



Uchelgais Gogledd Cymru  
Ambition North Wales

# Annual Report

[ambitionnorth.wales](http://ambitionnorth.wales)

# Contents

## 01. Foreword

---

## 02. Overcoming challenges and building momentum

---

## 03. Why Invest in North Wales?

---

## 04. 2022-23 Milestones

---

## 05. 2022-23 Quarterly Highlights

---

## 06. The North Wales Growth Deal

---

## 07. Skills and Transport

---

## 08. Governance

---

## 09. The Next 12 Months

---

## 10. Our Partners

## Our Ambition

To be confident and cohesive, focused on improving the region's economic, social and environmental well-being.

To see the region develop in a sustainable way, with opportunities for people to gain new skills, develop rewarding careers, for businesses to grow and communities to prosper.

To do this while championing the Welsh language, our culture and heritage, in line with the well-being goals for Wales.

# Foreword

This report provides an overview of our annual progress in implementing the transformative Growth Deal—a 15-year agreement with the Welsh and UK Governments—to sustainably develop North Wales and enhance economic, social, and environmental wellbeing. Our Ambition North Wales partnership comprising the six Councils, our Universities, Colleges, and the private sector, is our greatest asset and key to our success, as we innovate to overcome barriers and foster regional prosperity.

This year, together with Welsh Government and regional stakeholders, we've developed our Regional Economic Framework, endorsed by all Ambition North Wales partners. It outlines our priorities and goals, emphasising the importance also of close collaboration with nearby regions.

While the North Wales economy continues to face significant challenges, the imminent end of European funding sets a new context which necessitates a shift in our approach to development. To address this, the UK Government has launched the Shared Prosperity Fund, allocating £126.5 million across the six councils. These funds will be invested in supporting communities, local businesses, and our fellow citizens to flourish in the coming years.

We take immense pride in representing our region and view our work leading Ambition North Wales as an integral part of a broader ecosystem. While promoting economic prosperity through job creation, attracting investment, and enhancing the overall value of our economy is pivotal, it represents just one part of our mission. A thriving economy relies on a healthy environment, which is why our commitment to sustainable development underpins our approach. We also firmly believe that everyone should benefit, which is why we are developing our region in an inclusive way while promoting our language, culture, heritage, and aligning with the well-being goals for Wales.

Our progress reflects the strength of North Wales as a region and the resilience of our Ambition North Wales partnership, which is a privilege to lead. We firmly believe in our ability to not only embrace opportunities but also navigate and overcome challenges and ensure the future well-being and sustainability of our society.



**Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn**  
Chair of the Economic  
Ambition Board



**Cllr. Mark Pritchard**  
Vice-Chair of the Economic  
Ambition Board



# Overcoming challenges and building momentum...

There have been some real positives over the past twelve months, with the Digital Signal Processing Centre at Bangor University, now operational for a full year, becoming our first innovative project to move into delivery. With this came the first new jobs created and additional investment attracted to North Wales because of our Growth Deal.

We also saw the approval of three Outline Business Cases (OBCs) – the Last Few % project, the Smart Local Energy project and the Enterprise Engineering and Optic Centre project, which also launched its main tender process in March.

Despite making good progress, my reflections would not be complete without recognising the challenges. The projects we are delivering are aimed at overcoming significant and sustained socio-economic disadvantages in North Wales. For this reason, they are not easy to deliver and we must accept that things will evolve and change, as will our plans in order to accommodate this.

To this end, two of our original projects have been withdrawn and another re-scoped to meet evolving economic conditions. These include the decision by Coleg Cambria and the Economic Ambition Board that the Llysfasi Net Zero Farm project should progress with an alternative funding source which closely aligns with the educational goals of the college.

In addition, the Bodelwyddan Key Strategic Site was withdrawn due to significant changes in planned development. Finally, a request to reduce the scope of Bangor University's Egri project was approved and will see it focus solely on a new development at Menai Science Park (M-SParc).

These changes released £37m and enabled us to establish a £7m Portfolio Delivery Fund to support our most mature projects to address cost inflation or viability issues and move into delivery. Also, to allocate £30m towards an open call for new projects, launched early 2023, to identify new ambitious, innovative, and transformational projects to join the Growth Deal portfolio. The ambition through these new projects remains unchanged – they will bring new high-value jobs and investment as well as deliver on our wider aspiration to build a vibrant, sustainable, and resilient economy for North Wales.

I am proud of my team, the partnership, and the momentum we are building. Together, we have a huge amount of passion for North Wales and seeing our region thrive in the future. I'm looking forward to being part of this journey over the next twelve months.



**Alwen Williams**

Portfolio Director



# WHY INVEST IN NORTH WALES?

Askar Sheibani, Chair of the Business Delivery Board believes in particular that North Wales is well placed to become a 'world leader' in renewable energy, with opportunities to develop tidal and marine renewable energy as well as generating green hydrogen.

"We have the natural resources to become a world leader in renewable energy, the manufacturing expertise to deliver innovative solutions, and the people and partnerships to drive change into the region. This vision for North Wales is achievable and within our reach."



**Askar Sheibani**  
Chair of the Business  
Delivery Board

North Wales has unlimited potential to offer a unique and rewarding proposition for investors. The region offers competitive costs, beautiful landscapes, skilled people and much more. Our people are resilient, results driven and loyal. We are large enough to make an impact but connected enough to be dynamic and adapt quickly to learn new skills for the future.

We have pride in our heritage, culture, language and the environment and are welcoming to people and opportunities. This, along with the continued investment in our economy, makes North Wales the ideal location to invest.

As a region we are well connected to Cheshire, Liverpool and Manchester and have great links to Ireland through Holyhead Port, the second busiest roll on roll off ferry port in the UK and part of the recently announced Anglesey Freeport, which will be one of two new freeports established in Wales.

We have significant expertise and a skilled workforce in low carbon energy technologies including offshore and onshore wind, nuclear and a developing tidal stream energy sector building on the Morlais tidal development zone in Holyhead.

We have excellent research and education facilities in the region including our two universities, two further education colleges and the AMRC Cyrmu facility in Broughton. Our strong network of anchor companies and skilled supply chains includes internationally renowned companies in the high value manufacturing sector as well as national leaders in the agrifood, tourism and digital sectors.

# 2022 - 23 MILESTONES

April 2022 - March 2023

## APRIL

Ambition North Wales were awarded £736k to upgrade connectivity at 28 public sector sites through the Local Broadband Fund.



## MAY

We hosted a stand for the first time at the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Denbighshire.

## JUNE

We sponsored the North Wales Startup category at the Wales Startup Awards held in Cardiff.



## JULY

The Digital Signal Processing Centre project became the first Growth Deal project to launch, ensuring that the region is at the Cutting-Edge of Digital Technology.



## AUGUST

Ambition North Wales relocated from the Conwy Business Centre to the Government Buildings at Sarn Mynach, Llandudno Junction.



## SEPTEMBER

The Regional Energy Strategy Action Plan was endorsed by the Economic Ambition Board.



## FEBRUARY

Ambition North Wales launched a call for new projects for the £30m Growth Deal Funding.



## MARCH

The Smart Local Energy project Outline Business Case was approved by Economic Ambition Board.



## JANUARY

The North Wales Skills and Employment Plan was launched at Venue Cymru. The plan brings together employment, recruitment and the skills needs of local employers, together with the skills that individuals need to achieve their potential.



## DECEMBER

Christmas Jumper Day - The Ambition North Wales team took part in the official 'Christmas Jumper Day' by wearing our favourite seasonal jumper and donating to Save the Children UK.



## NOVEMBER

We launched our carbon emissions and biodiversity methodology to address climate change within the region.



## OCTOBER

Ambition North Wales agreed to enter into a Joint Venture Agreement with Welsh Government for the delivery of the Parc Bryn Cegin project.





## QUARTER ONE HIGHLIGHTS



The Digital Skills Expo in full swing at M-Sparc, Gaerwen

### WE HOSTED A DIGITAL SKILLS NETWORKING EVENT

In collaboration with M-Sparc, we held an afternoon of networking between employers and graduates. The event addressed feedback received from employers in the region who stated that their biggest challenge was recruitment.

Following the event, graduates and young people were offered interviews with local employers.

### JOINED UP WITH CODE FIRST GIRLS, TO PROMOTE THE DIGITAL SECTOR

We joined forces with Code First Girls to provide free coding courses to women and non-binary people within the digital sector. Currently, only 19% of those who study computer science post-16 are female - the course aims to close the gender skills gap within this critical and growing sector.

### THE ENTERPRISE ENGINEERING AND OPTICS CENTRE OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE WAS APPROVED

The Outline Business Case (OBC) for the project secured approval to move to the next stage. The project will explore the use of alternative, lightweight materials, which will reduce carbon within the manufacturing sector.



An artist Impression of the EEOC building



Portfolio Director, Alwen Williams with Mr Urdd at the Eisteddfod

### WE ATTENDED EISTEDDFOD YR URDD

We hosted a stand at the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Denbighshire for the first time in May 2022. It was an excellent opportunity to meet young people, children and parents to discuss the Growth Deal, whilst putting the region on the map for visitors from across Wales and beyond.

### WE ATTENDED THE WALES START UP AWARDS

Anglesey-based business, Cufflink won the North Wales Start-Up award at the 2022 Start-Up Awards. As category sponsor for the second year, we were delighted to see a record-breaking number of entries from our region.

## QUARTER TWO HIGHLIGHTS

### WE SECURED GRANT FUNDING TO DELIVER LOCAL AREA ENERGY PLANS

The North Wales Regional Energy Strategy action plan was approved by the Economic Ambition Board, with the aim to decarbonise our energy systems and ensure that the region benefits from the transition. To support the delivery of the action plan, we secured grant funding from Welsh Government to recruit a team of three to lead on this work and to develop the plans.

### THE LAST FEW % OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE WAS APPROVED

July saw the approval of the Outline Business Case for the Last Few % project. The approval was a major milestone, bringing the project a step closer to providing a consistent connectivity quality across the region with superfast broadband (30 megabits per second).

### LAUNCH OF THE FIRST GROWTH DEAL PROJECT: THE DSP CENTRE, BANGOR UNIVERSITY

The First Minister, the Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford, MS, and the Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt. Hon. David TC Davies, MP, attended the launch of our first Growth Deal project.

The Digital Signal Processing Centre (DSP) at Bangor University aims to develop solutions to benefit businesses and residents with better communication capabilities, such as 5G and 6G. Providing North Wales businesses and communities with more cost-effective, secure, and efficient use of their applications.



The DSP Launch event



Morlais site

### MORLAIS SECURES ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

One of the turbine developers linked to a Growth Deal project, Cydnerth (Morlais), secured a guaranteed price for its electricity, making it the first tidal Wales-based project to secure a contract as part of the UK Government's Contract for Difference allocation.

As a result, the developer Magallanes Renovables will have guaranteed revenue from the electricity it generates at Morlais.



# NEW TEAM MEMBERS TO BOOST RENEWABLE ENERGY IN NORTH WALES

Three new members joined the team in January to lead the delivery of the North Wales Local and Regional Energy Plans, aiming to tackle climate change by promoting innovation in the industry in North Wales.

The team will work to develop the Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) which will support Local Authorities in North Wales by providing an overview of each county's low-carbon challenges and opportunities. In doing so, Local Authorities can use this information to decarbonise and meet the national net-zero targets.

Having successfully secured £350,000 from the Welsh Government to deliver on the Local Area Energy Plans, the team have already started developing these plans with an estimated completion date of December 2023.

Project Manager, Richard Jones-Abbas: "I'm proud to be part of a process which will see Wales become the first country in the world to have a National Strategy based on Local Area Energy Plans from all 22 counties.



The new team members: Richard Jones-Abbas, Rhianne Massin and Danial Ellis Evans.

We will aim to have our Local Area Energy Plans in place by the end of this year, then we will help to put them into practice to address the climate and biodiversity crisis"

Danial says: "The renewable energy industry in North Wales is developing at a significant pace - we have the potential to be a powerhouse within the sector worldwide, so it is an interesting time to be living and working here, and I'm thrilled that I've decided to move back".

Rhianne says: "This job has given me the opportunity to begin my career in the renewable energy and sustainability sector. It's a fantastic opportunity and the work that Ambition North Wales is doing is very inspiring. I can't wait to get started."

# QUARTER THREE HIGHLIGHTS

## WE LAUNCHED A METHODOLOGY TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

We launched our carbon emissions and biodiversity methodology to address climate change within the region, which follows our commitment that all Growth Deal projects will aim to:

- operate at net zero,
- achieve a 10% increase in biodiversity
- reduce carbon emissions by at least 40%

The methodology, developed with Arup, will guide Growth Deal projects as they work towards these ambitious targets.

## ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR GROWTH DEAL PROJECTS

Four existing Growth Deal projects received an allocation from a £7m Portfolio Deliver Fund. The fund was developed to support mature projects within the portfolio, dealing with cost inflation or viability issues to move into delivery.

## JOINT VENTURE APPROACH FOR PARC BRYN CEGIN

The Economic Ambition Board endorsed a joint venture approach with Welsh Government for the proposed delivery of up to 3,000m2 of advanced build employment units at Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor. The site will be provide business relocation and expansion opportunities.

## WE ATTENDED THE GO NORTH WALES TOURISM AWARDS

We sponsored the new "Go Skills Award" at the Go North Wales Tourism Awards. This award recognised the contribution businesses have made to improving skills in the tourism and hospitality sector.

The winner of the award was Wales Ambassador.



The winner of the award Go Skill Awards: Wales Ambassador



Kirrie, Digital Connectivity Project Manager with the connectivity survey gear



Cath, Digital Project Officer with the connectivity survey gear

## ADDRESSING MOBILE CONNECTIVITY CHALLENGES

Ambition North Wales conducted a mobile connectivity survey on the quality of 4G connectivity across the region to identify which areas in North Wales currently lack coverage.

The results established which areas require investment for better mobile connectivity across the region's main transport networks.



# THE NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL PORTFOLIO

As the Growth Deal's portfolio of projects was to be delivered over 15 years, change was always expected.

Over the year, we have seen the withdrawal of two projects and a change request for one project, which resulted in an unallocated fund of £37m.

The decision by Coleg Cambria and the Economic Ambition Board that the Llysfasi Net Zero Farm project will no longer be funded through the Growth Deal but will progress with funding from other sources such as the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning fund, which closely aligns with the educational goals of the college.

The Economic Ambition Board decided to withdraw the Bodelwyddan Key Strategic Site from the Growth Deal following the Denbighshire County Council's review of the Local Development Plan and due to significant changes in the expected size of the project and the timescales for delivery.

A change request for the Egni project was approved to withdraw Phase 2 from the Growth Deal but continue with Phase 1 as the project's sole focus.

The Economic Ambition Board made some key decisions regarding the reallocation of funding within the Deal.

Firstly the establishment of a £7m Portfolio Delivery Fund for 2023-24 to support mature projects within the portfolio dealing with cost inflation or viability issues to move into delivery.

Secondly, the Board agreed on the criteria and an allocation of £30m capital funding for a project replacement process. The Growth Deal Funding process launched in early 2023, providing an exciting opportunity to identify new ambitious, innovative and transformational projects to join the Growth Deal and to deliver jobs and investment in the region. 26 applications were received, and the assessment process is underway, selecting projects that can drive economic growth, create jobs and attract investment to the region as well as delivering on our wider aspiration to build a vibrant, sustainable and resilient economy for North Wales.



## QUARTER FOUR HIGHLIGHTS

### LAUNCH OF TENDER FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE ENTERPRISE ENGINEERING AND OPTICS CENTRE

The project published a £8.35 million tender opportunity to design and construct the new centre that will support manufacturing businesses in the region to decarbonise.

Businesses can use the facilities to test materials within a controlled environment, providing more efficient products and systems requiring less energy, which will minimise costs and carbon emissions. Additionally, the project will create local job and training opportunities and attract investment.



The Skills and Employment launch event

### LAUNCH OF THE GROWTH DEAL FUNDING

We launched an application process for up to £30 million capital funding towards ambitious, innovative projects to join the Growth Deal portfolio.

Over 25 applications were received, and are currently going through the assessment process. The funding will support projects that have the potential to drive economic growth and create jobs in the region.

### NORTH WALES SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PLAN LAUNCH EVENT

The Skills and Employment Plan provides an insight into the supply and demand of the skills system in the region and what employers' priorities are.

More than 160 employers attended the launch to hear inspirational talks and specialist panel discussions about the plan.

NORTH WALES  
SKILLS AND  
EMPLOYMENT  
PLAN

2023-2025

Plasmaferth Region Wreiddol  
Cyngor Cymru  
North Wales  
Regional Skills Partnership



### SMART LOCAL ENERGY PROJECT OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE APPROVED

The Economic Ambition Board approved the Smart Local Energy Outline Business Case (OBC). The project aims to support energy projects across North Wales to achieve renewable energy and decarbonisation targets, which will have an element of local ownership.



Construction on the Morlais site

### PROGRESS WITH MORLAIS

Construction started on the Morlais project, the road excavations are complete and ducting and cabling are well underway. 97% of the staff employed, live in North Wales, with 68% being Welsh speakers. The Growth Deal investment will remove barriers to the future expansion of the Morlais project.



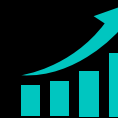
# ONE YEAR ON

## The Digital Signal Processing (DSP) Centre

In early 2023, Bangor University's DSP Centre project entered its second year of delivery. Since its launch, the project has progressed to achieving academic and professional recognition in publications such as the Institute of Engineering Technology and more. In its first year, the DSP Centre achieved the following:



**CREATED SIX  
SUSTAINABLE,  
HIGH-VALUE JOBS**



**GENERATED AN  
ADDITIONAL  
£614,095 GVA**



**SECURED £4.6  
MILLION IN  
ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

Professor Paul Spencer, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research said, “The investment by the North Wales Growth Deal has assisted the DSP Centre’s ability to engage with regional and international commercial partners and these collaborations have identified new opportunities for the region.”

Professor Jianming Tang, Head of the DSP Centre said, “The equipment funded by the Growth Deal will enable the Centre to expand its world leading research and continue to provide novel, cutting edge digital technologies to stimulate the regional economy.”



# THE NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL

funded by:





# OVERVIEW OF THE GROWTH DEAL

- To build a more vibrant, sustainable and resilient economy in North Wales.
- To build on our strengths, to boost productivity while tackling long-term challenges and economic barriers to deliver inclusive growth.
- To promote growth in a scalable, inclusive and sustainable way, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

## INVESTMENT

Growth Deal Target Investment:

**£240m**

Total Target Investment:  
over

**£1bn**

## SPENDING OBJECTIVES

Create up to

**4,200**

new jobs

Generate up to

**£2.4bn**

net additional GVA

## OUR PROGRAMMES



Agri-food and  
Tourism



Digital  
Connectivity



Innovation in High  
Value Manufacturing



Land and  
Property



Low Carbon  
Energy



# Agri-food and Tourism

## Programme Overview and Progress

The programme aims to promote and support employment and training in the Agri-food and Tourism sectors, building on world-leading skills and expertise already established within the region.

### Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub









**Lead Sponsor: Grŵp Llandrillo Menai**

A distinctive, world class rural economy hub offering food-grade facilities and knowledge transfer services to enhance the food and drink sector.

### Tourism Talent Network

**Lead Sponsor: Grŵp Llandrillo Menai**

Future-proof tourism and hospitality skills provision and increase the commercial benefits from one of the best established and fastest growing sectors in the region.

	Stage 1 Determine the project context	Stage 2 Prepare the Strategic Outline Case	Stage 3 Preparing the Outline Business Case	Stage 4 Approval of the Outline Business Case	Stage 5 Preparing the Full Business Case	Stage 6 Approval of the Full Business Case	Stage 7 Project Implementation and Monitoring	Stage 8 Project Evaluation
Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub	Complete 	Complete 	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 			
Tourism Talent Network	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					







# Digital Connectivity

## Programme Overview and Progress

Addressing connectivity challenges within the region, enhancing the capability to develop new technologies for the future ensuring that businesses and residents can benefit from fast, high-quality connectivity.

### Connected Campuses

**Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales**

Establishing network coverage at key commercial sites in the region, supporting businesses with valuable connectivity options.

### Connected Key Sites and Corridors

**Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales**

Enhancing the reliability and quality of mobile services on the main roads and rail routes, enabling full-fibre services to key commercial sites across the region.

### The Digital Signal Processing Centre

**Lead Sponsor: Bangor University**

Research and development of new technologies which improve how data is processed efficiently and reliably between devices and people.

### The Last Few %

**Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales**

Providing a minimum 'superfast' (30Mbps) broadband to poorly connected communities across North Wales.

	Stage 1 Determine the project context	Stage 2 Prepare the Strategic Outline Case	Stage 3 Preparing the Outline Business Case	Stage 4 Approval of the Outline Business Case	Stage 5 Preparing the Full Business Case	Stage 6 Approval of the Full Business Case	Stage 7 Project Implementation and Monitoring	Stage 8 Project Evaluation
Connected Campuses	Complete	In progress						
Connected Key Sites and Corridors	Complete	In progress						
Digital Signal Processing Centre	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	In progress	
Last Few %	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete	In progress			



# Innovation in High Value Manufacturing

## Programme Overview and Progress

Promote innovation and commercialisation of technology in the manufacturing industry, building on the existing strength of the sector within our region.

### Centre for Environmental Biotechnology









#### Lead Sponsor: Bangor University

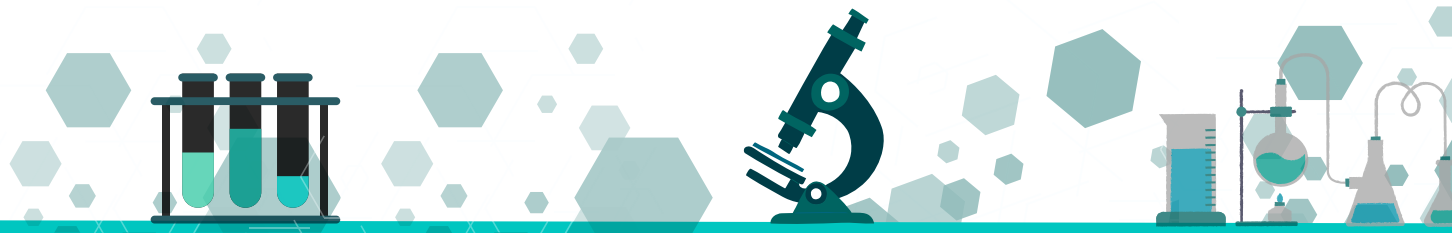
Exploring the use of biological processes as low carbon alternatives to products and industrial manufacturing processes

### Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre

#### Lead Sponsor: Glyndŵr University

Delivering state-of-the-art facilities to explore optics, photonics and composite materials as a lightweight material alternative, reducing carbon within the sector.

	Stage 1 Determine the project context	Stage 2 Prepare the Strategic Outline Case	Stage 3 Preparing the Outline Business Case	Stage 4 Approval of the Outline Business Case	Stage 5 Preparing the Full Business Case	Stage 6 Approval of the Full Business Case	Stage 7 Project Implementation and Monitoring	Stage 8 Project Evaluation
Centre for Environmental Biotechnology	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					
Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre	Complete 	Complete 	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 			







# Land and Property

## Programme Overview and Progress

Addressing land and property challenges within the region, to unlock opportunities and build on our strengths. The programme will develop sites to provide residential and employment premises. It will also maximise capacity at key transport links.

### Former North Wales Hospital

**Lead Sponsor: Jones Bros Civil Engineering UK**

Develop and clean the site for residential development and for businesses to relocate or expand.

### Holyhead Gateway

**Lead Sponsor: Stenaline**

Improve the port's capacity and facilities, creating a berth for energy projects and general freight

### Parc Bryn Cegin

**Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales**

Develop land for new build employment premises suitable for relocation opportunities.

### Warren Hall, Broughton














**Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales and the Welsh Government**

Providing critical services to the site for business reallocation, expansion, or attracting new businesses.

### Western Gateway, Wrexham

**Lead Sponsor: Ambition North Wales**

Providing critical services to the site for business reallocation, expansion, or attracting new businesses.

	Stage 1 Determine the project context	Stage 2 Prepare the Strategic Outline Case	Stage 3 Preparing the Outline Business Case	Stage 4 Approval of the Outline Business Case	Stage 5 Preparing the Full Business Case	Stage 6 Approval of the Full Business Case	Stage 7 Project Implementation and Monitoring	Stage 8 Project Evaluation
Former North Wales Hospital	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					
Holyhead Gateway	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					
Parc Bryn Cegin	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					
Warren Hall, Broughton	Complete 	In progress 						
Western Gateway, Wrexham	Complete 	In progress 						



# Low Carbon Energy

## Programme Overview and Progress

Unlocking the benefits of developing low carbon energy projects within the region, positioning North Wales as a leading location for the low carbon energy sector.

### Cydnerth (Morlais)

**Lead Sponsor:** Menter Môn

Develop additional grid connections for tidal energy suppliers to deploy more turbines within the zone.

### Egni

**Lead Sponsor:** Bangor University

Developing a Centre of Excellence, enhancing research, design and innovation in low carbon energy.

### Hydrogen Hub

**Lead Sponsor:** Ambition North Wales

Kick-start the region's hydrogen economy by supporting and delivering a hydrogen hub.

### Smart Local Energy

















**Lead Sponsor:** Ambition North Wales

Support projects to achieve renewable energy, decarbonisation and have local ownership.

### Trawsfynydd

**Lead Sponsor:** Cwmni Egin (Welsh Government)

Deploy Small or Advanced Modular Reactors at the site to generate low carbon energy.

	Stage 1 Determine the project context	Stage 2 Prepare the Strategic Outline Case	Stage 3 Preparing the Outline Business Case	Stage 4 Approval of the Outline Business Case	Stage 5 Preparing the Full Business Case	Stage 6 Approval of the Full Business Case	Stage 7 Project Implementation and Monitoring	Stage 8 Project Evaluation
Cydnerth	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					
Trawsfynydd	Complete 	In progress 						
Egni	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					
Smart Local Energy	Complete 	Complete 	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 			
Hydrogen Hub	Complete 	Complete 	In progress 					



An aerial photograph of a multi-lane highway winding through a lush green landscape. The road is flanked by fields and trees, with distant mountains visible on the horizon. A large, semi-transparent teal and blue diagonal graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image. The text 'SKILLS AND TRANSPORT' is centered in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font.

# SKILLS AND TRANSPORT

# OVERVIEW BY THE NORTH WALES REGIONAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP (RSP):

Over the last 12 months, the focus has been on consulting on and publishing our new Skills and Employability Plan for 2023-25. We talked to over 400 regional employers to understand their skills, needs, and challenges. We held focus groups and workshops with our stakeholders to set the vision and priorities for the region over the next three years.

The new plan will focus on:

- Helping employers understand the potential of employees in the region today and in the future;
- Help individuals to understand employment opportunities available to them in the region;
- Inform and improve decision-making at a policy level;
- Facilitate collaboration and partnership working between the key stakeholders.

## HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS:

### Net Zero Skills

A steering group has been created, which is made up of low carbon energy developers, RWE, BP, Morlais, Magnox and Cwmni Eginio, to understand the specialist skills, upskilling and reskilling requirements of the workforce, as well as to identify the transferable and common skills that arise across projects and technologies. We are also working closely with training providers to highlight the breadth of educational and training facilities available in the region to support new and existing employers across the low-carbon energy industry, including their supply chain.

### Skills Requirement of Growth Deal Projects

Alongside Ambition North Wales, the RSP has been working to develop a standardised way to identify skills gaps and challenges associated with Growth Deal projects to ensure we, as a region, can maximise opportunities. Work is ongoing, and the coordination of skills will play a critical role in the delivery of Growth Deal projects.

### Digital Skills Matching Event

In collaboration with M-SParc, the Regional Skills Partnership successfully hosted a Digital Skills Event in June, with over 120 people attending. The area of focus was to:

- Gain intelligence from employers on their skills, needs, and solutions;
- Match graduates/ young people/ economically inactive people with employers in the region who are looking to recruit;
- Advise employers who are struggling to attract and retain people into the industry through an inspirational talk from Google on their talent and skills pipeline strategy.



## **Young Person's Guarantee Desktop Research and Report**

We consulted with programmes, projects and stakeholders across the region to better understand the current landscape of offer/support available in terms of the current education, employment, training and well-being support/provision available for young people (16-24 years old) locally and regionally as part of the desktop research for the Young Person's Guarantee. A report was submitted to Welsh Government highlighting the regional gaps in provision/support and identifying the regional priorities for the future.

## **National Occupational Standards (NOS)**

We have reviewed the NOS focusing on occupational trends/changes, identifying emerging occupations in decline and priority across our priority sectors. This review helps to ensure that standards remain relevant and up to date in a rapidly changing work environment.

## **Covid-19 Larbhour Market Insights report summary**

The RSP completed and presented the last iteration of the Covid-19 LMI report to the Welsh Government in April. This final summary report is based on research conducted over the pandemic period. The RSP also presented three key skills challenges for the region to Minister.

## **Career Pathways and working with schools and educational partners**

We worked closely with GwE the educational consortia in North Wales to align the new curriculum with the needs of employers. Discussions have also occurred with Headteachers to share labour market intelligence and showcase opportunities and breadth of careers available for young people. Outcomes of the discussions and collaboration have resulted in joint working between the Regional Skills Partnership, Careers Wales, GwE and Schools to get a shared communication plan on how to target young people in schools from Year 7 onwards with information about career pathways, including promoting apprenticeships.

## **Personal Learning Account (PLA) Qualification Review**

The Regional Skills Partnership has been working with both FE colleges, Welsh Government and employers to undertake a qualification review of the PLA offer in the region. Ensuring that qualifications offered through the PLA meet industry requirements is crucial, and the Regional Skills Partnership have contributed robust labour market intelligence and industry views on the current offer.

## **Qualification Wales Reviews**

We have supported a broad range of sector reviews undertaken by Qualifications Wales – including those focused on Construction and the Built Environment, Engineering, Digital and Advanced Manufacturing, as well as Travel, Tourism, Hospitality and Catering. That work has helped us become informed advocates for developing new and refreshed National Occupational Standards, capable of being the building blocks for sector-focused vocational qualifications. Focus now is to work with Qualifications Wales through their sector reviews and help with the implementation processes – influencing Colegau Cymru, NTfW and training providers to ensure that practitioners are suitably skilled to deliver against new requirements, as well as engaging with 'Qualified for the Future' to reshape the qualifications landscape and utilise priority sector cluster groups through the new Curriculum for Wales.

# REGIONAL SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PLAN

The North Wales Skills and Employment Plan 2023-2025 brings together an overview of the employment, recruitment and skills needs of local businesses and employers, together with the skills that individuals need to achieve their potential. In order to provide these skills for local businesses and local residents, the complex employment and skills landscape needs to be 'decluttered', co-ordinated effectively across the region for employers, training providers and funders to work collaboratively.

The three-year Skills and Employment Plan has been developed by the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP), in collaboration with businesses and employers across the region, underpinned by a comprehensive review of relevant intelligence and data sources, set in the wider strategic and policy context, along with the current broader economic and labour market context and skills landscape.

The plan seeks to highlight the direction of travel of the skills needs of employers across our sectors. It spells out some of the challenges faced by employers, residents, sectors and training providers. It highlights opportunities to build on the existing co-ordination of employment and skills work in the region. Building on these opportunities and overcoming the challenges faced will require co-operation.

The vision is that North Wales is a region where the people, and specifically their skills and abilities, are a key driver of economic development and well-being. Employers in the region are thriving, developing and growing because of the skills of the local population. Businesses want to move into the region because of the skills of the local population. At the same time, residents can achieve their ambitions and maximise their potential within North Wales.



# TRANSPORT

- The North Wales Transport Commission was established in Spring 2022 to assess the problems, opportunities, challenges and objectives for realising a sustainable integrated and multi-modal transport system in North Wales. A Progress Statement was published in January 2023 and summarises the work to date and explores the potential solutions and opportunities. In the coming months, talks will continue with stakeholders to refine the proposed recommendations, with the final report due to be published in the Summer.
- The Roads Review Panel, an independent panel appointed by the Welsh Government to review road schemes that are under development, issued their recommendations in “The Future of Road Investment in Wales” document in February 2023. The final report will mark the end of the Roads Review Panel’s work and will assist the Ministers in deciding which schemes to take forward, modify or cease to support.
- Growth Track 360 held a Parliamentary Reception at the Palace of Westminster in February, providing all North Wales MPs and relevant stakeholders, with the opportunity to hear about the GT360 Prospectus 2.0, which will be launched later in 2023 and replaces the original prospectus issued in 2016. Since the original prospectus, climate change has become more pressing, and Transport for Wales and Network Rail have progressed studies which enable more specific, phased and investable schemes in the short to medium term which will require capital finance.
- A regional response was submitted to the Welsh Government’s white paper consultation “One Network, One timetable, One Ticket: Planning Buses as a Public Services for Wales”. This consultation was a key step towards creating a new model for running buses in Wales and an opportunity to look at what Wales needs from its public transport service and will be integral to the successful delivery of public transport for the future . A summary document of the responses was published in December 2022.
- In May 2021 the Government announced its plans for the biggest reform to the railway in three decades. The Great British Railway Transition Team (GBRTT) launched its “call for evidence” between December 2021 and February 2022 - where we submitted a regional response to help inform the development of a long-term strategy for railway, setting the strategic context and key priorities for the sector. The “Whole Industry Strategic Plan” was published in June 2022.
- Work continues to support the phased implementation of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, particularly around Strategic Transport Functions.





# GOVERNANCE

# GOVERNANCE OVERVIEW

Local authority partners established the Economic Ambition Board as a joint committee in 2019, and is the decision-making body for the North Wales Growth Deal, as well as leading regional economic collaboration.

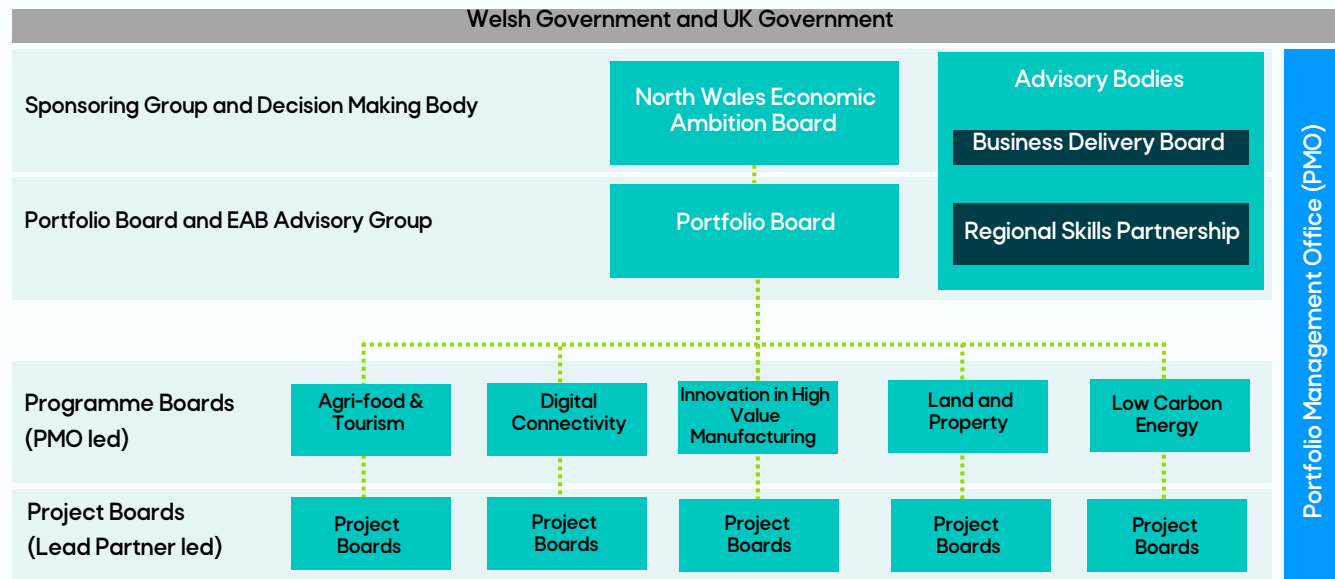
Having secured the Growth Deal in December 2020, the partners entered 'Governance Agreement 2'. This agreement, a legally binding document, defines the role and function of the Economic Ambition Board and its use of delegated powers. It also outlines the decision-making structures and democratic accountability.

The Growth Deal's governance arrangements enable decisions to be made openly and transparently for the benefit of the whole of the region. While the Economic Ambition Board acts as the decision-making body for the Growth Deal, there are strong formal and informal links to the Welsh and UK Governments as funders of the Deal.

The Economic Ambition Board has adopted a delivery model based on a best-practice approach to portfolio, programme and project management. This approach is an integrated way of meeting an organisation's ambition, driving better decisions and increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Reporting	Scrutiny Arrangements
The Portfolio Management Office produce quarterly progress reports and an annual report on the Growth Deal which are shared with the Welsh Government and UK Government, the Economic Ambition Board and its partners. These reports are publicly available on our website.	Scrutiny of the North Wales Growth Deal is provided by the six local authorities through the existing Scrutiny Committee arrangements. The Scrutiny Committees consider the quarterly and annual reports produced by the Portfolio Management Office.

## GROWTH DEAL PROJECT DELIVERY STRUCTURE



# THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS

By the Portfolio Director, Alwen Williams

Over the next twelve months, our focus, alongside our partners, remains firmly on driving our projects forward to deliver the new jobs and investment required to support future prosperity for North Wales.

In July, our board will select new projects to come into the North Wales Growth Deal. This is an exciting milestone and will ensure that unallocated capital as a result of some projects not moving forward, will be reallocated and invested in new projects.

In terms of our current portfolio, we always knew that our projects would take time to mature and be delivered, this is something that is signified by the fifteen-year term of the Growth Deal, however, we have some exciting milestones to accomplish next year including:

- Securing a sponsor to work in partnership to develop a Green Hydrogen Hub for North Wales. This will be an organisation or consortium of organisations that will design and deliver the project for which up to £11.2m of Growth deal funding will be invested into helping fossil fuel powered organisations become low carbon hydrogen customers.
- Launching our Smart Local Energy fund. The aim of the project is to create prosperity in North Wales by supporting and enabling clean energy and decarbonisation solutions. This will be delivered by targeting investments in clean energy solutions that create new local job opportunities, will attract local investment, and can be replicated throughout North Wales.
- Starting construction on the Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre. This is a project led by Wrexham University to deliver state-of-the-art facilities to explore optics, photonics, and composite materials as a lightweight material alternative, which will reduce carbon within the manufacturing sector.

- Starting construction on the Centre for Environmental Biotechnology, a project led by Bangor University to develop an enhanced research facility to explore the use of biological processes, such as unique enzymes, as low carbon alternatives to products and industrial manufacturing processes.
- Starting construction on the first Tourism Talent Network “spokes”, the first part of a collaborative project being delivered by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and leading regional tourism businesses that seeks to transform the tourism and hospitality sector in the region by future-proofing sector skills provision
- Investing in the second phase of development with the Digital Signal Processing Centre at Bangor University. This was the first of the Growth Deal projects to secure investment from the Growth Deal and we look forward to further enhancing the centre’s facilities in the coming year.
- Reaching an investment decision for our Last Few % digital infrastructure project which addresses the so called ‘digital divide’ (the difference in connectivity quality between towns and rural communities) and consider how we provide the right infrastructure to allow everyone in North Wales to enjoy affordable superfast connectivity (at least 30 megabits per second).
- Driving towards a net-zero future is an underpinning principle for the Growth Deal. We are embedding our approach to sustainable development through carbon reduction and biodiversity and ensuring that we really deliver against the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act as we move forward.
- Completion of our Local Broadband Fund project funded by the Welsh Government. The project aims to deliver gigabit connectivity to 18 public sector sites including libraries, community councils and offices.

At a personal level I am immensely proud of ‘Team North Wales’, which extends across our Ambition North Wales partnership and beyond, and I look forward with confidence at the year ahead.



# OUR PARTNERS



## £240M OF GROWTH DEAL FUNDING BY

