
NORTH WALES CJC STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE
31/03/2025

Present: Councillor Goronwy Edwards (Conwy County Borough Council) (Chair)
Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas (Isle of Anglesey County Council) (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

Craig ab Iago (Cyngor Gwynedd), Barry Mellor (Denbighshire County Council), Glyn Banks (Flintshire County Council) and David Bithell (Wrexham County Borough Council)

Co-opted Members (Without a Vote):

Angela Jones (Eryri National Park) and Ben George (Transport for Wales)

Chief Officers:

Huw Percy (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Gerwyn Jones (Cyngor Gwynedd), Geraint Edwards (Conwy County Borough Council), Emlyn Jones (Denbighshire County Council), Katie Wilby (Flintshire County Council) and Gwen Thomas (Wrexham County Borough Council).

Officers present:

Alwen Williams (Chief Executive, North Wales Corporate Joint Committee), Claire Incledon (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Jack Latkovic (Corporate Joint Committee Democracy Officer), David Hole (North Wales Corporate Joint Committee) and Andy Roberts (Regional Strategic Development Planning Officer).

Also in attendance:

Allan Pitt (ARUP) and Adam Graham (Transport for Wales)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:-

- Dafydd Wyn Williams (Cyngor Gwynedd) with Gerwyn Jones deputising
- Darren Williams (Wrexham County Borough Council) with Gwen Thomas deputising
- Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer)
- Dewi Morgan (Finance Officer)

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 December 2024 as a true record.

5. STRATEGIC TRANSPORTAT SUB-COMMITTEE QUARTERLY REPORT

The report was presented by the Acting Chief Executive of the North Wales CJC and the CJC Implementation Programme Lead.

RESOLVED

To approve the Quarterly Report and:

- 1. Recommend that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee entered into discussions with the Welsh Government to receive an update on the arrangements to fund the Bus Reform and Franchising project.**
- 2. Express concern about service continuity as the Bus Reform and Franchising project was further developed.**
- 3. Request a further discussion for funding a bus (coach) service from east to west Wales and also a north to south Wales bus service, to complement cross-border rail services, without disruption to local services.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Terms of Reference was approved at the Sub-Committee meeting on 1 October 2024. The Sub-Committee had met on two occasions, and it was considered appropriate to review the work undertaken and ensure that the right resources were in place to meet future developments.

DISCUSSION

It was reported that this was the first quarterly report detailing developments, in line with the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's legal duty in relation to the development of a Regional Transport Plan. It was further noted that a quarterly report would be submitted to the Corporate Joint Committee detailing specific projects, the financial performance of the Sub-Committee and upcoming developments. Members were reminded that the Regional Transport Plan assisted local authorities with developments and had no powers over strategic road and rail schemes which were beyond the control of those authorities.

The Sub-Committee and all stakeholders were thanked for their assistance in delivering all the developments seen within the report.

It was confirmed that the consultation period on the draft Regional Transport Plan had started since 20 January 2025 and would continue until 14 April 2025. It was explained that the work was being led by ARUP on behalf of the Joint Committee, also noting that collaboration had taken place with Transport for Wales. An update was given that over 1120 people had responded to the consultation to date, with the expectation that these numbers would continue to increase steadily until the end of the consultation period. It was added that ARUP had found themes arising in several responses, which had been collated in order to respond effectively to any concern or idea presented by the public.

It was highlighted that the local authorities' communications teams had supported the promotion of this public consultation. Furthermore, the Corporate Joint Committee and ARUP had taken every step to ensure that as many people as possible were able to access the consultation, such as a bilingual telephone line, a virtual engagement room and also by developing an easy-read version of the consultation to support anyone who may otherwise find it challenging to understand and participate in the consultation.

It was clarified that ARUP was assessing all responses to the public consultation and they would submit a report on the responses in due course. It was detailed that quantitative questions had been included in the consultation that would be assessed in order to ascertain the numbers and percentages of responses that agreed or disagreed with the

questions and statements. It was explained that it was more challenging to assess the results of the responses to the qualitative questions, and it was confirmed that ARUP had developed a computer coding system to assist in identifying specific themes and issues of concern. It was confirmed that this enabled ARUP to process all the information and share it with the Corporate Joint Committee and Transport for Wales for consideration. It was reported that relevant adjustments would be made subsequently so that the Regional Transport Plan could be submitted in draft form to the Welsh Government for further consideration and approval.

Members were guided through the next stages of the Regional Transport Plan confirming the aim of its final publication during September 2025.

It was explained that Transport for Wales has been working with local authorities to develop a number of projects offering sustainable transport across north Wales. It was noted that these projects were being considered as part of the policy base of the Regional Transport Plan. It was detailed that some of these projects included Wrexham Gateway, Bangor Gateway, Holyhead Gateway, Caernarfon Gateway and Enhancing Menai Resilience, with a budget confirmed for further development in 2025/26, in the hope of delivering them as soon as possible.

Concern was expressed about service continuity as the Bus Reform and Franchising project was further developed, confirming that some stakeholders had raised these concerns with the relevant Cabinet secretary, Ken Skates MS. It was noted that local authorities wished to receive assurances that any franchising developments would not affect the required services within the Region's counties. In response, it was confirmed that the 'Bus Services (Wales) Bill' was now being considered by Parliament and it was hoped that it would be adopted by statute by January 2026. It was stressed that it was crucial that local authorities communicated their views on the importance of this issue, as attracting additional funding would ensure the development of transport services for the region.

A report was given on the aspirations relating to the long-term developments of the region's rail network. It was recognised that developments to the rail network had not been a priority in formulating Transport Plans in Wales in the past as it was not a matter that had been devolved to the Welsh Government. However, it was emphasised that it was crucial that it was included within the Corporate Joint Committee's Regional Transport Plan. Details were provided on the nine aspirations for rail development in the Region, noting that they had been considered by Transport for Wales and Network Rail and were now under consideration as part of the Welsh Government's Investment Prospectus as they negotiated with the UK Government, in the hope of establishing a rail budget for Wales. An example was shared of the future consideration of electric trains, explaining that this could be a potential new development.

It was confirmed that the North Wales Transport Commission had been commissioned by the Welsh Government to make recommendations on transport issues in the region. It was explained that the Commission had identified 60 recommendations, with additional comments on the Menai crossings. It was emphasised that these recommendations had influenced the development of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's draft Regional Transport Plan, apart from the three recommendations which were being developed directly by the Welsh Government.

An update was provided on the Hunt-September advisory group that had been formed with the support of ARUP, the Design Commission for Wales, Welsh Government officials, Transport for Wales and the Selection Panel. Its aim was to understand barriers to sustainable development, making recommendations on better ways of working in order to

achieve better outcomes for everyone in Wales. It was noted that the challenges identified during the work of this advisory group fed into the draft Regional Transport Plan.

Reference was made to the North-South High-Speed Bus Service, as Transport for Wales was seeking views on proposals for a new service that may be introduced during 2026. It was detailed that the service would be a faster link between Bangor and Carmarthen than the current provision. It was also noted that there were considerations for an East-West fast service, but all these developments would be dependent on feedback from public consultation as well as budgets.

It was noted that the work of gathering resources for the Regional Transport Plan was being overseen by the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee Implementation Programme Lead in conjunction with ARUP consultancy services and Transport for Wales. It was explained that the Interim Chief Executive would start the process of recruiting individuals with transport planning expertise to assist with this work, following the transfer to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee on 1 April 2025.

It was confirmed that the expenditure on the development of a Regional Transport Plan was mainly derived from grants received from the Welsh Government. It was further noted that the commissioning of ARUP to provide technical and delivery support since the beginning of 2024 had resulted in expenditure of £193,170 to date. It was reported that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee was in discussions with the Welsh Government to confirm financial allocations for the 2025/26 financial year, but as yet there was no confirmation of the budget.

6. PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The report was presented by the Acting Chief Executive of the North Wales CJC and Regional Strategic Development Planning Officer.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the Report noting the progress to date on the Strategic Development Plan and the relationship with the Regional Transport Plan.**
- **To schedule a further Report to this Sub-Committee to share information with members about schemes, such as electric buses, within the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's Responsible Adventure project.**

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To ensure that the Strategic Transport Sub-Committee was fully aware of progress with the Strategic Development Plan from an early stage, to promote regular engagement and an integrated approach to strategic planning.

DISCUSSION

The Regional Strategic Development Planning Officer was welcomed to his first meeting.

An update was provided on the process of developing a Strategic Development Plan and the actions that needed to be delivered. Further information was provided on timetable considerations and legal requirements in relation to the development of the Plan.

It was noted that the development of the scheme ensured that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee responded to statutory requirements within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for regional economic well-being, spatial planning and transport planning issues. It was explained that a Strategic Development Plan Handbook had been submitted to Local Planning Authorities by the Welsh Government in 2022 providing guidance on how to develop a Plan. It was confirmed that it was expected to take five years to produce a full Strategic Development Plan. It was emphasised that work was underway to consider whether the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee could make adjustments to procedures in order to speed up the process where appropriate.

It was explained that the Strategic Development Plan was a long-term one that could be operational for up to 25 years. It was confirmed that this provided the ability to look forward to future developments and ensure that the critical issues were developed for the entire region. It was pointed out that the Plan ran in conjunction with other North Wales Corporate Joint Committee projects in order to secure economic well-being and ensure that there was suitable infrastructure for meeting targets and realising new developments.

It was confirmed that the first step in the development of the Plan would be to prepare a Delivery Agreement. It was clarified that the Agreement would detail how the Plan would be developed as well as confirming how stakeholders and the community could be involved in the development process. The initial timetable for the development process was detailed noting that there were eight main phases for the development of the Plan. The indicative timetable for the Delivery Agreement was reported, stating that it was hoped that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee would formally adopt it in July 2025 before requesting the Welsh Government to adopt it. It was noted that the Strategic Development Plan would be formalised following these steps and would be further developed, following feedback from the Welsh Government on the detailed timetable for the Strategic Development Plan in due course. It was pointed out that it was hoped that the development timetable for this Plan would be in line with the Local Authorities' Local Development Plans.

It was reported that the close relationship between the Strategic Development Plan and the Strategic Transport Plan ensured that an integrated collaborative approach was adopted. This collaboration would lead to the ability to deliver transformative projects as knowledge and expertise could be combined, resources accumulated and early engagements promoted.

It was asked whether the Strategic Development Plan provided opportunities for collaboration with private, public and community transport initiatives, such as the development considered as part of the Growth Plan's Responsible Adventure project. In response, the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's Interim Chief Executive confirmed that an understanding of specific elements of the Responsible Adventure project was relevant to this Sub-Committee, and agreed to add an explanatory item, along with other important transport issues, to the Sub-Committee's agenda in order to share information and understanding of the interaction between the projects. It was stressed that the work of the community initiatives and the public transport framework was very important, confirming that the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee aimed to deliver developments that filled any gaps and facilitated regional links.

The meeting started at 14:00 and ended at 15:20.

Chair

