

MEETING:	The Full Council
DATE:	14 May 2026
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes Cabinet Member – Economy and Community
TITLE:	Adoption of new economic development strategy for Gwynedd
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sioned E Williams, Head of Economy and Community

DECISION SOUGHT

That Cyngor Gwynedd adopt 'Gwynedd 2035: An Economy that Works for All' as an economic development strategy for Gwynedd.

1. THE REASON WHY THE COUNCIL NEEDS TO MAKE THE DECISION:

- 1.1 [Section 4 of the Cyngor Gwynedd Constitution](#) notes that an economic development strategy is part of the Policy Framework and is required to be approved by the Full Council on the basis of a Cabinet recommendation.

2. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Background

- 2.1 The Council has several schemes that refer to economic development:
- 'A Prosperous Gwynedd' is one of the seven priorities within the [Council Plan](#);
 - the [Ardal Ni \(Our Area\) Local Regeneration Plans](#) identify local priorities for the economy; and,
 - the [Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan](#) offers guidance for part of the economy.
- 2.2 These plans - along with regional documents, such as the [North Wales Regional Economic Framework](#) - have laid the foundations for the Council's work in economic development in recent years.
- 2.3 Through the Council Plan, the Cabinet has recognised that not having a single plan encapsulating what the people and communities of Gwynedd want and setting the direction for the county's economy, is a gap. As a result, the Economy and Community Department has been asked to draw up a new economic development strategy for Gwynedd.

The requirement for an economic development strategy

- 2.4 Financing for economic development is increasingly uncertain and dependent on short-term funding; for example, the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) will come to an end during the year and there is uncertainty regarding the future of ARFOR and no successor for the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) which funds the Llewyrch o'r Llechi programme.
- 2.5 There is a growing emphasis by the Welsh Government on regional collaboration, particularly in the context of Ambition North Wales and the economic well-being responsibility of the Corporate Joint Committee.
- 2.6 There is significant investment by the Welsh and UK Governments in the Anglesey Free Port and the Flint and Wrexham Investment Zone, but no similar plans for Gwynedd.
- 2.7 This is all within an operating environment of constant changes for enterprises.
- 2.8 Ongoing uncertainty within the economy stems from the growing international conflict and the turbulent political and social atmosphere in Wales and the UK.
- 2.9 The economy is also on the brink of major technological change as a result of artificial intelligence and that goes hand in hand with the effects of climate change.
- 2.10 By creating and adopting a strategy it will be possible to summarise the case for the development of the economy of Gwynedd, determine agreed prioritisation for responding to our needs and establish consistent guidance for the selection of schemes and prioritising expenditure in the area.
- 2.11 By adopting a strategy, we can identify and develop appropriate activities and better measure the impact of our efforts.

The challenges that require attention

- 2.12 Here in Gwynedd, we have a strong economic history that we can be proud of. There is also a modern and innovative economy with substantial potential in our existing enterprises and opportunities in new industries and activities but much of this potential is yet to be realised.
- 2.13 There are a range of positive qualities to the economy; unemployment is low, the qualification level of our workforce is high, we are resilient and our businesses have the best survival rate in Wales.
- 2.14 However, as with other rural and peripheral areas, there are challenges that need attention and, of course, the Strategy focuses on responding to those challenges.

2.15 The main issues that need to be addressed include:

- Fewer working-age people working
- Fewer people of working age
- Low wages
- Too much part-time and seasonal work
- People in poverty even though they are working
- Low productivity
- Lack of diversity of industries
- Not enough new enterprises starting up
- Enterprises not growing

Developing the Strategy

2.16 The new strategy; 'Gwynedd 2035: An Economy that Works for All', is enclosed in Appendix 1 of the report.

2.17 The content of the Strategy stems from an extended development process in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders including the Council's key partners from the public, private and third sectors.

2.18 The main steps in the development of the Strategy included:

- researching the composition and relative performance of the economy of Gwynedd;
- reviewing good practice in Wales, and comparable areas across Britain;
- seeking the views of enterprises of all types and from all parts of Gwynedd through a survey;
- individual and joint discussions with stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors; and,
- receiving the input of elected members of the Council via the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

2.19 On the basis of the information gathered a draft of the Strategy was produced. Constructive and positive feedback on the draft was received from the Scrutiny Committee and Council stakeholders across the three sectors before the content was confirmed.

The Strategy's Priorities

2.20 We want an economy that gives everyone an opportunity to live full lives and realise their full potential, and for an economy that strengthens the natural and cultural wealth which makes our county so unique.

2.21 With significant economic changes underway, there is an exciting opportunity to make Gwynedd a destination of excellence in new industries. Similarly, we must be supportive of those industries that already exist in Gwynedd and are essential to our communities, enterprises and residents. We must continue to nurture and add value to our traditional sectors, such as agriculture and tourism, as a solid foundation and a full part of a modern and innovative economy.

2.22 The vision 'Gwynedd 2035: An Economy That Works for All' is:

'An innovative, productive and low-carbon economy which strengthens the Welsh language, creates new opportunities and contributes towards everyone's well-being'

2.23 It is a vision that puts the people, communities and enterprises of Gwynedd at the centre and in order to implement it, three themes have been identified: Enterprise, People and Place.

2.24 For each of the three themes, there are two strategic priorities:

Enterprise: prosperous local enterprises that excel

1. Maximise the value of our current economy:
Realise the potential of our existing enterprises and sectors by increasing their value, strengthening their resilience and supporting them to reduce emissions
2. Make the most of new opportunities
Support and make the most of new industries and activity with substantial potential, ensuring that the benefit stays local

People: a skilled and inclusive workforce

3. Securing a skilled workforce:
Nurturing, attracting and retaining talent responding to the county's long-term skills needs
4. Supporting our people:
Supporting the people of Gwynedd to realise their full potential, to obtain quality employment, fair salaries and local opportunities

Place: the best conditions to thrive

5. The best possible connectivity and infrastructure:
Acting for better connectivity and business infrastructure to boost the economy
6. A great place to live, work and enterprise:
Promoting Gwynedd as a great place to live, work and enterprise, celebrating the Welsh language and our unique identity

Implementing the Strategy

- 2.25 A constant theme throughout the Strategy is the need for broad ownership and effort across organisations and sectors in order to realise it.
- 2.26 The advisory panel set up to support the realisation of the SPF in Gwynedd has highlighted the value of bringing together organisations from the public, private and third sectors.
- 2.27 We will therefore establish a 'Gwynedd Economy Forum' to co-ordinate the implementation of the Strategy.
- 2.28 The Forum membership includes the main organisations that contribute to local prosperity, and the bodies who work to develop an economy that benefits our communities. The Forum will bring local partners together from the public sector, private sector and third sector. Relevant regional and national organisations would also be a part of the Forum.
- 2.29 We will secure a voice for different parts of Gwynedd to ensure that there is awareness of these variances across the county.
- 2.30 The Forum will meet at least three times a year, in order to:
- Create and coordinate an annual Delivery Plan for the Strategy.
 - Monitor activities and their individual and composite indicators.
 - Maintain an overview of the progress towards achieving the Strategy.
 - Review and update the Strategy as needed.
 - Maintain an overview of the field and broader developments that are relevant to the Gwynedd economy, lobbying in favour of our needs.
 - Promote and facilitate collaboration between organisations with a role in developing the county's economy and other partnerships / forums.
- 2.31 The Strategy establishes the goal and identifies the method of addressing the long-term economic challenges identified for Gwynedd.
- 2.32 A Delivery Plan will be formulated annually under the leadership of the Gwynedd Economy Forum to implement the Strategy. The Plan will include current activity, and projects that are underway, noting their alignment with the Strategy and the areas that will benefit. The Strategy's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will then be a means of measuring the success and impact of the activities.
- 2.33 The preparation of the Strategy has also prompted a review of operating arrangements within economic development in the county. The review will look at opportunities to establish Menter Gwynedd as a vehicle for collaboration to ensure that initiatives across Gwynedd receive support and understand where help is available.

3. ENGAGEMENT UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

3.1 There have been ongoing efforts to secure stakeholder input into the Strategy. Before starting to create the Strategy, the views of others were gathered regarding the needs and priorities of the people and communities of Gwynedd, and the Strategy has been shared in draft form to ensure there is support for its content.

3.2 Stakeholders who have offered input include:

- Welsh Government
- Ambition North Wales
- North Wales Skills Partnership
- Business Wales
- Bangor University
- Eryri National Park Authority
- Adra Housing Association
- Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Cymru
- Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Tourism Partnership 2035
- The National Farmers' Union (NFU) and the Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW)
- Gwynedd Social Enterprise Network
- Mantell Gwynedd

3.3 The Council's Elected Members have also offered input and guidance via the Cabinet Members and the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

3.4 A summary of the engagement, input received and our response can be found in Appendix 2 of the report.

4. COMPOSITE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 Appendix 3 contains the Composite Impact Assessment prepared for the Strategy. The Assessment considers the impact of the Strategy on the residents of Gwynedd:

- identifying the main characteristics of the relationship between the Welsh language and the economy in Gwynedd and showing how the Strategy responds to these characteristics in order to strengthen the Welsh language.
- assessing the impact of the Strategy on well-being in a holistic manner, including economic and social, environmental and cultural aspects
- explaining how the Strategy meets the requirements and purpose of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including the Principles of Sustainable Development (i.e., the Five Ways of Working) and the Seven Well-being Goals

4.2 Preparing the Assessment has been an ongoing process with the Council's equality and language officers during the development of the Strategy which, in turn, has informed the content of the document.

5. THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 5.1 An assessment of the alignment of the Strategy with the requirements and wishes of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which is enclosed in Appendix 4, has been carried out. The outcome of the assessment has led to creating Section 3 of the Strategy (The Case for Action).

6. CABINET RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet, at its meeting of 10 March 2026, considered the above information and the content of the Strategy, agreeing to recommend the adoption of 'Gwynedd 2035: An Economy that Works for All', to the Full Council.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS:

Monitoring Officer:

"The Economic Development Strategy is part of the Council's Policy Framework. In accordance with the statutory requirements, the Strategy is submitted on the Cabinets recommendation for adoption by the Council. The report highlights the engagement processes undertaken along with the relevant statutory assessments and considerations in an appropriate manner. I am satisfied with the propriety of the decision sought. "

Head of Finance Department:

"This Strategy contains a number of activity areas, and both the report and Strategy emphasise that widespread ownership and effort across organisations and sectors are needed to make it a reality. In this context it is noted that the Strategy does not highlight the revenue and capital costs that Cyngor Gwynedd will face in order to realise it. Whilst many of these costs will be funded from current budgets, if requests for additional budget need to be presented, I expect that this will be done through the Council's usual arrangements. However, the Economic Strategy and the plans contained therein will be considered when reviewing the Council's long-term financial plans."

APPENDICES

1. The Strategy 'Gwynedd 2035: An Economy That Works for All'
2. Engagement Report
3. Composite Impact Assessment
4. Well-being of Future Generations Act Assessment