



REPORT TO THE STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE
6 October, 2025

TITLE: The Strategic Transport Sub-Committee Quarterly Report

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To consider the quarterly report as required further to the Terms of Reference.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. To consider the report and make recommendations if necessary to the Corporate Joint Committee.

3. REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. The Terms of Reference were approved at the meeting of the sub-committee on 1 October 2024. The Sub Committee has now been in place for a year. This is the second review report, with the previous one being in March 2025.

4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. The Terms of Reference state that the "Strategic Transport Sub-Committee will prepare a quarterly report on its work for the Corporate Joint Committee which shall include:
- Progress on implementation of the Regional Transport Plan, including individual Programmes and Projects
 - The Financial Performance of the Committee
 - Forthcoming developments"
- 4.2. The context for such a report is to ensure that the work of the sub-committee is open and transparent and that its functions are being clearly communicated. The consultation exercise on the Regional Transport Plan raised awareness of the work of the CJC and specifically its powers in relation to developing and delivering transportation policies for the North Wales region.
- 4.3. Resource management is a function of the sub-committee which includes the opportunity to monitor and review the level and deployment of resources required, and where it deems appropriate make recommendations to the CJC in relation to these matters.
- 4.4. The Terms of Reference provide that quarterly reports shall form part of an agreed scrutiny protocol and shall be in a format which will facilitate its submission into Scrutiny or other governance arrangements as determined by the Corporate Joint Committee.

- 4.5. The sub-committee was first convened on 1 October 2024. Since then, significant progress has been achieved in a short timeframe that has led to the successful launch of the public consultation exercise in January and the submission of a Regional Transport Plan to Welsh Government in July. The Membership of the sub-committee has benefitted from an informal in-person meeting to develop across-region working, and to explore shared skills and experience to support the delivery of transportation projects in North Wales. This regional cross-fertilisation of information and skills will continue to be a focus for future delivery and monitoring work.

5. QUARTERLY REPORT

5.1. Progress on implementation of RTP - Consultation

- 5.1.1 A twelve-week consultation period on the RTP and its associated documents commenced on 20 January and ended on 14 April 2025. The work was led by ARUP on behalf of the CJC and involved digital as well as physical resourcing.
- 5.1.2 Feedback from the public consultation fed into a consultation report and supporting documents which in turn informed and updated the RTP and RTDP. The findings of the consultation and outcomes are set out in a report to the Sub-Committee meeting on 30th June, 2025.
- 5.1.3 In total, 1,684 responses were received. This included 1,421 related to a campaign supported by the North Wales Wildlife Trust opposing the A494/A55/Flintshire Corridor (commonly referred to as the 'Red Route') in relation to the perceived potential of a previously proposed trunk road being referenced as part of a regional aspiration in strategic road network options to address transport related problems. The aspirations set out in RTP are not proposed policies that will impact the strategic roads network.

At the Sub Committee meeting on 30th June, Members were briefed on responses to the RTP consultation, including correspondence from the North Wales Wildlife Trust in connection with the Stamp Out The Red Route local action group. This was followed up with a written response sent to the North Wales Wildlife Trust from Ambition North Wales. This can be seen [here](#).

On the 2nd September, The North Wales Wildlife Trust subsequently sent a further letter, which can be seen in Appendix A. Ambition North Wales responded to this on the 17th September, which can be seen in Appendix B. As the initial letter received from North Wales Wildlife Trust was in English only, the response on 17th September was sent in English only. This has been translated to include in these Sub Committee papers.

- 5.1.4 Alongside individual responses to the consultation, 37 organisational responses were also identified.
- 5.1.5 Generally, aside from the concerns raised about the Red Route, the sentiment of responses was supportive of the plans and proposals, with a wide range of issues raised, spanning modes of transport, as well as comments in relation to economic, social, and environmental and commercial matters.
- 5.1.6 All feedback received was carefully considered and taken into account, informing the RTP and its supporting documents. To help demonstrate how this feedback has been taken into

account, topics of feedback have been grouped and responses provided in a 'You Said, We Did' approach, which can be found in the Consultation Report - [LINK](#).

- 5.1.7 A Post Adoption Statement for the Integrated Well Being Appraisal (IWBA) was also prepared, which explains how the feedback has shaped the IWBA and how the IWBA has informed the RTP documents accordingly (in accordance with Equalities principles, the Well-being of Future Generations principles, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and related assessments 57).
- 5.1.8 As part of the work to finalise the RTP, work has been done to identify a register of commitments. This is made up of actions that the CJC has committed to progressing during the RTP period in either the RTP or as a response to a consultation comment. Members will be updated on this at a future meeting.

5.2 Approval of RTP for Submission

- 5.2.1 On 30th June 2025 the Strategic Transport Sub-Committee were provided a presentation of the RTP and supporting documents. This included an update on changes to draft documents taking into account feedback from the public consultation, and also our intentions to make further and final amendments in readiness for the CJC in July 2025.
- 5.2.2 The Strategic Transport Sub-Committee recommended that the CJC approve the RTP and its supporting documents for submission to the Welsh Government for Ministerial approval and publication. The Sub-Committee recognised and commended officers and partners for the significant collaborative effort required to produce these documents in readiness for submission.
- 5.2.3 On the 18th July, 2025 the CJC made the decision to approve the North Wales Regional Transport Plan and supporting documentation for submission to the Welsh Government for approval and publication by the Minister in September 2025.
- 5.2.4 The RTP and all its associated documents have now been submitted to Welsh Government. It is expected that they will be approved by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales in September. This is expected to be after the submission deadline for meeting papers, so an update will be provided verbally at the meeting.

5.3 Grants Modernisation and Regional Transport Fund

- 5.3.1 Currently, funding from Welsh Government is available to local authorities for transport schemes is available via one of the following funds:

- Local Transport Fund
- Resilient Roads Fund
- Active Travel Fund
- Road Safety Fund (Revenue)
- Road Safety Fund (Capital)
- Safe Routes in Communities Fund
- Unadopted roads Fund
- Ultra Low Emission Vehicles Transformation Fund

- 5.3.2 Through a process known as 'Grants Modernisation', Welsh Government are combining these funding streams for future years into one fund, known as Regional Transport Fund.
- 5.3.3 Through the transition to a single Regional Transport Fund, driven by the RTP, it is Welsh Government's intention that CJs will have a much greater role in the allocation and management of capital infrastructure spending in Wales.
- 5.3.4 Further to recent guidance from Welsh Government CJs are asked to identify a draft RTP Programme showing a delivery schedule for schemes to receive funding during 2026/27 - the first year of the Regional Transport Fund. CJC officers and Arup are working with the local authorities to identify the priority schemes from the Regional Transport Delivery Plan for progression in 2026/27. This process will also identify some priorities for years two and three. The delivery schedule must then be submitted to Welsh Government for approval before any funding is released to local authorities. This subject is considered in more detail in another agenda item at this meeting.

5.4 Timescales for RTF

- 5.4.1 Work in the next quarter (and beyond) will focus on finalising the RTP and developing the prioritised programme of transport schemes to be funded by Regional Transport Fund in 2026/27. The key dates for these pieces of work are:
 - **September** – Approval of RTP by Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales
 - **September and October** – working with local authority officers and consultancy support to identify and prioritise transport schemes to include in the draft RTP programme for delivery in 2026/27
 - November 4th – informal briefing of Members on transport schemes prior to CJC decision.
 - **Early November** – extraordinary CJC meeting to approve the draft RTP Programme
 - **November 21st** – Submission of draft RTP Programme to Welsh Government
 - December 15th – sub-committee update on progress & next steps
 - **December 19th** – Feedback from Welsh Government on draft RTP programme
 - **January 30th 2026** – Submission of final RTP Programme to Welsh Government
 - **March 2026** - Welsh Government approves RTP programmes and sends RTF offer letters for FY2026-27 to the local authorities and CJs

5.5 Update on other programmes and projects being planned or delivered by others

The sub-committee has a role in planning, co-ordinating and advising on regional responses to Welsh Government proposals for improving public transport.

5.5.1 Network North Wales

At a Transport Summit held in Wrexham in May 2025, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales launched Network North Wales, a multi-billion-pound investment vision for an integrated, high-frequency transport network for the region. It will be a network that's better connected, more accessible and brimming with opportunity. It is also a significant enabler towards delivering Transport for Wales' T-Network vision – 1 Network, 1 Timetable, 1 Ticket, 1 Team, alongside the move towards Bus Franchising.

The programme announced by the Cabinet Secretary included interventions across the short, medium, and long term, which become increasingly ambitious over the period. In the short term, this meant the continued roll-out of the new fleet of trains serving North Wales, and the re-branding of the Borderlands Line to the Wrexham-Liverpool line.

By May 2026 Welsh Government have committed to:

- Double the frequency of trains between Wrexham and Chester.
- Upgrade railway stations on the Wrexham-Liverpool Line.
- Increase services on the North Wales Main Line by 50%.
- Introduce new bus services to improve access to jobs in Wrexham and Deeside.
- Launch direct trains between Llandudno and Liverpool.
- Begin rolling out pay as you go on rail services in North Wales.
- Start the T13 bus service between Rhyl and Wrexham via Ruthin and Denbigh.
- Add Metro and Network North Wales branding to trains, buses and stations to make the network easier to navigate.

In the next three years they have committed to:

- Carry out upgrades at Padeswood to unlock more freight and passenger capacity.
- Start running two trains per hour between Wrexham and Liverpool.
- Improve station safety and access at Buckley.

In the next five years, Welsh Government have committed to:

- Deliver more new trains and build new stations.
- Improve rail connections to Manchester Airport.
- Have a consistent rail timetable for the North Wales Main Line.
- Upgrade signals at Gobowen to increase capacity on the Marches Line.

Up to 2035, the commitments include:

- Electrify the North Wales Main Line.
- Increase platform capacity at Chester railway station.
- Run four trains per hour from Wrexham to Liverpool.
- Increase services on the North Wales Main Line.
- Significantly improve accessibility at stations, including level boarding

Beyond 2035, the proposals are:

- Introduce Metro-style services to stations south of Wrexham to Gobowen.
- Improve journey times between North and South Wales.
- Build new stations north and south of Wrexham, including A55 Parkway.
- Electrify and re-signal the Marches Line.
- Improve Northern line connections from Wrexham to Leeds.

It is important to note that where the Network North Wales commitments overlap with the RTP, the commitments are in line with the RTP vision. Notably regarding enhanced access to the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone, and rail aspirations for the North Wales Main Line, Wrexham-Liverpool Line, and Chester to Wrexham, guided by the T-Network philosophy.

5.5.2 North Wales Metro

Transport for Wales have been working with local authorities in the region on the development of a number of projects to enhance the sustainable transport offer across North Wales. These have been considered in the RTP policy base and in the RTDP schemes, which will act as the primary mechanism for capital delivery. The work has included:

- **Wrexham Gateway:** As part of the Wrexham Gateway Partnership, plans are being developed for an integrated transport hub at Wrexham General Station that are a key part of a wider regeneration programme.
- **Bangor Gateway:** Developing proposals to improve walking, cycling, and public access to Bangor station and enhance the station environment.
- **Holyhead Gateway:** Proposals to enhance the station environment and improve sustainable access to the station and the port facilities, including improved walking, cycling and wheeling connectivity from the town centre and residential areas and improved bus provision.
- **Caernarfon Gateway:** Exploring options for the eastern approach to the town centre that may be facilitated by the removal of the existing flyover or multi-storey car park.
- **Enhancing Menai Resilience:** Developing options to improve resilience and reliability of the Menai Crossing.
- Identifying options for improving choices for travel to work at large employment sites including Deeside Industrial Park and Wrexham Industrial Estate.
- Identifying options for bus infrastructure improvements across the region that will facilitate improved public transport journey time and reliability.
- Feasibility work considering an east-west coach service intended to complement the rail offer and improve cross-border connectivity.

5.5.3 Bus

Welsh Government have announced that young people aged 16 to 21 will be able to ride on buses across Wales for just £1 from September. Single fares will cost just £1 and there will be £3 day passes available too. It will allow young people to enjoy unlimited travel with any participating bus services from 1 September for a year. Welsh Government will extend the scheme to 5 to 15-year-olds from November. Existing reduced fares for children will apply until then. Young people looking to benefit from this will need a mytravelpass.

During the summer, Arriva have been running a new Cymru Coastliner service: a new express summer coach service between Rhyl and Llandudno. It operated from 22 June to 25 August. The service connected Rhyl and Llandudno in under one hour, calling at locations including Kinmel Bay, Towyn, Abergele, Colwyn Bay and Rhos-on-Sea. The coach operated hourly, seven days a week, using air-conditioned coaches.

At the National Eisteddfod in Wrexham in August, Welsh Government, TfW, and Arriva announced the new TrawsCymru T51 service, connecting Rhyl and Wrexham from September. This replaces the 51/X51 service. Key changes include:

- i. From September 2025:
 - hourly buses between Ruthin and Wrexham (an upgrade from the two-hourly service)
 - introduction of hourly service between Wrexham and Rhyl on a Sunday
 - simplified fares and digital ticketing options
- ii. From March 2026:
 - better integration with rail services and other TrawsCymru routes
 - new modern, accessible vehicles designed for comfort and sustainability

In South West Wales, between 1st July and 23rd September, Transport for Wales and local authorities have undertaken consultation on the proposed base network for the future franchised bus services. The timescale for introducing franchised network shows a 2027 start for South West Wales, with North Wales in 2028.

5.5.4 Strategic Road Network

Between 9th December, 2024 and 4th March, 2025, Welsh Government undertook consultation on the A494 River Dee Bridge Replacement Scheme.

The public consultation showed strong support for replacing the A494 River Dee Bridge as soon as possible. There was support for Option E as a solution which would minimise impacts during construction, provide noise screening for local residents through new green spaces and provide active travel connections across the River Dee. However, the consultation report notes that it is also clear from the public consultation that there is concern about congestion on the A494 and support for schemes which could alleviate this. The scheme's primary purpose is to replace the existing A494 River Dee Bridge which is approaching its life expiry.

Having taken into account the technical, social, economic and environmental aspects of the scheme along with the positive comments received during the public consultation, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport & North Wales has decided to adopt Option E as the Preferred Option to address the problems with the existing A494 River Dee Bridge.

Option E comprises:

- New off-line single structure River Dee Bridge plus active travel link within existing rail underbridge.
- This would replace the River Dee Bridge with a new bridge immediately upstream.
- Work at the railway would be minimised with the existing highway verge area through the structure being reconfigured to facilitate an active travel path.
- Up to 3km of new and improved active travel paths.

The next steps for the scheme are to complete the preliminary design, Environmental Statement and WelTAG Stage 3 report. Following this, the draft Orders will be published in line with the Highways Act 1980 and Acquisition of Land Act 1981.

- 5.5.5 In July, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales released a written statement on 'Plans for our road network'. This explained that Welsh Government are now beginning essential work to refresh resilience studies for trunk roads. This will ensure they have the evidence base to inform future investment decisions, to ensure roads continue to play their

role in delivering Wales' socio-economic and net zero policies. This will begin with studies of the busiest trunk roads: the A55 and A494 in North Wales and the M4 in South Wales.

6. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

- 6.1. The CJC has secured additional funding of £200k from Welsh Government for RTP and RTDP progression in financial year 2025/26.
- 6.2. Financial spend on consultancy support to date has been used to commission ARUP to provide technical support and delivery since early 2024 for all elements of RTP delivery. This spend (2023/4 to September 2025) is currently £312,999.41. Of that, £271,281.95 has been claimed from Welsh Government grant.
- 6.3. A Senior Transport Officer joined Ambition North Wales in August on two-year secondment from Transport for Wales. This demonstrates the partnership working between Ambition North Wales and other organisations with an interest in RTP and RTDP delivery. It is expected that the Senior Transport Officer will undertake the CJC's responsibilities in supporting the delivery of the RTP, supported by the wider Ambition North Wales team.
- 6.4. Ambition North Wales buys-in support from Cyngor Gwynedd as its host authority. This provides officer time for support on Legal services, Democratic Services, and finance support.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The legal and governance implications are addressed in the body of the report.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – 2nd September letter from North Wales Wildlife Trust
Appendix B – 17th September letter to North Wales Wildlife Trust

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety

ii. Statutory Finance Officer:

I believe that the report is an accurate reflection of the situation and have no objections to the decision sought.

