

CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of item:	Regional Transport Plan: Update
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Craig ab Iago, Cabinet Member for the Environment Department
Relevant officer:	Gerwyn Jones, Assistant Head of Environment Department
Date of meeting:	11 March 2025

1. Decision Sought:

- 1.1 Recognition of the development of the draft Regional Transport Plan (RTP) and the processes associated with this.
- 1.2 Approval of the response [**Appendix 5**] to the consultation.

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision:

- 2.1 There is a statutory duty for the Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) to produce an RTP. Cyngor Gwynedd is a member of the CJC. Further detail is provided in the following report.

3. Introduction - Regional Transport Plan (RTP)

The RTP and ancillary outputs

- 3.1. The RTP is a strategic document outlining the long-term vision for the region's transport system, including the aims, objectives and policies and priorities for improving the transport network and services.
- 3.2 This RTP will help us address current and future local and regional transport issues now and over the next 5 years (2025-2030) by providing a framework for future investment decisions. It sets out how transport can support the delivery of Llwybr Newydd, the Welsh Government's transport strategy, and contribute to the success, regeneration and development of our region.

The need for an RTP

- 3.3 The requirement for local authorities to produce a Transport Plan is set out in the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Transport (Wales) Act 2006. This duty was transferred to CJs on 30 June 2022, by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Therefore, North Wales CJC has a duty to produce an RTP for north Wales. The CJC must develop local authority policies to implement Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021. These policies must include transport facilities and services where:

- There is a need to satisfy the needs of people who live or work in, visit or travel through the region;
- The need to carry loads; and
- Pedestrian facilities and services.

3.4 RTP must consider the transport needs of disabled persons (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010) and persons who are older or have mobility issues and consider overcoming barriers more widely.

Ownership of the RTP and ancillary outputs

3.5 The RTP is owned by the CJC, which is responsible for bringing it in line with Llwybr Newydd: Transport Strategy for Wales, and for its development and adoption.

Implementation support of the RTP

3.6 Local authorities have a key role to play in implementing the RTP. Local authorities are responsible for carrying out the schemes identified in the Regional Transport Delivery Plan.

3.7 The implementation of the RTP is supported by Transport for Wales, who will work with local authorities to develop schemes that local authorities intend to deliver. In addition, Transport for Wales will support the achievement of our rail aspirations, and work with local authorities to identify improvements to the bus network as we move towards franchising.

3.8 The Welsh Government and the North and Mid Wales Trunk Roads Agent (NMWTRA) will support the presentation of our strategic road network aspirations, as the bodies responsible for managing, maintaining and improving the strategic road network.

Approval of the RTP and subsequent actions

3.9 The Strategic Transport sub-committee is responsible for the preparation and development of the RTP, with responsibility for its approval reserved to the CJC following a period of public consultation and submission to the Welsh Government. The timetable for approval is July 2025.

3.10 Once the RTP is approved, it will shape the transport improvements being introduced in North Wales over the next five years. Welsh Government funding grants for transport schemes will only be available for schemes that support the aims of the RTP. It is expected that any transport improvements undertaken in North Wales will be included in the Regional Transport Delivery Plan.

How the Regional Transport funding operates

3.11 Currently, bids are submitted by each local authority every year. Bids are assessed and awarded by the Welsh Government. Grants are accepted. Introducing the plan and quarterly claims are made that are monitored and evaluated. Currently, there are seven funds with processes requiring separate bids.

3.12 By now, a grant modernisation programme is underway to review this process.

What is the Regional Transport Delivery Plan

- 3.13 A draft Regional Transport Delivery Plan (RTDP) outlines the specific steps needed to implement the wider objectives and policies set out in our RTP.
- 3.14 Our RTDP sets out the interventions that our local authorities will take forward over the next 5 years. It includes our priorities over time, considers the likely costs and impacts, and our contributions to our regional objectives.
- 3.15 The RTDP takes the form of a list of schemes that are ranked in priority order in terms of the impact of delivering against our priorities. These are the schemes that local transport authorities intend to invest in to achieve the RTP. It does not include strategic 'trunk road' schemes, or rail projects, which would be provided by other bodies such as the Welsh Government and Network Rail.
- 3.16 The schemes in the RTDP have been ranked on the following basis:
- Higher Priority
 - Medium Priority
 - Lower Priority

This is based on output from a system that considered and weighed-up the schemes from the perspective of:

- Environmental Impact
 - Land Considerations
 - Planning and Legal Considerations
 - Stakeholder Acceptance
 - Consultation
 - Disruption
 - Buildability
- 3.17 The schemes are a mix of schemes that reflect local and/or historical aspirations, schemes proposed by Transport for Wales and specific schemes that have reached a level of maturity. They include a range of different schemes in size, nature, scope and cost with some being specific/local as well as some that are more general. See **Appendix 1**.

Integrated Wellbeing Appraisal

- 3.18 An Integrated Well-being Assessment (IWBA) is required as part of the Transport for Wales Appraisal Guidance (WeITAG). Our IWBA shows how our policies will contribute to well-being, supported by impact assessments that have been undertaken to consider issues such as the environment, health, equality and biodiversity.
- 3.19 IWBA is not just a 'tick box' exercise. The information in the IWBA must be used to include benefits of the design except for any potential adverse effects from the design. The IWBA must demonstrate how well-being has been dealt with and should identify the positive and negative effects and show how any negative impacts have been avoided or mitigated.

3.20 The IWBA should address four key questions, based on the four ambitions in the Welsh Transport Strategy:

- How will the programme or project benefit people and communities? (equality, health, safety and confidence)
- How will this benefit the environment? (reducing carbon emissions, beneficial to biodiversity and ecosystem resilience and reducing waste)
- How will this benefit places and the economy? (place-making, innovation, transportation)
- How will this benefit Welsh culture and the language? (arts and sport and historic environment)

3.21 In helping to answer these questions, the IWBA is supported by a range of impact assessments, including some that are statutory, such as a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Monitoring and Appraisal Scheme

3.22 The RTP must include a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that shows how regional progress in achieving the national priorities and ambitions of the Transport Strategy for Wales (TSW) will be monitored, measured and evaluated. This must include the region's contribution to decarbonisation targets and national modal change.

3.23 Our Monitoring and Evaluation Plan includes a series of measures with baseline information for each. The measures are based on the framework of measures used in the Integrated Well-being Appraisal (IWBA) and draw on the Transport Strategy for Wales Monitoring Framework adapted for regional needs. Transport for Wales has published baseline data for the TSW Monitoring Framework and this is continuously updated by Transport for Wales.

3.24 The CJC must submit annual performance reports on RTP to the Welsh Government each year. A comprehensive evaluation will be prepared after three years to assess whether the RTP is achieving its outcomes, providing value for money and whether there are any outcomes that were not intended. The results of this comprehensive evaluation will feed into the subsequent RTP for the National Transport Delivery Plan (NTDP).

What has the RTP programme achieved thus far

3.25 During 2024, the programme has delivered:

- The CJC Action Plan which defines the tasks, resources and budget required to develop and deliver the RTP for North Wales.
- The Case for Change and the supporting Stakeholder Engagement Plan provide the evidence base and approach for engagement.
- The IWBA scoping report was submitted to statutory consultees (including Natural Resources Wales and Cadw) for a period of 5 weeks.
- Draft products for consultation including: RTP; Monitoring and Evaluation Plan; RTDP; IWBA; consultation materials.

Appendix 2 provides a summary of the main milestones and time-scale associated with the RTP.

Consultation on the RTP - Reaching Out and Engagement

3.26 Feedback on the Draft Regional Transport Plan, along with the supporting documents, can be found on the North Wales Ambition website:

[Ambition North Wales | North Wales Regional Transport Plan \(draft\) - Public Consultation](#)

3.27 A consultation period on the draft Regional Transport Plan opened on the 20 January 2025 and will be open until the 14 April 2025. A copy of the consultation document has been included as **Appendix 3**.

3.28 The CJC's central team has coordinated and collaborated with the consultants commissioned to develop the RTP on outreach and engagement work to raise awareness and encourage participation as part of the consultation process on the RTP.

3.29 This has included co-working with officers in communications, as well as transport, within the North's six local authorities. Examples of what has been done to this effect are included as **Appendix 4** which includes:

- Press Release
- Direct communication with Politicians
- Sharing information on social networks
- General communication with Elected Members

4. Considerations

4.1 There are several considerations involved in the development of the RTP. In the short term the following can be considered as a summary of the main ones.

4.2 Constitutionally local authorities will need to consider:

- How they engage with work such as the RTP from a consultation perspective and provide input into something they have already contributed to its development.
- How the CJC's operation interacts with the Local Authorities, and this includes consideration and approval of work such as the RTP.
- How the CJC will operate and make decisions that will often relate to local issues on a regional basis.

4.3 It is a transformational time in transport which includes the following:

- Changes are taking place structurally in the transport context with, for example, the establishment of the CJC and Transport for Wales.
- Changes taking place in terms of Welsh Government means, programmes and funding sources.
- Potential changes in Welsh Government's priorities and focus on transport.
- Changes in legislation and models related to provision in specific areas that include buses.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The structural situation is likely to take some time to establish and it is true to say that not all things involved in implementing these changes are completely clear and have not been confirmed. This is likely to lead to a situation where there will be uncertainty in terms of role, responsibilities and accountability in relevance and transport matters in Wales. An example of this would be the implications and effects of moving to a model of franchise to maintain and provide local bus services in Wales. The likelihood is that Transport for Wales will lead with local authorities as partners. This has already happened in terms of the perspective of the TrawsCymru network.
- 5.2 In the context of the RTP the CJC is responsible for its development as a product in its own right but the expectation to realise the aspirations, expectations, objectives and goals will likely fail, on the whole, on local authorities. What the local authorities are able to achieve, to a large extent, will depend on the funding provided by the Welsh Government.
- 5.3 It will therefore be necessary to be careful that there is a credible link between the strategic ambition and what can be achieved as well as between those who will be responsible for setting the framework and those who will be seen as being responsible for realisation.
- 5.4 It is necessary to be aware and to be alive to the considerations referred to. While the ability to influence directly may be limited it will be necessary to look to optimise opportunities for the benefit of Gwynedd's communities.
- 5.5 This is likely to involve close collaboration with other key stakeholders including Transport for Wales. Recent successful examples of this are already happening which include the cross-county review of the local bus network along with the Porth Caernarfon and Llanbedr projects.
- 5.6 The draft RTP meets the requirements set out in the guidance. It is in line, supported and aligned with Llwybr Newydd which is essential to unlock and win grants to implement schemes.
- 5.7 The wider concerns remain that the Welsh Government's strategy and allocation of resources does not recognise the dynamic, not to mention meet the needs and aspirations of rural areas such as Gwynedd.
- 5.8 At a time when the CJC continues to become established there will be a significant responsibility on that body to agree, plan priorities and spending at a regional level that will continue to engage and realise plans, for the most part, locally.

6. Rationale and justification for recommending the decision

- 6.1 There is a statutory duty for the CJC to produce an RTP. Cyngor Gwynedd is a member of the CJC.

7. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 7.1 The process and work of developing the RTP is subject to an Integrated Wellbeing Assessment (IWBA) as part of the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG).

8. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

8.1 The process and work of developing the RTP is subject to an Integrated Wellbeing Assessment (IWBA) as part of the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG).

9. Recommendations

9.1 That Cabinet Members note the arrival of the Corporate Joint Committee for North Wales and its role in the development and delivery of the RTP.

9.2 That Cabinet Members authorise the Cabinet Member for Environment to write to the Chair of the CJC to:

- acknowledge and congratulate the work that has gone into preparing the draft RTP.
- recognise that the draft RTP meets the guidelines set by Welsh Government for the development of RTP.
- refers to wider concerns regarding issues influencing and affecting transport provision in rural areas.

Draft response has been included as **Appendix 5**.

10. Views of the Statutory Officers

a. Chief Finance Officer

There is no financial commitment arising from the decision sought, but the Regional Transport Plan is a key document and will affect transport projects in the Gwynedd area when it becomes operational.

b. Monitoring Officer

The report represents Gwynedd Council's response to the consultation on the Regional Transport Plan. Although there is representation from Gwynedd on the Corporate Joint Committee and the Transport Sub-Committee this consultation is an opportunity for Gwynedd to give a corporate response on the proposed Scheme. It will be for the Corporate Joint Committee to exercise its statutory powers under the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (Wales) Regulations 2021 to evaluate the responses and adopt the Plan in a final form.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: Gwynedd Projects
Appendix 2: Milestones and Timeline RTP 2025
Appendix 3: Consultation Document
Appendix 4: Consultation on the RTP - Reaching Out and Engaging
Appendix 5: Draft Response – Environment Cabinet Member