



Complete Agenda

Democracy Service
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Meeting

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time

10.30 am, THURSDAY, 21ST MARCH, 2024

(NOTE: A BRIEFING SESSION WILL BE HELD FOR MEMBERS AT 10.15AM)

Location

Hybrid - Siambr Hywel Dda, Council Offices, Caernarfon LL55 1SH and Virtually on Zoom

*** NOTE**

This meeting will be webcast

https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en_GB/portal/home

Contact Point

Eirian Roberts

01286 679018

eirianroberts3@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

(DISTRIBUTED 13/03/24)

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (12)

Councillors

Jina Gwyrfai
Dawn Lynne Jones
Gareth Tudor Jones
Gwynfor Owen
Huw Rowlands
Rhys Tudur

Iwan Huws
Dewi Jones
Olaf Cai Larsen
Llio Elenid Owen
Paul John Rowlinson
Sasha Williams

Independent (6)

Councillors

Elwyn Jones
Beth Lawton
John Pughe Roberts

Gwilym Jones
Dewi Owen
Richard Glyn Roberts

Ex-officio Members

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

With a vote on education matters only

[vacant seat]	Church in Wales
Colette Owen	The Catholic Church
[vacant seat]	Meirionnydd Parent/Governors Representative
Karen Vaughan Jones	Dwyfor Parent/Governors' Representative
Manon Williams	Arfon Parent/Governors' Representative

Without a Vote

Elise Poulter	NEU
Gwilym Jones	NASUWT

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chair for consideration.

4. MINUTES

5 - 24

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 25th January, 2024 be signed as a true record.

5. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL - QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 25 - 55

Cabinet Member – Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn

To consider a report on the above.

6. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GWYNEDD CATEGORY 3 SECONDARY SCHOOLS SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION 56 - 63

Cabinet Member – Councillor Beca Brown

To consider a report on the above.

7. FREE SCHOOL MEALS

64 - 71

Cabinet Member – Councillor Beca Brown

To consider a report on the above.

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 25/01/24

Attendance:

Councillors: Councillor Elwyn Jones (Chair)
Councillor Paul Rowlinson (Vice-chair)

Councillors:- Jina Gwyrfai, Iwan Huws, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Gwilym Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, John Pughe Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts and Huw Llwyd Rowlands.

Co-opted Members: Manon Williams (Parent/Governor Representative for Arfon) and Elise Poulter (NEU).

Officers present: Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 5:- Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader), Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department) and Dylan Griffiths (Economic Development Manager / North Wales Shared Prosperity Fund Manager).

Present for item 6:- Councillor Menna Trenholme (Cabinet Member for Corporate Support), Eurig Huw Williams (Human Resources Advisory Services Manager) and Delyth Gadlys Williams (Equality Advisor).

Present for item 7A:- Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education Department), Gwyn Tudur (Assistant Head: Secondary), Rhys Glyn (Head of Gwynedd Immersion Education System), Debbie Anne Jones (Assistant Head: Corporate Services) and Ffion Edwards Ellis (Assistant Head: Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion).

Present for item 7B:- Arwyn Thomas (Managing Director, GwE), Euros Davies (Senior Regional Leader - Primary and Special Schools) and Ellen Williams (Core Lead - Secondary).

Present for item 8:- Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education Department), Gwyn Tudur (Assistant Head: Secondary), Rhys Glyn (Head of Gwynedd Immersion Education System) and Debbie Anne Jones (Assistant Head: Corporate Services).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Rhys Tudur, Colette Owen (The Catholic Church), Gwilym Jones (NASUWT), Councillor Nia Jeffreys (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Operational Economy Matters) and Councillor Beca Brown (Cabinet Member for Education).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 9 November 2023 as a true record.

5. GWYNEDD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Leader and officers from the Economy and Community Department were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted - the report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy Operational Matters invited the committee to scrutinise:-

- The contents of the project under the '*Prosperous Gwynedd*' priority area in the Council Plan, which aimed to create the best possible circumstances for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work; and
- The progress of the Economy and Community Department in implementing the project to trigger growth in Gwynedd's economy.

The Leader set the context and the Head of Economy and Community Department outlined the content of the report and the Economic Development Manager / North Wales Shared Prosperity Fund Manager elaborated on the specific steps in terms of support for businesses.

Since the time of writing the report, it was noted:-

- That the process of selecting projects that would receive funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund had ended, and that over £3m would be distributed to businesses.
- This was far below the 185 applications worth £10m that had been received, and should the Council have more time and resources, then many more could certainly have been supported.
- That the £1m available through the Arfor programme had been distributed to 20 businesses and, once again, the demand was much higher than the resources available.

Members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and submit observations.

It was noted that the UK Government's method of distributing funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund was very defective. Specific reference was made to the lack of regional and national projects, the lack of strategy on a level higher than county level, the urgency to spend substantial funding in a short period of time which meant prioritising projects that could be realised quickly and the great uncertainty regarding what would happen after April 2025. In response, it was noted that some things were better provided on a national level, some on a regional level, some on a county level and some on an even more local level, but that no model was ideal. There was a need to plan on which level allocations and decisions should be made, but there had been no opportunity to do so in this case due to the timetable.

It was enquired whether some proposals were funded in their entirety and the rest were being refused, or whether there was an element of partially funding some schemes. In response, it was noted that it had been decided not to fund some proposals in their entirety to be able to support more businesses, and that all of the partially funded businesses had confirmed that it was possible for them to deliver their project within the timetable with less funding.

It was asked whether the cost to the fund of employing additional officers to administrate the scheme included redundancy costs? A request was also made for information about the background of those officers and what would they be likely to do after the scheme ended as it would be beneficial to keep the expertise within the Council or within the region. In response, it was noted:-

- That the cost of additional staff to administrate the scheme was an eligible cost of the grant, therefore, Cyngor Gwynedd did not pay for those staff.
- That the small number of staff employed to run the projects in Gwynedd was a combination of people with previous background in the field and new young people in the field, and that the larger team across North Wales included a number of secondments from among senior officers from Gwynedd and other counties, along with former officers with a background of managing large funds, and European funding specifically.
- The team, from a grant administrating aspect, had to be grown due to the need to process so many projects in a relatively short period and once again in this case, it was managed to give young people an opportunity to obtain experience in the field.

It was enquired how confident the officers were that it was possible for funded projects to be spent against the timetable. In response, it was noted that it could be confident that it would be possible to spend the funding as a project maturity and implementation ability assessment criteria had been built into the process. Nevertheless, should there be concern that a project was not delivering, there would be an opportunity to recycle the funding.

It was noted that the Department was to be congratulated for coordinating all grants across North and West Wales, but as no strategic direction had been provided by the UK or Welsh Governments, it was important to prioritise the preparation of a strategy for the benefit of Gwynedd. In response, it was noted:-

- It was fully agreed with the observation, but it had not been possible to complete the work of preparing a Gwynedd Economy Plan due to the additional requirements on the Service to manage and administrate the funding programmes.
- Now that the decision-making work in terms of allocating the funding had been completed, the work of preparing the plan would soon begin and it was important that lessons from the experience of current arrangements were learnt and that the priorities for Gwynedd were clear for the future.

It was asked whether there was a risk that the Holyhead Freeport could have a negative influence on the Gwynedd economy. In response, it was noted:-

- That this question had been asked and that assurance had been given by officers that the Holyhead Freeport would not lead to any '*displacement*'. Nevertheless, no evidence had been seen so far of how this could be managed and it was greatly hoped that there would be a discussion on a regional level soon.
- It was understood that the process of preparing the business plan for the Freeport was still ongoing and it was not yet clear what impact it would have on the region.
- Details were not available either regarding which benefits or which detrimental impact the new Economic Investment Zone in the East would have on the rest of the region, and the situation would have to be monitored.
- There was concern about any potential impact the Freeport would have on some specific areas such as Bangor, due to the tax advantages offered to businesses being set-up in the Freeport area. It had been promised that guidelines would be in place which meant that this would not happen, but Gwynedd had not been part of any discussions about this or had not seen a plan. Once plans would be available, the officers would be eager to scrutinise them and to see how collaboration could take place.

It was enquired what plans would there be to try to attract major employers to Gwynedd as a result of drawing up a Gwynedd Economy Plan as there was concern that any major businesses that imported / exported goods would select Anglesey and businesses transporting goods within British borders would select Flint / Wrexham. Whilst accepting that Gwynedd could not offer tax advantages etc. to such businesses, it was asked what other support Gwynedd could offer those companies. In response, it was noted:-

- That major companies were unwilling to locate in marginal areas such as Gwynedd, which was far from the market with less workforce and higher transport costs, without an incentive for them to do so.
- That there was an incentive for companies to locate in the Freeport area, e.g. funding to construct units and taxation relief, but this would not happen in Gwynedd.
- That these were the type of questions to raise when preparing the Economy Plan as it was not anticipated that Cyngor Gwynedd resources could help.

Concern was expressed that the Parc Bryn Cegin site in Bangor had been empty for over two decades and, although the local member of parliament was doing a lot of work on this, it was noted that things were not progressing. It was also asked where the new businesses units would be located. In response, it was noted:-

- That the new units would be located in Minffordd and provide for the whole county centrally.
- That there was also demand in other areas and it was awaited to see what the private sector market would provide itself in some areas.
- That there was a shortage of industrial sites in Gwynedd and sites would need to be purchased despite the fact that Parc Bryn Cegin, which was in Welsh Government ownership, was empty.
- That the joint Local Development Plan with Anglesey showed that there was sufficient industrial land within the plan area, but those lands were on Anglesey, and it was hoped that it would be possible to examine this as part of the Plan review with the aim of having more land and property provision in Gwynedd.

It was noted that Gwynedd was one of the poorest counties in Britain and was very reliant on the Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Funds. In response, it was noted:-

- It was believed that Gwynedd's economy was overdependent on the tourism industry and there was a need to generate more local benefit from it.
- That rural Wales had a serious depopulation problem and an economic plan was needed for the rural areas of Wales.
- That there was a need to create a much easier environment to construct small or smaller units as there was demand for them. It was believed that there were opportunities for substantial investment across the countryside and we needed to look much more carefully at our development plans to facilitate this.
- It was not believed that the current Government understood the rural situation and that it was easier to see economic progress in urban areas with economic enthusiasm.
- That very good and extremely successful businesses existed in Gwynedd that offered good employment to workers and that companies chose Gwynedd as the staff were stable and loyal.
- There was a need to recognise that there was a thriving economic foundation across Gwynedd and that this foundation meant that we were not open to substantial economic changes.

- That opportunities for extension needed to be created for the small businesses we had in Gwynedd and that investment on a regional and national level was needed, along with a national plan for rural Wales.

It was emphasised that it was important that Gwynedd electors understood that the Council had not created all of the uncertainty regarding the future of resources to support the local economy, and that the UK Government was responsible for the situation, and this in order to gain electoral advantage.

It was noted that it was important that people understood that Cyngor Gwynedd had not caused the financial crisis, and that the Westminster Government was to blame for providing less money to us every year.

It was noted that some applicants who had been unsuccessful for grants felt that all their work on the applications had been in vain and it was enquired how it could be explained to those people that Cyngor Gwynedd was not to blame for this, and that the work completed by them would be important for other projects in future. In response, it was noted:-

- It was hoped, in every case, with the exception of completing the form, that the work would not be in vain.
- It was hoped that the officers would see everyone who had been unsuccessful with their grant applications to see if there were different ways of funding the schemes. Also, the Service would refer an officer from Business Wales to the applicants, certainly therefore in terms of the larger grant applications to see if there was a different way of supporting the business to deliver the project.
- That more grants would certainly come along in future although the details were not yet known, and everyone was advised to continue working on the details of their projects so that they were as mature as possible when another opportunity would arise for a grant.
- Members were asked to pass on information to the Service about any projects that were concerned about their situation so that officers could contact them.

It was asked whether it was understood why Gwynedd's economic inactivity and unemployment rates fluctuated more than in several other places. In response, it was noted:-

- That much of the data generated was based on surveys and samples, and the smaller the size of the geographical area, then the less certain the size of the sample.
- That there was a need to exercise caution with this type of data and it was important to look at the usual trend.

Looking at the additional value indicators and average wages etc., it was noted that the usual pattern was that the UK was doing better than Wales and Gwynedd. It was enquired, whilst accepting that we did not have economic stimuli to make a huge difference, whether it was fully understood why that gap remained for so much time. In response, it was noted:-

- Although the information, specifically in terms of economy performance, showed a slight pattern of back and forth movement, the trend remained very similar.
- That Gwynedd's economy was more marginal and also a traditional economy in many ways, with sectors based on smaller than average units, and that this underlined the scale of the challenge.
- That a long-term, consistent effort was necessary over many generations to close some of the gap, and although Gwynedd wages were never going to be on the same level as wages in London, there were several other advantages of working in Gwynedd.

- That the gap was currently too vast, but what mattered was that we were moving towards improvement.

It was noted that there was a trend for economic policy formulated by the UK Government to favour London, and that the same was true on a Cardiff level, and that other countries made more of an effort to ensure that regional parts thrived.

Referring to the table in the report, it was enquired in which fields and in which parts of the county the 101 Gwynedd residents who had received support so far in 2023/24 had secured a job. It was also asked how many of the 364 local individuals who had attended the job fairs had now secured employment. In response, it was noted:-

- That the report specifically referred to activities involved with the Gwaith Gwynedd programme which targeted those people who were farthest from the labour market, people who had been unemployed for a prolonged period or people with health conditions which had often prevented them from working in the past.
- That the Gwaith Gwynedd team mentored the individuals over an extended period and what happened in the long-term was also monitored to ensure that the individuals did not drop out of employment and to assist them to move on to better jobs within their sector.
- That job fairs were used as an opportunity to identify people who needed additional support to gain access to employment.

It was asked if it was anticipated how the shrinking of public sector funding over the next few years would affect businesses in the county, considering that businesses received indirect funding from the public sector by means of contracts and employee spending. In response, it was noted that it was hoped that this would be part of the brief for a Gwynedd Economy Plan as there was a need to understand what the indirect impact as a result of the shrinking of the public sector budget in general was on partners in Gwynedd.

It was noted that the quality of jobs, not unemployment, was the main problem in Gwynedd and, by creating more jobs, it was asked how it could be ensured that the local population took advantage of this, rather than the immigrant population, and whether it was possible to avoid this at all as low quality jobs would be necessary anyway. In response, it was noted that conditions had been introduced attached to grant proposals, including a condition that the business, if it did not already do so, would pay the Real Living Wage to all their employees by the end of the year.

It was asked whether it would be possible to provide a full list at the end of the grant allocation period of the businesses that had received support, along with how many jobs had been created, as it would be beneficial to know more about the geographical distribution of the funding. After a period of time, it was also asked whether the Department would look back to see if those businesses had been a success or a failure, and what would the timetable be for this. In response, it was noted:-

- That the names of successful businesses and the proposals made by them would be published.
- The applications received had to be considered, therefore, if no applications had been received from specific areas, there was a need to address this in the new plan.
- Although consideration would be needed on how to evaluate the plan beyond the programme period, the Department would continue to monitor it to see how the company had developed over the years, and also maintain the relationship with the person who has received support so that it would be possible for them to receive further support or benefit from further opportunities by the Council and others.

Concern was expressed about the reduction in the Gwynedd population and it was noted that this would mean that more businesses which employed local people would have to close. Also, as Gwynedd was a county that was very dependent on agriculture, and that farmers were facing substantial cuts in payments, concern was expressed about what would happen to Gwynedd's rural economy in future. In response, it was noted:-

- Concerns regarding the latest agriculture plans were understood and that messages were being conveyed from the Welsh Local Government Association Rural Forum to the Government.
- It was believed that we were overdependent on agriculture and tourism in Gwynedd and a much more diverse economy was needed.
- That risks had to be taken when creating employment in the rural areas and be ready to attract people from outside the county if they were willing to establish a business and create employment for local people.
- That our ability as a Council to change the situation was very sparse, but we would do our best and consider all of these matters in the discussions when developing the Economy Plan, and return to the scrutineers with the details of the plan.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

6. EQUALITY OBJECTIVES CONSULTATION DOCUMENT 2024-28

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Support and officers from the Corporate Support Department were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support explaining that the Council had a specific duty, as part of the Equality Act 2010, to review its Equality Objectives by the end of March 2024, and she invited the input of the scrutineers to the draft objectives.

The Cabinet Member set out the context and thanked the officers for all their work in this field.

Members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and submit observations.

It was noted that the most important thing to remember in terms of equality was that the starting point was not the same for everyone and that sometimes the starting point needed to be moved so that people with barriers which prevented them from being equal in society could move forward. With that, it was asked which steps the Council were taking, for example, to give jobs to people with those inequalities and to give them an opportunity to step forward. In response, it was noted:-

- That the intention of the objectives of the Strategic Equality Plan was to try to move things forward for those people who experienced inequality and that four objectives were working towards action points on this.
- That the first objective was involved with employment and that this was in accordance with the guidance.
- Consideration had also been given to what else that needed to be done. The staff had been asked to complete a questionnaire noting their characteristics, but many did not do so for various reasons, but without this information, it was not possible to know what the situation was within the Council and who needed the most encouragement. As a result, it was decided that actions points were required which would move this forward.
- That the Council had a legal duty to be a welcoming employer to all, and the right attitudes were needed within the organisation operating in a manner that was welcoming to all and encouraged everyone to come and work for us, e.g. it was

possible to undertake reasonable adaptations to the workplace for people who felt that they needed support to come and work for the Council.

- That there was room to improve this again and that part of the Plan on employment set an ambition to undertake specific steps towards ensuring that Gwynedd was the chosen employer for all.

It was enquired how more women could be attracted to senior managers' posts. In response, it was noted:-

- That the Women in Leadership field was a priority field within the Council and that a project working on changing the culture had been in place for many years and making great progress.
- That a pilot scheme was underway examining how job application forms were being screened to ensure that there was no type of unnecessary bias.
- In terms of other characteristics, that an equality core group met on a quarterly basis and included representatives from groups representing people with different characteristics, to obtain specialist opinion from them on different matters.
- As part of the engagement, that officers had visited several groups, including young carers and Pride, to obtain their opinion before drawing up the draft, and it was intended to undertake further engagement work mainly with different groups for this part of the consultation.

General concern was expressed that identity politics focusing on relatively small groups in society evaded the basic inequality, namely the socio-economic inequality, and the fact that the report provided more detail on reducing this to close the pay gap was welcomed, as that was where our focus should be.

Concern was expressed that women were being over-represented in low salary jobs, e.g. in the care field.

It was noted that the cohort that had responded to the questionnaire was not representational of the county's population linguistically (33% compared to approximately 64%) and it was suggested that this could explain the anti-Welsh undertones felt here and there in the observations. It was noted that officers had responded quite firmly to this in the observations, but some discriminatory observations in other fields had been omitted, and it was asked whether the hostile and disparaging observations towards the Welsh language should also be omitted and not addressed either. In response, it was noted:-

- As so much of this was being said, not only in this questionnaire, but in other questionnaires as well, it was felt that this needed to be addressed as it was important to teach people about our way of looking at things, and our way of operating in Gwynedd.
- Therefore, there was an intention to have an action point stating that we would sell our vision of the Welsh language and our logic for asking people for the skill of being able to speak Welsh.

Reference was made to the following sentence in the report "*Equality officers also met with various groups of people with protected characteristics, including young carers, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, etc.*" and it was noted that it was astounding that there was no report relating to equality and equal opportunity recognising all of those groups.

It was noticed that the response to the questionnaire from the Bala / Penllyn area was low compared to other areas and it was asked why so few young people had responded to the questionnaire. In response, it was noted that young carers and young people in Gisda were visited in an attempt to ensure that we got a representation of young voices. It was also intended to question the Young Farmers and Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor.

It was enquired how it was intended to stimulate the interest of young people who had left school in the Gwynedd Youth Forum. In response, it was noted that the most important thing, as with every characteristic, was to ask the young people themselves what was the best way of doing so, and to act accordingly.

It was asked how Gwynedd compared with other councils in terms of equality in the workplace and what steps were being taken to ensure that the entire workforce placed an emphasis on this. In response, it was noted:-

- That other councils experienced the same obstacles as Gwynedd in reality and that there was work to be done on why we were emphasising this field.
- As there were gaps in our systems in terms of including people with characteristics in our employment arrangements, it was intended to establish a staff forum that would be a way of having a two-way dialogue and gather ideas to set-up schemes based on clear evidence.

The fact that the education field had been included in the objectives was welcomed, but it was noted that the action points were matters that related to the world of education, and that the equality link was not clear in all of them. The reason why the action points related to equality was explained. It was stated that every school was required to have its own equality plan and these action points would establish a framework as a starting point for the schools to develop their own plans.

The Equality Advisor was thanked for her work and commitment to the field and everyone was urged to attend one of the equality training sessions that she organised.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

7. EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORTS

Officers of the Education Department and GwE were welcomed to the meeting.

7A EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Submitted - Education Annual Report 2022-23.

The Head of Education Department set out the context noting his desire to facilitate the scrutiny work by moving towards producing reports that would give more to scrutineers in terms of what we faced, but less in terms of the bulk of reports, which would also give more prominence to the challenge facing the schools, the staff and supporting services.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

Disappointment was expressed that there was no reference to special schools in the report. It was noted that the report referred to the problem of recruiting classroom assistants in the mainstream, but there was no mention of the special schools where the problem was much worse. Although the work of assistants at the special schools was very intense, it was also noted that they received the same salary as mainstream assistants. In response, it was noted:-

- That no specific part of the report dealt with special schools, but that services referred to encompassed the primary, secondary, all-through and special sectors. Possibly, this could be re-examined and the special sector could be explained at the next annual report.
- The problem of recruiting assistants was not unique to Gwynedd. Should individuals work full-time hours all-year round, it could be argued that they were on a fair salary,

but as they worked less than a usual working week, and during term time only, it was difficult to attract people to the role.

- There was work to be done to promote the jobs and profession including a campaign on social media sites and discussions with Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor with the aim of holding an event with the schools.
- In terms of the special schools, there was a piece of work to be undertaken in terms of evaluating jobs within those schools and structures within the school which would, possibly, reflect the intensity of the work faced compared to the mainstream.
- There was also room to examine the duties carried out by assistants on levels 1-4 in the schools to see if there were higher roles, but below a teacher, that those individuals could undertake, such as covering lessons and undertaking supply work as required.

It was enquired whether every school had now been informed of its linguistic category and what exactly was intended to ensure that the new categorisation system developed and embedded to deliver Gwynedd's ambition in this field. In response, it was noted:-

- That work was already being undertaken in the background in terms of commissioning an external consultant to work with the Department in respect of the Language Policy, and that a timetable was in place to get everything ready by the end of the current financial year.
- That there would be an opportunity for members to be part of the process of formulating the Language Policy, and it was intended to report back to this committee in March on progress against the recommendations of the Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation.
- What was being said regarding the pressures in terms of the language, the language categorisation etc. was understood and the Head of Department would work with the team to put this together.
- That the schools were aware of their category.
- That the categorisation was currently non-statutory guidance, but it would be statutory in the Welsh Language Education Bill.
- That the categorisation was not necessarily going to drive our ambition in Gwynedd, but rather the policy and provision within the schools. With that, it was believed that the work being carried out in terms of policy and working with schools and stakeholders was more important than the national categorisation system which, in essence, was a comparatively administrative system.
- That the Department collected data on the current provision that schools had and also asked every school to share priorities in terms of developing, maintaining and increasing the Welsh language provision.
- That the Department also scrutinised the Welsh language priorities with the GwE Supporting Improvement Advisor, who was responsible for the Welsh language, and also worked with GwE to provide guidance and support for specific schools on the priorities of their school development plan.
- With regards to the Welsh Language Education Bill, that the Department also examined the financial implications of transferring to the new system and how much the provision and support would mean to us financially as an Authority when it would come into force.

The importance of seeing the linguistic data was emphasised. In response, it was noted that the data was being collected annually and shared with several stakeholders.

Concern was expressed that the Authority had little supervision of the implementation of the Welsh Language Charter and the Secondary Sector Language Strategy and, by speaking

to some schools, it appeared that they did not have a charter scheme, and that they only completed an annual questionnaire. In light of this, it was recommended that a priority be added to the report that the Authority would have more supervision of the implementation of the Welsh Language Charter and the Secondary Sector Language Strategy in our schools, and also produced a report for each school. In response, it was noted:-

- That the Welsh Language Charter would be relaunched in its new form at the Urdd Eisteddfod this year, and there were plans to promote it on a national scale.
- Following the relaunch, it was intended to recommence the accreditation process so that schools could apply for a gold, silver or bronze award to recognise their efforts.
- That a Welsh Language Charter Coordinator and Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator were providing support to the schools and also worked very closely with GwE to ensure that grant funding of the Language Charter was being spent specifically to meet the linguistic needs of the different catchment areas. Very good work was being undertaken in the catchment areas in terms of providing experiences, and also developing staff training regarding the values of using the Welsh language socially.
- That the Catchment Language Coordinators coordinated the feeding of information to the Welsh Language Charter Coordinator and that the work was being monitored and ongoing.
- That children in every school responded to questionnaires about their social use of the Welsh language and that this then presented a Language Web to the school so that it was possible to identify strengths and areas for development in the context of the Welsh language socially.
- That the School Council, alongside teachers, was drawing up an action plan to develop the specific areas that needed to be addressed and that the Authority monitored this work, and also worked on a national level to ensure that this occurred across Wales.
- That the Language Web and actions within the schools would be scrutinised even further as a result of reintroducing the accreditation process.

It was noted that there was no foreword to the annual report recognising the support and contribution of governors, or the learners either, when implementing educational strategies. In response, it was noted that this was something of an omission and that children, young people, governors and the entire community that supported the education sector should have been thanked.

It was suggested that the report was lacking in evidence, e.g. figures / percentages, to support and justify what had been noted. In response, it was noted that it was intended to move away from the idea that reports did not always highlight a weakness, by providing reports that also underlined the challenges to strike a balance. Along with the intention to provide a timeline on targets when setting future priorities, this meant that it would be much easier to report to scrutineers next years in the annual report.

A request was made for an update on the situation in terms of recruiting educational psychologists as this was a matter of priority. In response, it was noted:-

- That the situation had not improved and it was intended to send a joint letter to the Government between Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy Councils drawing attention once again to the concern regarding the training method and the difficulty in recruiting bilingual psychologists.
- It may be possible for the Department to recruit individuals who were finishing their training for the next academic year.

Concern was expressed that the increase in the number of children with profound needs and very challenging behaviour attending the ABC centres could put more pressure on the two special schools in the county which were nearing, or had reached, full capacity. In response, it was noted:-

- That the Early Years Additional Learning Needs Team included teachers who supported the *cylchoedd meithrin* as well as a small team that supported children with additional learning needs in the early years.
- That children were now identified early and that comprehensive individual development plans were being prepared for them before they started school.
- That considerable increase had been seen in recent years in the number of children with additional needs as the Service had intentionally proceeded to look for children, or to provide for children with needs in the early years, but the numbers had now reconciled.
- Although the numbers were fairly consistent in terms of early years referrals, that the density was higher and the Service responded to this.
- That the purpose of the ABC centres, if they worked effectively, was to prevent children from reaching special schools by equipping them with the social skills etc. they needed to be able to cope with mainstream education.
- This did not always work and it was true to say that there was a pathway from the ABC centres to the special schools.
- That the Service also examined how to up-skill the mainstream schools in terms of young children being admitted with more complex difficulties, and to develop the collaboration between the special schools and the mainstream, by sharing good practice.
- That the capacity of the special schools was a problem and that the Authority was looking into this. There was no short-term solution but a discussion needed to be held with the special schools regarding the best way to release space in the classrooms.

Concern was expressed regarding the waiting times for neuro-developmental assessments and a request was made for further information about the collaboration with the Neuro-developmental Team to try to address the issue. In response, it was noted:

- That considerable investment had been made by the Government, not as much in the education sector, but in other services in terms of supporting learners with neuro-developmental difficulties.
- That a lot of children were referred but that not all of them would ultimately get a diagnosis.
- In terms of the education system, the diagnosis was not examined, but rather the needs being reported.
- That the work undertaken jointly with other teams in the field included mapping out what everyone provided as support, ensuring that no efforts were duplicated and making the best of the resources that everyone had, and also perhaps examining what training was required and the input to families.
- That everything needed to be simplified across the children, health and education services to make things easier for families so that they received key input.

It was asked what the Department was doing to try to get more teachers and assistants to apply for the vacant posts in some schools. It was noted that children's behaviour towards teachers had substantially worsened as a result of the Covid period and this was why the presence of an assistant in the class was so important. It was also noted that it was difficult to recruit Welsh speakers to schools in the Tywyn area, and it was asked how it was intended to find the people with the best qualifications to come to work at the new Language Centre that would open in Tywyn. In response, it was noted:-

- That we had a real challenge in Gwynedd in terms of inclusion and behaviour in the schools and that this had been highlighted in Estyn's report.
- That the Department was currently giving priority to Estyn recommendations and examining plans that would ensure better provision across the primary and secondary sectors for children with increasing challenging behaviours.
- That these challenging behaviours, as well as the increased workload, were certainly having an impact on recruiting staff to the profession. It was also noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit headteachers and that several current headteachers were teaching for 3-4 days a week on top of the responsibility of being a headteacher.
- There was possibly a need to look at creating some sort of campaign to recruit teachers and assistants for Gwynedd, and the best people to sell the profession were the teachers and headteachers themselves. Although there were challenging behaviours, there were much more positive than negative experiences in the classroom, and this needed to be promoted.

It was noted that the recruitment issues were not unique to Gwynedd and that pressure should be placed on the Welsh Government for more funding for teachers' pay, or otherwise, we would potentially be looking at the closure of rural schools due to a teacher shortage. In response, it was noted:-

- That the financial situation in our schools was difficult with 38 schools in a situation of over-staffing, and this with a 3% cut over three years.
- That there was a reduction in the number of children across the county which further contributed towards the deficit and made headteachers' situation difficult as they would have to make difficult decisions over the next few weeks and months in terms of staffing structure and how to proceed in the future.
- That this was the most challenging period ever seen in the world of education and it appeared that several people who had the ability to step into a headteacher's post had decided to wait until the wave had passed before taking that step.

It was noted that the pay and work conditions made it difficult to recruit teachers and that the actual hours teachers worked made the pay per hour relatively small.

It was enquired how it was intended to cope with the lack of headteachers over the next few years. In response, it was noted:-

- That the new Education Strategy would be an opportunity to discuss this with the schools.
- That the potential solutions included working with headteachers in other schools and encouraging people who hold back from applying for a headteacher's post to step forward to fill the gap, even if this was only on a temporary basis, accepting that maintaining this type of administration, which was not resilient, would place additional pressure on the Education Department and GwE.

Reference was made to the difficulties of recruiting technicians in schools and it was asked what different ways were available to support schools in terms of IT provision. In response, it was noted:-

- That there was a problem in recruiting science technicians, as well as IT technicians.
- As well as sharing technicians with other schools, that the Council's central technicians had been providing an outreach service to support technical work in schools that could not appoint a technician, but that a technician was required there and then for the majority of tasks.

- That the Department had been working with Bangor University to see if there were students who would be interested in undertaking this type of work, but unfortunately, the salaries did not attract these type of individuals.
- That the Department had also been working with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor and schools, e.g. to see if anyone would be interested in taking a gap year after A Levels to do this type of work, and although it was managed to get a few names, those individuals had not followed on with the offer.
- That the Digital Strategy was aiming to increase the skills of learners so that they left school with digital skills that would enable them to deliver these posts in due course.
- There was a need to try to reduce the demand for technicians initially by upgrading the devices currently in schools, although, it must be borne in mind of course that the increase in the number of devices across the county would lead to more demand for technical support.

It was suggested that the result of cuts in school budgets would be larger classes and it was asked to what extent it was anticipated that the curriculum would need to be limited to do right by the core subjects by assigning more hours for them as classes would be larger, and to what extent this would then militate against the type of developments that were part of the new curriculum. In response, it was noted:-

- When drawing up lesson timetables, that schools always started with the core subjects and built on this.
- As the new curriculum comes into force, it was anticipated that it could become more difficult for smaller schools to strike the balance across the five areas of learning and experience due to the need for all of the expertise and staffing variety, but in terms of class size, schools should have viable classes that can learn.
- That the inclusion system and all of the available support should ensure that a school never reaches a point of having to assign more hours for the core subjects.
- That it was not anticipated that the new curriculum would be limited, but schools would certainly face challenges in moving forward.

It was noticed that there was no reference in the report to the system of returning children who attended the language centres to the mother school on the fifth day of the week. In response, as the immersion system in Gwynedd in its new form had now completed a whole year cycle, it was noted that the Service had proceeded to consult and engage with stakeholders about an evaluation of that system. Once the observations would be collated and the process completed, the matter would be brought before this committee for scrutiny.

It was noted that there was great concern in one area of the county in particular that returning children from the language centres to the mother school for 1 day a week was affecting the language used on the school playground. It was noted that a member had intended to submit a question about this to the last Full Council meeting, but it had been refused. In response, should an evaluation of the system prove that the system needed to change, it was noted that the Serious would examine this seriously.

In response to a question, it was explained that there would be a review of the immersion system in an internal review, but it would include all voices.

It was asked how many children with English as an Additional Language were there in Gwynedd, especially in the primary sector. In response, it was noted that the exact figure could be provided for the member.

It was asked about the Language Policy situation in terms of children who did not speak English or Welsh, and it was asked why they were not, at least in the primary sector, proceeding to learn Welsh immediately. It was also asked which lessons could be learnt by

examining the English learning system, which was also a specialist linguistic field. In response, it was noted:-

- That children who did not speak English or Welsh were being admitted immediately to the language centres, and that they also learnt English as an additional language. There was no policy stating that children had to learn English first.
- That 4% of the children in the language centres last term were children who had arrived without any Welsh or English.
- That the Service and the English as an Additional Language Team shared immersion values and principles, and also held training with schools that had seen a substantial influx of children who did not speak English or Welsh.
- It was attempted to ensure that children did not receive input from both teams at the same time and that they initially attended the language centres and then received support from the English as an Additional Language Team.

It was noted that:-

- The Youth Service had been located in three different Council departments over the past two years, and it had also been through quite a substantial restructuring process.
- The report mentioned looking at new budgetary opportunities, and it was enquired what was meant by this.
- That a questionnaire shared with young people before Christmas was very complicated and that this raised concern regarding the reliability of the consultation.
- Would a review of the Service involve undertaking a full consultation or only providing a questionnaire?

In response, it was noted:-

- The Youth Service would be welcomed to the Education Department and it was believed that this was its natural home within the Council given the special work the Service carried out with schools.
- Good work was also being undertaken with young people leaving schools, and who possibly, needed support to move on in terms of their working life and training etc., and this fitted in well within the education system.
- The community youth work was being funded by different financial sources and grants etc., and it was wished to examine the consistency of provision across the areas.
- The youth support in terms of schools was consistent and available for all schools and that the work, which was undertaken on a multi-agency basis, was praised.
- The exceptionally good work in terms of post-16 learners was being undertaken in accordance with the framework to support learners who left education and training.
- In terms of the observation regarding the complexity of the questionnaires, that the Service would examine this and ensure that the content was clear and coherent for all.
- In terms of financial implications, although there was a cut to the Youth Service in terms of the cuts highlighted, that the Service had been fortunate to some extent that empty posts etc. meant that it was possible to cut without losing key individuals from the service.

It was noted that:-

- It was disagreed that the Education Department was the perfect place for the Youth Service and that it should be a separate service that bridged several departments given that the Council Plan for the next five years referred to the importance of

providing leisure and socialising opportunities beyond an education establishment for children and young people.

- That an increase had been seen in the number of young people finding it difficult to be part of normal education since the pandemic period, and that the Youth Service was very important, almost as a preventative service, so that young people did not get into a difficult situation.
- That the work currently carried out by the Youth Service with scarce resources was unbelievable.
- That the excellent provision offered by the Porthi Dre charity in Caernarfon did a massive different to the well-being of young people.
- That the report mentioned that 1,300 accreditations had been completed by young people and, although this was a success to the young people, a serious question should be asked in terms of the ultimate value of these accreditations. It was asked whether the Service contacted those young people who had completed accreditations in the past to enquire if those accreditations had helped them to find work or training. Although the priority was for young people to get the opportunity to interact and socialise, it was also noted that the need to complete accreditations could also be a stumbling block for young people to engage with the Youth Service.
- That the report noted that the Youth Service had engaged with 65% of young people from Tier 1 and 2 (Number of Gwynedd's most vulnerable young people), which meant that it had not been managed to engage with the other 35%. While recognising that it was not possible to reach everyone, and that there had been a great increase in demand, it was asked what advance planning was being undertaken to ensure that the demand could be better reached.

In response, it was noted:-

- That the answer in terms of how to get more to engage with the Youth Service could be seen in the fact that the Service worked with children within the schools, and work with them in a different way to teachers and assistants.
- It was agreed that the need to complete accreditations could be a stumbling block for young people to engage with the Youth Service, and this needed to be examined. However, some young people, such as individuals who did not engage as well in school, received real value from the accreditations as they allowed them to have better access to further education etc. that they would not have had through the school curriculum alone.
- In terms of encouraging more young people to be part of the Youth Service, a strategy on promoting the Service was underway and, possibly, visiting Porthi Dre would be one way of getting young people to better engage with the Youth Service.

The teachers' unions representative noted that she had questions for the Head of Education and GwE Managing Director but, unfortunately, she had to leave the meeting. GwE's Managing Director asked her to e-mail him the questions so that he could respond directly.

It was noticed that the report noted that 99.16% of school staff had an up-to-date DBS, which was a very high percentage, but it should be 100%, and it was asked whether the fact applications were being processed etc. was the reason for this. In response, it was noted:

- That the percentage should clearly be 100% and that the Department was working towards this. Despite this, reaching 100% was nearly impossible, especially if individuals had been suspended from work and, therefore, failing to process their DBS, but still on the payroll until the investigation was ongoing. Also, there were supply teachers, who did not teach any more but had remained on the Authority's list, and one or two individuals awaiting their results etc. in terms of the DBS.

- That the Authority had a list noting in which schools and services the individuals without a DBS were based and that a Safeguarding Officer would contact each one of them on a monthly basis to ensure that the number was as low as it could be.
- That the number of staff without an up-to-date DBS had reduced from 96 to 26 in 3 months.

It was asked whether or not it could be clear if the number of children receiving school meals was on the rise, and whether campaigns to get children to eat healthily affected this. In response, it was noted:-

- That the offer of free lunch for primary sector learners from Reception to Year 6 had been operational in Gwynedd since the beginning of last September, and although the provision was available for children, that work still needed to be undertaken in terms of completing the installation of kitchen equipment etc.
- An increase had been seen in the number of children receiving school meals since September, although, possibly, that this increase had not been as much as expected in some schools, and there was room to promote the offer a bit more.
- Some still thought possibly that the offer was not open to all and that the sense of stigma surrounding free school meals remained.
- That it was intended to submit a report to this committee in March on the Free School Meal Project and, by then, the Department would have gathered headteachers' opinions about what increase they felt they had seen in their schools, whether it had improved the healthy eating element by children and whether or not it had positively affected the behaviours or education of the children during periods after lunch.
- That the Department also worked with two schools on a pilot scheme to find out to what extent more intensive work could be carried out with some families to try to encourage them to take advantage of the offer.

It was noted that the school day could be expensive for parents, and it was asked whether work was underway to assess if there were children missing school as their parents could not afford everything that was required. In response, it was noted:-

- That work was currently being undertaken to specifically examine the cost of sending a child to school in Gwynedd.
- That parents' response so far to the questionnaires sent to stakeholders had been good, explaining the frustration, not only in terms of the fact that there were costs, but that those costs tended to occur at the same time. The Department would also examine whether there were comments about attendance in particular when responses would come in.

It was enquired what was the reason for the gap between what was in the budget and the actual cost of school transport. In response, it was noted:-

- That the transport budget in Gwynedd had been overspending for many years and that this had to be examined over the next few weeks and months.
- That the situation was complex and the transport budget was difficult to manage for several reasons, including children moving schools, children moving in and out of care, some children with special needs that were being met outside the local area, the need to transport children to a range of different establishments, including ABC centres, language centres and special schools, the fact that contractors were a combination of bus and taxi companies and that some contractors gave up the contract and re-tendered for the contract for a higher price.

- That it was intended to appoint a Transport Manager for the Education Department in the next few days so that one person within the Department took responsibility for transport.
- That the demand and provision had to be examined to see if there was a more cost-effective way of transporting a child from A to B, but this was a task in itself given that, maybe, there was only one company in the market for the contract in some rural areas.

It was enquired whether the Authority had provision to ensure that equality plans were put into place in the schools. In response, in light of updating the model policies and schemes as a result of the new guidance, it was noted that the Department would provide the best tools for schools to develop their own individual equality plans.

It was asked if there was a process in place to ensure that looked-after children attended school as much as possible and whether the Department had the capacity to meet every statutory requirement in terms of looked-after children. In response, it was noted:-

- That we had the capacity but there was an issue in terms of accessing data so that looked-after children could be targeted in a timely manner as children went in and out of care before it was possible to provide anything for them in terms of the schools.
- That the Department was specifically looking at this and that the data extended further than attendance alone, and was also involved with the attainment of looked-after children.
- It was very difficult to obtain data that indicated where a looked-after child should be in terms of educational attainment and to reach an opinion regarding the effectiveness of the provision.
- That the Data Team examined the attendance of looked-after children compared to other children and found very imaginative methods to solve several barriers in terms of collecting information within the schools.

7B GWE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Submitted - GwE Annual Report 2022-23.

The Senior Regional Leader - Primary and Special Schools gave an overview of the contents of the report.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

It was noted that it was wished to recognise and thank the classroom assistants for giving their time to attend training and for giving their all when undertaking the role at work every day. In response, it was noted that it was agreed with the observation and that effective assistants added substantial value to a school.

It was noted that it was heartbreaking that experienced assistants with many years' experience and knowledge in the field were leaving to other jobs that paid a better salary.

It was noted that the report was full of complimentary adjectival language and that the first paragraph of the Executive Summary on the first page of the report was repeated word for word under the Introduction and Context heading. In response, it was noted that the initial paragraph that appeared in the Executive Summary and in the report, itself was a quote from Estyn's findings on the service, not only locally in Gwynedd, but consistently across the 6 authorities in north Wales authorities.

It was noted that there was no disagreement with the main improvement priorities, but it was asked for assurance that the list of priorities would appear in the next annual report and that any progress against those matters would be reported. In response, it was noted:-

- In terms of the reporting system, that the elements identified as ones that needed developing would be incorporated in the business plans.
- That these improvement priorities were included in the business plans that were currently operational, and when there would be an opportunity to report again within a year, these would be the grounds to show progress against the identified matters.

It was noted that there was no reference in the report to PISA tests and it was asked how GwE intended to respond to the test results. In response, it was noted:-

- Due to the nature and background of Wales, it appeared that Wales had been more adversely affected coming out of the Covid period than several countries that were similar to us.
- That PISA tests were one of the Government's national indicators as something that showed how effective the education system was, but there was a risk in making statements on international tests.
- If PISA tests would become a national indicator that was counted and measured against, that a clear national strategy needed to be in place which was supported from a government level for services such as GwE, and also to a school level to ensure that our most able pupils received the opportunities to show their ability.

It was asked how important good governors were for a school to progress and what were GwE's expectations of governors. In response, it was noted:-

- That the role of a governor was to be a critical friend who worked in partnership with schools.
- There was always an invitation for governors to join in some of the work undertaken by GwE in the schools, with the headteacher's cooperation, e.g. how we reached an opinion on different things, what evidence we examined, how well a school knows itself (which also included governors), what were the priorities and what was done about them.
- The natural order would then be to scrutinise these matters in the governing body to identify the priorities and how to improve.
- Should there be a wish to hold specific workshops for governors in that role specifically, this could certainly be arranged in cooperation with the Head of Education. An opportunity would also be needed to guide councillors through the information in the new School Improvement Framework in terms of what were the responsibilities and how to deliver the role in a way that slightly changes as we progress.

It was suggested that the annual report would be much clearer if it was much more concise and GwE was asked to take this into consideration for the future.

It was asked whether GwE would be part of the work of monitoring the new Welsh Language Charter. In response, it was noted:-

- That this was not yet known as Welsh language funding, which used to come to GwE, had now been entirely in the hands of the authorities for a year.
- In terms of the new Welsh Language Charter framework, the monitoring work would be carried out by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Welsh Language Charter Coordinator and the Welsh Language Team in the authority. However, this would be a considerable challenge given the number of primary and secondary schools across the whole of Gwynedd and the fact that the Coordinator divided her time between Gwynedd and Anglesey.

- That the Department was currently working with the Welsh Government to examine the financial implications in terms of the Welsh language entirely in terms of the Welsh Language Education Bill so that it was possible to calculate and propose expenditure projections of what impact introducing the Bill would have in the hope that the Government would earmark a sum of money to correspond with this.
- Should the Authority deem that there was a commission role for GwE in terms of undertaking the monitoring work alongside the Authority, or on behalf of the Authority, it would be possible to have a discussion about this.

The opinion was expressed that the report was very superficial, especially the important evaluation sections under the '*Getting to grips with further improvements*' heading, and that some of the improvements, such as '*continuing to identify how progress looks in order to wilfully plan the next steps over time*', was very vague. It was also asked to what extent GwE monitored slippage data and progress in the Welsh education provision, and how it supervised this. In response, it was noted:-

- That GwE did not monitor data and progress in the Welsh education provision as things currently stood.
- In terms of a previous observation during the meeting about seeing the recommendations in the next annual report, it was possible, once again, that the length and breadth of what GwE could offer would be much less as we moved forward, and this was a discussion to be held over the next few weeks and months.
- That an observation had been made more than once during the meeting regarding the ambiguity of the report's language, but in terms of the length of reports, providing a much more concise report would be a small matter. However, this would raise the question in terms of the value the Council received in having such a short document, bearing in mind that there was also an external audience, namely the inspectors.
- The right balance would have to be struck to be able to show the length and breadth of the span of service that GwE provided to the schools.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

8. POST-16 EDUCATION PROJECT IN ARFON

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Education detailing the journey of the Post-16 Education Project in Arfon over the past five years and she invited observations from the scrutineers.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

Disappointment was expressed about the report on the grounds:-

- That there was no mention of reconciling post-16 education across Gwynedd.
- Although the report referred to the academic side, there was no reference to the vocational side and it was believed that separating the two cohorts of children when they were 16 years old was a huge mistake.
- That the advantage of a tertiary college was that it kept learners together until they were 18 years old and it was sad that children in Arfon did not get the same opportunity as children in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd.

In response, it was noted that it was currently possible for pupils in Arfon to study academic and vocational subjects through the sixth form in schools.

Further information was requested regarding the laith Cyf company which had been commissioned to carry out research in the field on behalf of the Education Department. In response, it was noted that the laith Cyf company was an external company with several decades of experience in linguistic planning and also experience in the field of education and training.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 4.00pm.

Chair

Report to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Date:	21 March 2024
Title:	North Wales Growth Deal – Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023/24
Cabinet Member:	Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn
Author:	Sioned E Williams, Head of Economy & Community Hedd Vaughan Evans, Head of Operations, Ambition North Wales
Department:	Economy & Community

1. WHY DOES IT NEED TO BE SCRUTINISED?

I

1.1.1 In December 2020, the Economic Ambition Board and the Welsh and UK Governments agreed the Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal. Quarterly reporting on progress against the North Wales Growth Deal is a requirement of the Final Deal Agreement. Following consideration by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the reports will be shared with Welsh Government, UK Government and the local authority scrutiny committees.

1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the Quarter 3 Growth Deal Report and Portfolio Risk Register for the attention of Gwynedd Council's Scrutiny Committee.

2. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

2.1 This report includes two appendices:

- North Wales Growth Deal – Quarter 3 Performance Report
- Portfolio Risk Register – December 2023

2.2 North Wales Growth Deal – Quarter 3 Performance Report

2.2.1 The Quarter 3 performance report provides an overview of progress on the Growth Deal programmes and projects.

2.2.2 This quarter saw the approval of the updated Portfolio Business Case and the submission to Welsh and UK Governments as part of the annual award of funding process.

2.2.3 The Economic Ambition Board approved three project Outline Business Cases during the quarter. These were the Tourism Talent Network, Egni and Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant. The Board also approved the Full Business Case for the Enterprise Engineering and Optic Centre project, a significant milestone for the Growth Deal.

2.2.4 The Quarter 3 update is showing projects reporting against the revised portfolio delivery profile approved by the Board. Three projects are currently reporting as red due to either risks to the project scope or significant delays to project timescales:

- Connecting the Last Few % - Procurement activity on the project has been suspended until UK Government confirms the launch date for its new intervention, expected to

be confirmed in Q3 23/24 for launch in 2024. The new proposed intervention by UK Government is likely to meet or improve upon the project's spending objectives.

- Western Gateway, Wrexham – a review of the project is being undertaken to assess its delivery considering the recommendations from the Road Review Panel and Welsh Governments four tests for highways investment.
- Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub – planning permission is yet to be secured. Survey work is underway as requested by Natural Resources Wales and CADW.

2.5 Portfolio Risk Register – December 2023

2.5.1 The Portfolio Risk Register is updated on a regular basis by the Portfolio Management Office and reviewed by the Portfolio Board and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board on a quarterly basis.

2.5.3 The risk register has been fully updated with a number of changes recorded in the documents, including revised risk descriptions, revised scoring and mitigating actions, and the commentary has been updated for all risks.

2.5.4 While the risk profile has remained stable over the past quarter, the risk profile does remain high with a number of red residual risks including affordability, capacity, delay, planning and statutory consents, public and private sector investment, and spending objectives. The risk on economic context has increased due to the developing global issues affecting supply chains and the energy market likely to affect costs in the short to medium term. The risk on delay remains red but has decreased due to the progress made during the quarter including the OBC and FBC approvals.

3. **RECOMMENDATION**

3.1. That the Committee scrutinises Ambition North Wales Board's performance in delivering the Growth Deal and accepts that mitigation measures are in place to respond to the risks.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	North Wales Growth Deal – Quarter 3 Performance Report
Appendix 2	Portfolio Risk Register – January 2023

North Wales Growth Deal

2023-24 Quarter 3

(October – December 2023)

Performance Report

1.	Portfolio Director Summary.....	3
2.	Portfolio Performance.....	4
3.	Digital Programme Performance.....	5
4.	Low Carbon Energy Programme Performance.....	7
5.	Land and Property Programme Performance.....	10
6.	Agri-food and Tourism Programme Performance.....	13
7.	Innovation in High Value Manufacturing Programme Performance.....	15
8.	Project Progress Tracker.....	17
9.	Growth Deal Project Delivery Pipeline - Portfolio Business Case 2023.....	18
10.	Objective Tracker - Overview of delivery (March 2023).....	19
11.	Growth Deal Grant Expenditure Profile - Portfolio Business Case 2023.....	20
12.	Growth Deal Projects: Capital Funding Allocation Profile.....	22
	APPENDIX A - Growth Deal Projects Summary.....	23

During this quarter we saw significant progress in the delivery of the Growth Deal projects

The Outline Business Cases for the Tourism Talent Network, Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant and the Egni projects were approved by the Economic Ambition Board and recommended that a Full Business Case is prepared for the Board to consider following the completion of the outstanding actions.

The Full Business Case for the Enterprise Engineering and Optic Centre project was approved by the Board. This is a significant milestone for the Growth Deal and will see the project start on site in February 2024 with Wynne Construction having been appointed as the main contractor for the Plas Coch development.

The updated Portfolio Business Case has now been approved by the Board and submitted to Welsh and UK Governments as part of the annual award of funding process.

The annual Portfolio Gateway Review of the Growth Deal was carried out by a panel of independent experts during October. The report gave an Amber-Red confidence rating and set out 15 recommendations to address. An action plan was presented to the Economic Ambition Board during December.

A follow-up Assurance of Action Plan (AAP) review took place during December and focussed on the effectiveness of the actions to address the recommendations. The Assurance of Action Plan review gave an Amber-Green confidence rating demonstrating progress against the recommendations.

Savills completed work on their Investment Analysis report, and a set of founding investment principles were presented to the Economic Ambition Board in December. Work on a detailed Investment Strategy will continue with the aim of presenting to the Board in February.

Looking forward 2024 promises to be an exciting year for Ambition North Wales and the Growth Deal, with significant progress expected this year on our projects.



Alwen Williams, Portfolio Director

Alwen Williams

Themes	RAG Status	Commentary
Portfolio Business Case	Green	The Portfolio Business Case 2023 update was approved by the Board in October and has been submitted to Welsh Government and UK Government as part of the annual award of funding process.
Delivery Pipeline	Yellow	The delivery pipeline has been reviewed and updated as part of the 2023 Portfolio Business Case. Projects will now report against this revised timetable
Governance	Green	The Portfolio, Programme and Project Management Framework is now well established with the Portfolio Board and five Programme Boards operating effectively. A Conflicts of Interest procedure is in place across all Boards.
Assurance	Green	The fourth annual Growth Deal assurance review (Programme Assurance Review) was completed in October 2023 with the report delivering an 'Amber-Red' confidence rating for the portfolio. A follow up Assurance of Action Plan (AAP) review took place in December 2023, with the report delivering an Amber Green confidence rating. The next review will take place during October 2024.
Resource and Capacity	Green	A recruitment campaign has been underway to appoint to 7 roles within the Portfolio Management Office. New officers have joined the team and others will join in the new year, taking the team to full capacity. This includes additional capacity to deliver on the SPF workstreams. Fixed term contracts in the team have been extended to March 2025 reducing the risk of staff leaving in the short term.
Finance	Yellow	A total of £2.28m Growth Deal funding had been spent up to the end of 2022/23, £1.8m of that on the Digital Signal Processing Centre. To date in 2023/24 £474k of Growth Deal revenue has been spent.
Investment	Red	Securing the public and private sector investment required to deliver the Growth Deal remains a significant risk across the portfolio. The Economic Ambition Board approved the Investment Principles during their meeting in December 2023, the investment strategy is being developed to support the team to meet the investment targets.
Risk	Red	Reallocation of PMO resources following the Portfolio PAR review has accelerated OBC and FBC development slightly reducing risk on delays and this approach will continue to be used to further minimise the risk. Portfolio-level risks regarding consents and delay remain high due to project-level issues. Affordability remains a high risk due to ongoing inflation, supply chain issues and construction cost increases.
Benefits Monitoring & Evaluation	Green	The benefits realisation, monitoring and evaluation framework and indicator definitions have been finalised, with three final areas still under discussion with Welsh Government. A system user guide is being developed for the reporting system and the second phase of user training is scheduled for February.
Communication and Engagement	Green	The announcement on the OBC and FBC approvals was the main focus, along with promoting recruitment opportunities with Ambition North Wales. Our engagement and reach continued to grow on social media, with over 6,400 website users.

	Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)		Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)		Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)
--	---	--	--	--	--

Programme Aim	Job Creation Target	GVA Investment Target	Total Investment Target
Deliver the step change in digital connectivity needed to ensure North Wales is able to satisfy user demand, maintain pace with the rest of the UK, unlock the potential of priority sectors and sites and underpin a flourishing innovation ecosystem.	380	£158m	£41.7m

RAG Status	Programme Manager Commentary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gateway 2 review for the Connected Key Sites and Corridors '4G+' project took place in November with the reviewers providing an Amber-Green assessment. The PMO is now working on addressing areas for improvement prior to submitting the outline business case for consideration by the Portfolio and Economic Ambition Boards. Work has continued on the Connected Campuses business cases with a Business Justification Case for regional investment in LPWAN networks at an advanced stage. The Programme is making progress with three Shared Prosperity Fund digital projects set to run over the course of 2024. Work is underway involving each of the councils investigating new approaches to using council owned property to support how 4G mobile coverage is delivered in the region. Additional support for communities to improve their broadband and local businesses understand options for adopting new digital technologies is also being prepared to start in early 2024.



Mark Pritchard
Lead Member



David Fitzsimon
Senior Responsible Owner



Stuart Whitfield
Programme Manager

	Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)		Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)		Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)
--	---	--	--	--	--

Project (Project Sponsor)	Project Stage	Key Milestones (this quarter)	Key Milestones (next quarter)	RAG Status	RAG Rationale
Digital Signal Processing Centre Bangor University	Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative) proposals submitted to UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology Future Telecommunications 'Network of Networks' Challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of final business justification case for the third tranche of funding to purchase equipment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress with the support for indirect job creation is risking not meeting forecasted levels. The Project has developed new SBRI proposals to seek to address this and is developing a digital ecosystem of employers to improve commercialisation of the Centre's research outputs.
Connecting the Last Few % Economic Ambition Board	Developing the Full Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement documents and contract completed. SPF application in progress. Community broadband engagement is a workstream within the application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government to confirm launch date for its new intervention. Decision on rescoping the project within the programme Procurement of SPF funded project to support communities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government has proposed a new intervention which is likely to meet or improve upon the Last Few % project's spending objectives. Procurement activity has been suspended until UK Government confirms the launch date for its project, expected to be confirmed in Q3 23/24 for launch in 2024 SPF project will support spending objectives through promotion of funding for communities to improve broadband locally
Connected Key Sites and Corridors Economic Ambition Board	Developing the Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMO approval of OBCs 4G+ Gateway 2 Review November, Amber Green Programme Board approval of 4G+ OBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portfolio Board approval 4G+ OBC Economic Ambition Board approval 4G+ OBC Business Delivery Board endorsement 4G+ OBC Fibre OBC Gateway 2 Review 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gateway 2 Review of 4G+ Amber Green assessment with recommendations now being addressed before Portfolio and Economic Ambition Board consideration Fibre OBC Gateway 2 review to be scheduled
Connected Campuses Economic Ambition Board	Developing the Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPF application approved, this includes funding for connectivity assessments across the region to support the objectives of the Advanced Wireless project LPWAN BJC project board approval Advanced Wireless SOC approved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LPWAN procurement Gateway 2 Review to be scheduled for Advanced Wireless business case LPWAN BJC board approvals and Critical Friend Review Advanced Wireless OBC PMO review 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LPWAN BJC developed with project board approval Advanced Wireless SOC approved and OBC being developed for PMO review in Q4

Programme Aim	Job Creation Target	GVA Investment Target	Total Investment Target
To unlock the economic benefits of transformational low carbon energy projects and position North Wales as a leading UK location for low carbon energy generation, innovation and supply chain investment.	980	£530m	£668.5m

RAG Status	Programme Manager Commentary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egni - OBC has been approved by the Economic Ambition Board. • Deeside - OBC has been approved by the Economic Ambition Board. • Hydrogen Sponsor Challenge - the applications have been scored and moderated. Next stage will be clarifications, technical interview and recommendation put forward for a March 2024 Economic Ambition Board approval. • Cydnerth - following changes to State Aid thresholds, funding into the Cydnerth project could now be considered as a subsidy rather than an investment on a commercial basis. The Menter Môn Morlais team are currently working on a proposal for Ambition North Wales to consider that will require subsidy control consideration. • Recruitment - Denise Creed started in the role of Energy Project Officer on the 20th of November and Sandra Sharp will be starting as Energy Project Manager on the 22nd of January.



Cllr Llinos Medi
Lead Member



Dylan Williams
Senior Responsible Owner



Elgan Roberts
Programme Manager

Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)	Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)	Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)

4. Low Carbon Energy Programme Performance

Project (Project Sponsor)	Project Stage	Key Milestones (this quarter)	Key Milestones (next quarter)	RAG Status	RAG Rationale
Cydnherth (Morlais) Menter Môn	Developing the Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morlais project completed. • The Morlais Sub Station was officially opened by the First Minister on the 20th of October. • Collaborative Group established to address WEFO T&Cs and Growth Deal funding mechanism. • Operational loan secured through Welsh Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OBC to be updated and finalised. • Finalise Growth Deal funding mechanism into the project that is compliant with Subsidy Control regime. • Prepare OBC for March 2023 approval. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolutions to the funding mechanism needed before the OBC can be submitted for approval
Hydrogen Hub Economic Ambition Board	Developing the Strategic Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications received in response to the Hydrogen Sponsor Challenge. Have been scored and moderated. • Clarification questions have been issued to the bidders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical interview for potential sponsors before final assessment concluded. • Put forward a recommendation to the Economic Ambition Board in March 2024 to select a sponsor. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications received from credible organisations, slight delay with process to prioritise on priority pipeline of projects, but overall timescales not impacted
Egni Bangor University	Developing the Full Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of RIBA Stage 2 progressed to timetable. • OBC approved by the Board in December 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue and agreement of RIBA Stage 2 report. • Commence on developing FBC. • Start of RIBA Stage 3 activity. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project is progressing on time and to budget.
Smart Local Energy Economic Ambition Board	Developing the Full Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed the changes to be incorporated into the revised tender proposal • Stakeholder session undertaken with private sector and third sector representatives - useful feedback received to incorporate in updated tender • Fee mechanism updated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise the tender documents • Re-launch the tender • Finalise investment strategy and draft FBC. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay to finalising FBC and launch of Fund due to the failure to appoint a Fund Advisor on the first attempt
Trawsfynydd Cwmni Eginio	Developing the Strategic Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant progress with this project since last report due to uncertainty around the site selection process led by UK Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent UK Government release of consultations and roadmap for nuclear to be reviewed with Cwmni Eginio to understand impacts on project 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty on programme delivery timescales until the site selection process is completed by UK Government

Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant The Circular Economy Developments	Developing the Full Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway Review completed • OBC approved at the December Economic Ambition Board meeting • Contracts in place with EPC & O&M Contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action OBC recommendations and prepare FBC • Agree funding agreement • Complete subsidy control assessment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding agreement to be finalised and subsidy control assessments to be completed before FBC approval which introduces some risk.
Holyhead Hydrogen Hub Menter Môn	Developing the Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ove Arup KO meeting to support OBC and FBC development. • Engineering meetings ongoing, engagement of civil contractors for desktop geotechnical studies. Progressing utility connection easements. Initiate discussion plot acquisition. • Grid connection studies received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion of geotechnical studies, connection agreement and 132kV grid topology. • Onboard additional MM support resource. • Progress OBC development. • Gateway Review and draft OBC submission. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment decisions required from external investors (EDF and UK Government) which are dependent on others

Programme Aim	Job Creation Target	GVA Investment Target	Total Investment Target
To address the shortage of suitable land and properties for business growth and to bring forward sites for housing development. To deliver improvements that stimulate investment in sites and premises in the Port of Holyhead and the wider region. Enables other programmes by ensuring the right land and property infrastructure is available.	2280	£1.29bn	£355.4m

RAG Status	Programme Manager Commentary
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 36</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warren Hall, Broughton – Welsh Government consultants have reported on the impact of the Hawarden airfield safety case on the project site and initial discussions are taking place with Airbus UK. . • Western Gateway, Wrexham – The Council, Welsh Government and Transport for Wales held a workshop to assess the Roads Review recommendations to deliver a and exemplar project in line with the four tests adopted by Welsh Government. It has been agreed that Transport for Wales will undertake a WELTAG O Traffic Review, to provide a review of the evidence base for traffic flows and numbers post the pandemic. • Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh – Denbighshire County Council were successful in their Levelling Up Fund Round 3 application to UK Government and a provisional sum of funding from the headline amount awarded could be used to assist in resolving the development viability issues caused by increasing build costs in the construction industry. Progress on the draft Outline Business Case is moving now at pace. The Land and Property Programme Board in December endorsed the project subject to completion of the OBC and meeting particular points of information. The remaining outstanding consenting matters concerning planning conditions and licences required to finalise the Phase 1 works t and permit these o commence have been submitted to the Council. • Holyhead Gateway – Holyhead Port expansion project outline business case has been substantially completed. The Land and Property Programme Board approved the project subject to confirmation on agreed points. • Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor – SP Projects have been appointed by Welsh Government and have provided a revised site Masterplan and high level costings for comment. by the PMO and these have been past back to SP Project and Welsh Government. Regular project team meetings are proposed to commence in January 2024. • Kimmel Studios – After the initial on boarding and site meeting Studio 50 have been appointing their consultancy team over the last quarter and engaging with their private sector funders. They are to share their funding business case for the private sector funding with the PMO. • Wrexham Gateway – UK Government confirmed the relocation of 300 plus Civil Service posts from London/Home Counties to Wrexham in December to be located at the Wrexham Gateway site. The Council are to complete the Strategic Outline Case and now commence developing the Outline Business Case.

5. Land and Property Programme Performance

Project (Project Sponsor)	Project Stage	Key Milestones (this quarter)	Key Milestones (next quarter)	RAG Status	RAG Rationale
Western Gateway, Wrexham Wrexham County Borough Council	Developing the Strategic Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A workshop has been held with the Council, Transport for Wales and Welsh Government to assess a way forward to help deliver the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport for Wales are to undertake and fund a Welltag 0 assessment on behalf of the Council. to provide a baseline assessment of traffic flows and numbers as they are in 2024. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project risk rating remains on red whilst the review of the projects ability to meet Welsh Governments tests for highway investment is undertaken.
Warren Hall, Broughton Welsh Government / Economic Ambition Board	Developing the Strategic Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh Government have met with Airbus UK to discuss the evidence provided by their consultants and these discussions are ongoing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh Government to formalise with Airbus UK the revised airfield safety case impact on the project site. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project risk rating remains at amber as revising the airfield safety case is still to be fully assessed. And agreed by Airbus UK.
Former North Wales Hospital, Denbighshire Jones Bros (Ruthin) Limited / Denbighshire County Council	Developing the Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Outline Business Case is substantially complete. The project was presented to the Land and Property Programme Board in December 2023 who support the project. UK Government awarded Denbighshire Levelling Up Funding Round 3 funds based the R2 application which contained provision for a £3m allocation in 2022. Project partner to submit documents to Planning Authority on S106 agreement, planning condition compliance and Habitat licences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and approve the outline business case Commence the approval process for the full business case. Denbighshire to formalise the Levelling Up Fund Round 3 funding allocation. for the project The Subsidy Support referral to the Competition and Markets Authority to be registered on the Authority website. Outstanding statutory consents are granted by planning authority. Agree/finalise with Jones Bros and DCC Phase 1 works and payment and verification process for transparency and value for money purposes. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project risk rating moved to Green due to provisional award of LUF funding to Denbighshire and possible allocation to reduce the viability gap.
Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor Welsh Government / North Wales Economic Ambition Board	Developing the Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welsh Government consultancy team to commence project development. Plot Masterplan and high level costings provided for comment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular project teams meetings to commence. Drafting the Outline Business Case to re-commence with a view to having a completed draft for the spring. 2024. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green risk rating retained for the project. Even though project commencement on site maybe delayed by 3 months.

5. Land and Property Programme Performance

Project (Project Sponsor)	Project Stage	Key Milestones (this quarter)	Key Milestones (next quarter)	RAG Status	RAG Rationale
Holyhead Gateway Stena Line Ports Limited	Developing the Outline Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Outline Business Case is substantially complete and final analysis is being undertaken on outputs delivered by the project. The project was presented to the Land and Property Programme Board in December 2023 who support the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing the draft Outline Business Case for the delivery of the port capacity enhancement works Submit the Subsidy Support application to Competition and Markets Authority. Stena commence first stage procurement prior to issuing the second stage Invitation to Tender.. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk rating retained at amber as negotiations with end user of new port areas is still ongoing.
Kinmel Studios Stage Fifty	Finalising the Strategic Outline Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage Fifty have been appointing their consultancy team to develop the project. and approaching private funders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategic Outline Business Case to be completed. Development of the outline business case to commence. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk rating as green given project application scrutiny and assessments made on its deliverability.
Wrexham Gateway Wrexham County Borough Council	Finalising the Strategic Outline Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Government has confirmed that over 300 Civil Service will be relocated to Wrexham. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategic Outline Business Case to be completed. Development of the outline business case to commence. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk rating as green given project application scrutiny and assessments made on its deliverability.



Cllr Jason McLellan
Lead Member



Andrew Farrow
Senior Responsible Owner




David Mathews
Programme Manager


Page 38	Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)	Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)	Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)
---------	---	--	--

Programme Aim	Job Creation Target	GVA Investment Target	Total Investment Target
To build a more sustainable, vibrant and resilient foundation economy in the region, optimising opportunities for employment and prosperity through our environment and landscape.	380	£281m	£41.3m


RAG Status	Programme Manager Commentary
	<p>Significant progress this past quarter with the approval by the Economic Ambition Board of the Outline Business Case for the Tourism Talent Network project in October, providing the momentum for the project to progress to procurement ahead of Full Business Case consideration in July 2024. The Responsible Adventure project has focused on a scaled back Strategic Outline Case that incorporates feedback from Ambition North Wales as part of the project selection process. Planning issues remain a significant risk for all three projects, with the risks being managed as described below. The Task and Finish group established to explore the agriculture/horticulture gap in the Growth Deal has commissioned some research looking at food supply and demand in the region.</p>



Cllr Charlie McCoubrey
Lead Member



Sioned Williams
Senior Responsible Owner



Robyn Lovelock
Programme Manager

	Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)		Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)		Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)
--	---	--	--	--	--

Project (Project Sponsor)	Project Stage	Key Milestones (this quarter)	Key Milestones (next quarter)	RAG Status	RAG Rationale
Glynliffon Rural Economy Hub Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	Developing the Full Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey work on-going as requested by Natural Resource Wales and CADW On-site meeting with Ambition North Wales to discuss planning risks and timeline to Full Business Case submission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise survey work Work with the PMO to confirm a revised timeline for drafting and reviewing the Full Business Case working towards approval in early 2024. Further develop the Full Business Case 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rating remains red due to repeated project delays and as planning permission has yet to be secured
Tourism Talent Network Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	Developing the Full Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline Business Case (OBC) approved by the Portfolio Board and Economic Ambition Board in October/November 2023 PMO support provided on procurement planning for Spoke partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with PMO to develop project-specific funding agreement Preparation of the Outline Business Case for the Sustainable Communities for Learning proposal for Hub element, and submission of planning application 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of the Outline Business Case has confirmed timeline towards Full Business Case consideration in July 2024.
Responsible Adventure ZipWorld	Developing the Strategic Outline Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training day in early October with project sponsor to discuss project delivery and share experience and knowledge. PMO support provided on Better Business Case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Board to consider Strategic Outline Case (SOC) Better Business Case workshops Commence development of the Outline Business Case 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Outline Case being prepared in timeframe expected

	Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)		Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)		Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)
--	---	--	--	--	--

Programme Aim	Job Creation Target	GVA Investment Target	Total Investment Target
To consolidate North Wales position as a powerful and innovative high value manufacturing cluster, building on existing specialisms and leading expertise to create a higher value, more diverse economic base that supports the transition to a low carbon economy.	180	£114m	£39.5m

RAG Status	Programme Manager Commentary
	The approval by the Economic Ambition Board of the Full Business Case for the Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre project is a significant milestone for the project and for the Growth Deal, enabling the project to move into delivery. Construction of the Plas Coch Centre will begin in February 2024, the first construction project enabled by the North Wales Growth Deal. Planning permission for the Centre for Environmental Biotechnology (CEB) was received and the draft Business Justification Case for the project was reviewed by the Portfolio Management Office, with the Business Case on track for approval in March 2024.



Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn
Lead Member

To Be Confirmed
Senior Responsible Owner



Robyn Lovelock
Programme Manager

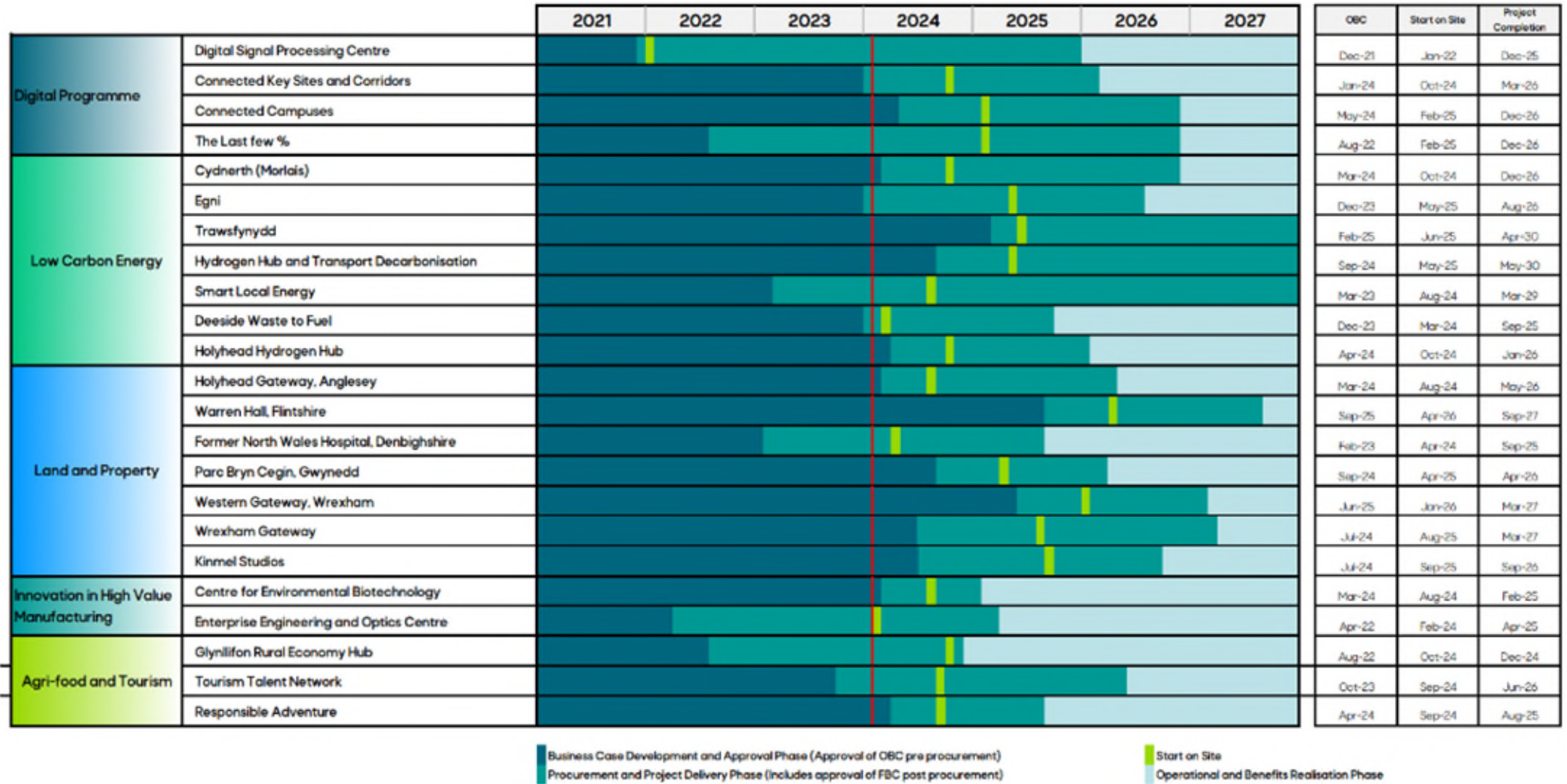
	Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)		Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)		Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)
--	---	--	--	--	--

Project (Project Sponsor)	Project Stage	Key Milestones (this quarter)	Key Milestones (next quarter)	RAG Status	RAG Rationale
Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre Wrexham University	Full Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full Business Case approved by the Economic Ambition Board in November 2023 Suppliers for OpTIC works and equipment purchases not appointed, projects will be retendered following further supplier engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract signing scheduled for January 2024, with Plas Coch start-on-site planned for February 2024 Revise and publish tenders for the OpTIC works and equipment purchases 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project on track to begin construction in February 2024
Centre for Environmental Biotechnology Bangor University	Developing the Business Justification Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning permission for the Henfaes site received Incorporating feedback from Portfolio Management Office Review into finalising the Business Justification Case for final review in February 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise Business Justification Case ahead of EAB consideration in March 2024. Preparation for procurement in April 2024 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rating moved from Red to Amber following Gateway and PMO Reviews

	Delivering to Plan with no issues to address (no action required)		Delivery slightly behind schedule and/or minor/moderate issues to address (management action in place)		Delivery significantly behind schedule and/or significant issues to address (urgent action required)
--	---	--	--	--	--

8. Project Progress Tracker

Project	Consenting Stage				Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8
	Pre-application stage	Outline planning / Consent	Full planning / Consent	Conditions discharged	Determine the Project context	Preparing the Strategic Outline Case	Preparing the Outline Business Case	Approval of the Outline Business Case	Preparing the Full Business Case	Approval of the Full Business Case	Project implementation and monitoring	Project Evaluation
Digital Signal Processing Centre	No planning required				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚	
Connected Key Sites and Corridors	Consenting requirements TBC				✓	✓	⌚					
Connected Campuses	Consenting requirements TBC				✓	✓	⌚					
Last Few %	Consenting requirements TBC				✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚			
Cydnerth (Morlais)	✓	✓	✓	⌚	✓	✓	⌚					
Trawsfynydd Power Station	Consenting requirements TBC				✓	⌚						
Egni	⌚				✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚			
Smart Local Energy	Consenting requirements TBC				✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚			
Hydrogen Hub & Transport Decarbonisation	Consenting requirements TBC				✓	✓	⌚					
Deeside Waste to Fuel	✓	✓	✓	⌚	✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚			
Holyhead Hydrogen Hub	✓	✓			✓	✓	⌚					
Holyhead Gateway	✓	✓	✓	⌚	✓	✓	⌚					
Former North Wales Hospital	✓	✓	✓	⌚	✓	✓	⌚					
Western Gateway, Wrexham	LDP adopted 23/12/2023				✓	⌚						
Warren Hall, Broughton	⌚				✓	⌚						
Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor	⌚				✓	✓	⌚					
Kinmel Studios	⌚				✓	⌚						
Wrexham Gateway	⌚				✓	⌚						
Glynliffon Rural Economy Hub	⌚				✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚			
Tourism Talent Network	⌚				✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚			
Responsible Adventure	⌚				✓	⌚						
Centre for Environmental Biotechnology	⌚				✓	✓	⌚					
Enterprise Engineering and Optics	✓	✓	✓	⌚	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	⌚	



The status for each project is assessed against this profile from the 2023 Portfolio Business Case unless a new timeline has been approved by the NWEAB through a project business case or change request.

10. Objective Tracker - Overview of delivery

		Portfolio Business Case 2023 Targets			Approved Project Business Case Targets				Difference		
		GVA (EM)	Jobs Created (net)	(EM) Total Investment*	OBC/ FBC*	GVA (EM)	Jobs Created (net)	(EM) Total Investment*	GVA (EM)	Jobs Created	(EM) Total Investment*
Digital	Digital Signal Processing Centre (DSP)	10	35	2.96	FBC	12	33	3.0	+2	-2	-0.04
	Connecting the last few %	10	135	4.17	OBC	15	130	4.0	+5	-5	+0.17
	Connected Key Sites and Corridors	50	115	9.40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Connected Campuses	30	0	20.68	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Low Carbon Energy	Cydnherth (Morlais)	30	100	8.87	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Hydrogen Hub and Transport Decarbonisation	35	90	28.42	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Egni	30	50	8.00	OBC	19	49	10	-11	-1	+2
	Smart Local Energy	130	230	102.00	OBC	122	174	106	-8	-56	+4
	Trawsfynydd	70	505	244.12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Holyhead Hydrogen Hub	20	20	28.77	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant	20	40	63.28	OBC	34	65	60	+14	+25	+1.72
Land and Property	Western Gateway, Wrexham	120	360	43.36	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Warren Hall, Broughton	120	445	69.76	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh	10	50	99.94	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor	20	50	5.91	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Holyhead Gateway	370	925	181.44	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Wrexham Gateway	10	150	14.37	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Kinmel Studios	50	200	32.00	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Agrifood and Tourism	Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub	30	95	16.79	OBC	45	96	13	+15	+1	-3.79
	Tourism Talent Network	10	5	12.94	OBC	35.3	68	12.88	+25.3	+63	-0.06
	Responsible Adventure	20	175	12.40	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Innovation in High Value Manufacturing	Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre	30	60	16.42	FBC	70	70	18.12	+40	+10	+1.7
	Centre for Environmental Biotechnology	30	90	3.50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Growth Deal Portfolio Total		1,255	3,925	1,029	6OBC + 2FBC	352.3	685	227			

* Total investment shown here includes 15% Portfolio Management Office costs
 OBC - Outline Business Case, FBC - Full Business Case

11. Growth Deal – Capital Expenditure Profile

Note: The expenditure profile is based on the latest available project information.

Project	2021/22 (£m)	2022/23 (£m)	2023/24 (£m)	2024/25 (£m)	2025/26 (£m)	2026/27 (£m)	2027/28 (£m)	2028/29 (£m)	2029/30 (£m)	2030/31 (£m)	2031/32 (£m)	2032/33 (£m)	2033/34 (£m)	2034/35 (£m)	2035/36 (£m)	Total (£m)
Digital Programme																
Digital Signal Processing Centre Project	0.12	1.66	0.39	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.96
Connected Key Sites and Corridors	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	4.00	2.00	2.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.87
Advanced Connectivity ('Connected Campus')	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.94	10.10	4.93	4.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.68
Last few %	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.32	1.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17
Low Carbon Energy Programme																
Cytherth (Morlais)	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.33	4.44	1.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.87
Egni (Low Carbon Energy Centre of Excellence)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.94	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.94
Trawsfynydd Power Station	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.50	2.50	5.00	5.70	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	19.70
Hydrogen Hub	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.61	5.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.23
Smart Local Energy	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.50	3.00	9.25	9.25	1.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.63
Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant*	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.40
Holyhead Hydrogen Hub*	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.90	1.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.80
Land and Property Programme																
Holyhead Gateway	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.64	17.00	2.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	34.47
Warren Hall, Broughton	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.38	7.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.77
Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh	0.00	0.00	0.14	4.90	1.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.94
Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.91	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.91
Western Gateway, Wrexham	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.48	4.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.96
Kimmel Studios*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.40	3.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.80
Wrexham Gateway*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.79	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.79
Innovation in High Value Manufacturing																
Centre of Environmental Biotechnology	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.96
Enterprise Engineering & Optics Centre	0.00	0.00	1.81	7.27	2.47	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.55
Agrifood and Tourism Programme																
Glynifon Rural Economy Hub Project	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.20	4.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.82
Tourism TALENT Network	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	2.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.43
Responsible Adventure*	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.30	3.70	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.20
Growth Deal Sub Total																
North Wales Growth Deal	0.12	1.66	2.34	60.54	86.68	49.85	21.33	7.33	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	234.8
PMO 2.15%																
Portfolio Management Office	0.22	0.28	1.02	1.20	0.70	0.70	0.30	0.15	0.15	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.05	0.00	5.15
Growth Deal Total																
North Wales Growth Deal	0.34	1.94	3.36	61.74	87.38	50.55	21.63	7.48	5.15	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.05	0.00	240.0

* Replacement projects invited to join the Growth Deal subject to agreeing a MOU - timetable and deliver profile to be finalised

11. Growth Deal – Risk Adjusted Capital Expenditure Profile

Note: The expenditure profile is based on the latest available project information, risk adjusted by the Portfolio Management Office.

Project	2021/22 (£m)	2022/23 (£m)	2023/24 (£m)	2024/25 (£m)	2025/26 (£m)	2026/27 (£m)	2027/28 (£m)	2028/29 (£m)	2029/30 (£m)	2030/31 (£m)	2031/32 (£m)	2032/33 (£m)	2033/34 (£m)	2034/35 (£m)	2035/36 (£m)	Total (£m)
Digital Programme																
Digital Signal Processing Centre Project	0.12	1.66	0.39	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.96
Connected Key Sites and Corridors	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	4.00	2.00	2.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.87
Advanced Connectivity (Connected Campus)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.94	10.10	4.93	4.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.68
Last few %	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.32	1.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.17
Low Carbon Energy Programme																
Cydnherth (Morias)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.33	4.44	1.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.87
Egni (Low Carbon Energy Centre of Excellence)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.97	1.97	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.94
Trawsfynydd Power Station	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.50	2.50	5.00	5.70	5.00	0.00	0.00	19.70
Hydrogen Hub	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.61	5.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.23
Smart Local Energy	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.75	3.00	9.25	9.25	2.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.63
Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant*	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.20	2.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.40
Holyhead Hydrogen Hub*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.90	1.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.80
Land and Property Programme																
Holyhead Gateway	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.64	17.00	9.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	34.47
Warren Hall, Broughton	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.38	7.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.77
Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.90	3.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.94
Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.91	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.91
Western Gateway, Wrexham	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.48	4.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.96
Kimmel Studios*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.40	3.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.80
Wrexham Gateway*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.79	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.79
Innovation in High Value Manufacturing																
Centre of Environmental Biotechnology	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.96
Enterprise Engineering & Optics Centre	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.27	4.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.55
Agrifood and Tourism Programme																
Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub Project	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.20	4.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.82
Tourism TALENT Network	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.13	2.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.43
Responsible Adventure*	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.30	3.70	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.20
Growth Deal Sub Total																
North Wales Growth Deal	0.12	1.66	0.39	24.55	56.53	67.83	44.51	19.56	1.50	2.50	5.00	5.70	5.00	0.00	0.00	234.8
PMO 2.15%																
Portfolio Management Office	0.22	0.28	1.02	1.20	0.70	0.70	0.30	0.15	0.15	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.05	0.00	5.15
Growth Deal Total																
North Wales Growth Deal	0.34	1.94	1.41	25.75	57.23	68.53	44.81	19.71	1.65	2.60	5.10	5.80	5.08	0.05	0.00	240.0

* Replacement projects invited to join the Growth Deal subject to agreeing a MOU - timetable and deliver profile to be finalised

12. Growth Deal Projects: Capital Funding Allocation Profile

Programme	Project	Project Sponsor	Profile 23/24 (£m)	Actual YTD (£m)	Variance (£m)*	Rationale
Digital	Digital Signal Processing Centre	Bangor University	0.39	0.00	-0.39	The claim for the DSP has been received and will be paid during Quarter 4.
	Connecting the Last Few %	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Connected Key Sites and Corridors	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Connected Campuses	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Low Carbon Energy	Cydnherth (Morlais)	Menter Môn	0.00	0.00	0.00	No Full Business Cases have been approved. Expenditure profile now aligned to 2023 Portfolio Business Case update.
	Hydrogen Hub & Transport Decarbonisation	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Egni	Bangor University	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Smart Local Energy	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Trawsfynydd Power Station	Cwmni Eginio	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Deeside Waste to Fuel	The Circular Economy Development	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Holyhead Hydrogen Hub	Menter Môn	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Land and Property	Western Gateway, Wrexham	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	No Full Business Cases have been approved. Expenditure profile now aligned to 2023 Portfolio Business Case update.
	Warren Hall, Broughton	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.14	0.00	-0.14	
	Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor	North Wales Economic Ambition Board	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Holyhead Gateway	Stena line	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Kinmel Studios	Stage Fifty	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Wrexham Gateway	Wrexham County Borough Council	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Agri-food and Tourism	Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub	Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	0.00	0.00	0.00	No Full Business Cases have been approved. Expenditure profile now aligned to 2023 Portfolio Business Case update.
	Tourism Talent Network	Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	0.00	0.00	0.00	
	Responsible Adventure	Zip World	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Innovation in High Value Manufacturing	Enterprise Engineering and Optics Centre	Glyndwr University	1.81	0.00	-1.81	EEOC Full Business Cases has been approved. Expenditure profile now aligned to 2023 Portfolio Business Case update.
	Centre for Environmental Biotechnology	Bangor University	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Portfolio Management Office Costs			1.02	0.47	-0.55	
Total			3.36	0.47	-2.89	

* Variance is the difference between the planned profile (Portfolio Business Case 2023) and the Actual Year to Date (YTD) expenditure.

	Project	Sponsor	Summary
Digital	Digital Signal Processing Centre (DSP)	Bangor University	The project will allow the DSP Centre to expand its presence and remit, integrating fully with the National Strategy Project (NSP) and enable the scaling of key assets including a 5G testbed, research capacity and state-of-the-art equipment.
	The last few %	Ambition North Wales	This project targets universal superfast coverage across North Wales, which have yet to be served by other means and cannot obtain speeds of at least 30Mbps (download).
	Connected Key Sites and Corridors	Ambition North Wales	This project aims to enhance the reliability and quality of mobile services on the main roads and rail routes in North Wales, enabling full-fibre services to key commercial sites across the region. Focussing on developing fibreoptic networks, which are essential for delivering 4G, 5G and gigabit capable broadband.
	Connected Campuses	Ambition North Wales	The project will accelerate the development of a range of digital connectivity options with a current focus at 18 key regional economic sites.
Low Carbon Energy	Cydnerth (Morlais)	Menter Môn	Investing in infrastructure to connect to the National Grid network and monitor marine environmental effects. This will enable an increase in the deployment of turbines by tidal developers and the generation of renewable energy.
	Hydrogen Hub and Transport Decarbonisation	Ambition North Wales	Support delivery of a demonstrator project involving the production of green hydrogen from low carbon energy sources and its use within regional transport networks.
	Egni (Low Carbon Energy Centre of Excellence)	Bangor University	Investing in the development of facilities at Bangor University and Menai Science Park, enhancing the North Wales and UK capabilities for innovation in low carbon energy and related areas, helping to create the conditions for new inward investment and business growth in the low carbon energy supply chain in North Wales.
	Smart Local Energy	Ambition North Wales	To help achieve renewable energy, decarbonisation and local ownership targets, the project will support innovative enabling projects and demonstrators that overcome market failures and unlock private and community sector investments in smart local energy solutions.
	Trawsfynydd	Cwmni Egino	The site is uniquely placed for a 'First of A Kind' deployment of a Small Modular Reactor (SMR) or Advanced Modular Reactor (AMR). Alongside the public and private sector, the Growth Deal will contribute funding towards enabling infrastructure for this development.
	Deeside Waste to Fuel	The Circular Economy Ltd	Creation of a facility to convert 182,000 tonnes per year of commercial food waste destined for landfill/incineration into green bio-methane, power, and fertiliser.
	Holyhead Hydrogen Hub	Menter Môn	This project will build a green hydrogen production facility at Parc Cybi, Holyhead, producing around 2000+kg/day of green hydrogen, supplying road, maritime and rail transport customers across North Wales.
Land and Property	Western Gateway, Wrexham	Ambition North Wales	Delivery of primary services to enable the site to be brought to the market for sale and development.
	Warren Hall, Broughton	Ambition North Wales	Delivery of primary services to enable the 65-hectare mixed use site to be bought to the market for sale and then development by the private sector.
	Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor	Ambition North Wales	Provide industrial floor space to meet known demand for units.
	Former North Wales Hospital, Denbigh	Ambition North Wales	The Growth Deal funding will assist in the delivery of a cleared and remediated site with primary services to bring forward a mixed-use commercial and residential development
	Holyhead Gateway	Stena Line	Future proof the Holyhead Port by providing new deep-water heavy loading and cruise facilities, improved vehicular access, guaranteeing the future of the breakwater and providing for the demands of regional energy projects.
	Wrexham Gateway	Wrexham County Borough Council	This project is a sustainable development of a vibrant regenerated area, creating a focal point to support business investment and a multi-modal transportation hub with links to active travel.
	Kinmel Studios	Stage Fifty	This project will design, build and operate film and television studios at Tir Llwyd Enterprise Park along with a training academy and incubator units.
Agri-Food and Tourism	Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub	Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	The vision is to create a distinctive, world-class Rural Economy Hub at Glynllifon, offering a range of facilities and services to strengthen and enhance the regional economy, specifically through growing the food and drink sector.
	Tourism Talent Network	Grŵp Llandrillo Menai	Future-proofing the pipeline of skills provision and increase commercial benefits from one of the most established sectors in the region. The talent network will stimulate public-private collaboration to coordinate action on skills and product development to transform and accelerate the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector in the region.
	Responsible Adventure	Zip World	A multi-element project as part of a sustainable and eco-tourism package including a new sustainable Cable Car, Slate Explorer including visitor viewing platform and an eBus Network.
Innovation in High Value Manufacturing	Centre for Environmental Biotechnology (CEB)	Bangor University	The Centre for Engineering Biotechnology will be a world-leading centre in the discovery and characterisation of novel extremophilic enzymes of industrial relevance. The Centre for Engineering Biotechnology will provide a strong foundation for attracting world-leading researchers, significant public and commercial research funding, and inward investment to Wales.
	Enterprise Engineering & Optics Centre	Wrexham University	The Enterprise Engineering & Optics Centre will provide facilities targeted to boost high-level skills development for the region and enable Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) and large businesses to work in partnership with Wrexham Glyndwr University on commercially driven research and development in optics, composites and hydrogen fuel cells.

NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL PORTFOLIO RISK REGISTER

Risk ID	Date Raised	Risk Category	Risk Name	Risk Owner	Description of the Risk	Current Gross Risk Rating			Trend	Mitigating Actions	Action Due Dates	Action owner	Residual Risk Rating			Trend	Status (Open / Closed)	Commentary	Date of last update
						P	I	Score					P	I	Score				
R003	21/10/20	Financial	Affordability	Portfolio Management Office	If projects increase in cost, there is a risk they may not go ahead or project scope may need to be scaled down	5	5	25	↔	<p>Project Business Cases will set out detailed project level financial, commercial and risk management measures to manage costs.</p> <p>Robust performance, risk and financial reporting arrangements will be established for all projects</p> <p>Once Project Business Cases are approved, any additional costs incurred will be the responsibility of the Project Sponsor and alternative funding options will be considered.</p> <p>Ongoing discussions with UK/WG on mitigation strategy for managing the risk of increasing costs</p> <p>Portfolio Delivery Fund approved by the NWEAB and requests for funding approved in Feb 2023</p> <p>PMO engaging with sponsors at project level to identify mitigation for cost increases</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Monthly</p>	<p>PMO, Project Sponsor</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p>	4	4	16	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. The residual risk rating remains high as costs have increased significantly since the Growth Deal was agreed in December 2020. While costs have stabilised at the moment, the Growth Deal funding from government is fixed at the amount agreed in 2020 therefore affordability remains a challenge for project. This is being managed on a project by project basis with some projects able to look at design changes, changes to deliver models and others needing to secure additional funding from other sources.	16/01/24
R016	22/10/20	Programme and Project Delivery	Assurance	Operations Manager	If agreed assurance processes are not followed, there is a risk that project approval could be impacted and could result in suspension/postponement of government grant payments.	3	5	15	↔	<p>Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan (IAAP) agreed with Welsh and UK Government as part of Final Deal.</p> <p>Continued engagement with Welsh Government Assurance Hub to refine and update the Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan (IAAP)</p> <p>PMO assurance lead to coordinate delivery of assurance in accordance with the IAAP</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p>	2	4	8	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. An assurance review in October 2023 resulted in 14 recommendations to be undertaken by the PMO. An action plan was put in place to address these and the follow up review in December highlighted the good progress made in addressing the recommendations.	16/01/24
R015	22/10/20	Reputational and Social Impact	Benefits Realisation	Portfolio Management Office	If project benefits are not realised, there is a risk that the overall Growth Deal could fail to deliver the benefits set out within business case.	4	4	16	↔	<p>Each programme and project will be responsible for benefits management through a Benefits Realisation Plan.</p> <p>Monthly highlight reports to Programme Board to monitor benefits realisation</p> <p>Procurement Principles adopted with focus on community benefits and social value</p> <p>Benefits Realisation guidance developed and being disseminated to project sponsors for use in project business cases</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>PMO, Programme and Project SROs</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p>	3	3	9	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. A recent assurance review highlighted the work of the PMO on benefits realisation as good practice which will ensure the structures and systems are in place to help projects realise and report on benefits realisation.	16/01/24
R001	21/10/20	Programme and Project Delivery	Capacity	Portfolio Director	If sufficient resources are not in place at portfolio, programme and project level, there is a risk that this could impact on the successful delivery of the deal	4	5	20	↔	<p>NWEAB approval for fixed term contract extensions to March 2025. Majority of PMO Team in place</p> <p>Additional procurement and legal technical capacity to be secured for projects as required</p> <p>PMO to utilise external technical support when necessary</p> <p>PMO supporting partners to ensure capacity for delivery and support recruitment activity</p> <p>Backfill arrangements in place to manage the impact of part-time secondment of Portfolio Director to the Corporate Joint Committee</p> <p>SPF bid includes contribution towards some existing PMO costs</p> <p>Approval from both Governments to increase the top slice from to 2% and enabling PMO to draw down additional funding through Growth Deal budget and extend contracts to 2025</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Reviewed monthly</p> <p>Reviewed monthly</p> <p>In place</p> <p>March 2023</p> <p>In place</p>	<p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO, Project Sponsors</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO</p>	4	4	16	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Capacity remains a risk with a number of vacancies in the team. However recruitment is underway to fill these roles which should see the risk reduced in the next quarter.	16/01/24
R006	21/10/20	Environmental	Climate Change and Biodiversity	Portfolio Director	If projects do not take account of carbon emissions or biodiversity loss within project level assessments, there is a risk the portfolio could contribute towards the issues of climate change and biodiversity loss	4	3	12	↔	<p>Position statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity adopted by the NWEAB.</p> <p>Project business cases to demonstrate delivery against the adopted NWEAB position.</p> <p>Methodology on how to take account of carbon emissions and biodiversity loss within project business cases now published and shared with all projects</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>In place</p>	<p>NWEAB</p> <p>PMO, Project SROs</p> <p>PMO</p>	3	3	9	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Roll out of methodology and associated training continues	16/01/24
R002	21/10/20	Programme and Project Delivery	Delay	Portfolio Management Office	If there are delays to project delivery, there is a risk this could have an impact on the realisation of benefits or could result in projects not progressing.	5	5	25	↔	<p>PMO resources reallocated to assist projects requiring additional support (2023 PAR action).</p> <p>Monthly highlight reports to Programme Board with escalation routes to NWEAB</p> <p>Programme and project RAID logs in place to record risks and manage issues</p> <p>Project business cases and implementation plans to clearly set out risks to project delivery and mitigations. PMO working with sponsors to identify opportunities to minimise delay and where delay is unavoidable minimise impact</p> <p>Quarterly reports to the NWEAB and Portfolio Board</p> <p>Project timetables reviewed as part of the 2022 Portfolio Business Case</p> <p>Project Delivery Fund approved by the NWEAB with change requests approved in Feb 2023</p> <p>PMO working with sponsors at project-level to identify opportunities to minimise delay and where delay is unavoidable minimise impact</p>	<p>Monthly</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>In place</p> <p>Feb 2023</p> <p>In place</p>	<p>PMO</p> <p>PMO, Project Sponsor</p> <p>Project Sponsor</p> <p>Project Sponsor</p> <p>PMO</p> <p>PMO, Project sponsor</p> <p>PMO, Project Sponsors</p>	4	4	16	▼	Open	<p>Risk probability reduced.</p> <p>OBC and FBC approvals in Q3 have addressed some delays. Action following PAR to use PMO resources more flexibly has proven to be effective to accelerate business case development. Risk probability will reduce further if progress is sustained.</p> <p>A number of projects are experiencing delays which will impact on the timing of benefits realisation.</p>	16/01/24

Risk ID	Date Raised	Risk Category	Risk Name	Risk Owner	Description of the Risk	Current Gross Risk Rating			Trend	Mitigating Actions	Action Due Dates	Action owner	Residual Risk Rating			Trend	Status (Open / Closed)	Commentary	Date of last update
						P	I	Score					P	I	Score				
R020	03/10/22	Programme and Project Delivery	Economic Context	Portfolio Management Office	If there are significant changes to the UK economy (e.g. cost of living crisis and the energy security crisis), then the strategic and economic cases for programmes and projects may be adversely impacted	4	5	20	▲	Project business cases and implementation plans to clearly set out the case for projects and the risks to project delivery, including the impact of recent economic developments	N/A	PMO, Project Sponsors	3	5	15	▲	Open	Risk probability increased. Developing global issues affecting supply chains and energy market likely to affect costs in the short to medium term.	16/01/24
R017	22/10/20	Financial	Financial Management	s151 Officer	If appropriate financial arrangements are not put in place, there could be a risk to the delivery of the deal, draw-down of the funding grant and allocation of funds.	3	4	12	↔	NWEAB will utilise existing financial processes of Gwynedd Council as Host Authority Project Business Cases will set out detailed project level financial, commercial and risk management measures to manage finances Robust monthly performance, risk and financial reporting arrangements will be established for all projects Robust financial claims process established for the drawdown of funding	N/A N/A Monthly N/A	PMO PMO, Project SRO PMO, Project SRO PMO	2	3	6	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Residual risk remains low due to the processes in place by Ambition North Wales and the funding agreements with project sponsors.	16/01/24
R014	22/10/20	Financial	Fraud	Portfolio Director	If appropriate processes are not put in place and managed, there is a risk that the portfolio could be subject to fraudulent claims resulting in misuse of public funds	4	4	16	↔	Projects to have robust financial monitoring processes in place PMO to review claims submitted before passing them onto accountable body for payment Code of conduct and conflicts of interest policy incorporated as part of Governance Agreement 2 Conflict of Interest Register maintained for all programmes, projects and advisory groups.	N/A N/A Complete N/A	PMO PMO Monitoring Officer PMO	2	4	8	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Residual risk remains low due to the processes in place by Ambition North Wales. A further round of fraud training is planned for the PMO and Business Delivery Board in early 2024.	16/01/24
R009	21/10/20	Regulatory	Planning and Statutory Consents	Portfolio Management Office	If projects do not receive the necessary statutory consents and planning approval, there is a risk that projects will not be delivered and the benefits would not be realised.	4	5	20	↔	Project business cases will set out the consenting requirements for each project and the risks to project delivery Continued engagement with project sponsors to understand consenting process and risks with support provided where appropriate at project level Local authority phosphates strategies in place as part of Local Plan adoption. PMO delivered review of project consenting progress for each project and will incorporate into reports going forward Lessons learnt review to be delivered following project-level consenting delays Chair and/or Portfolio Director to write to consenting authorities highlighting the impact of delayed decisions when individual project risks are escalated.	N/A N/A In place Summer 2023 In place As required	PMO, Project SROs PMO Local Authorities PMO PMO, Project sponsors Portfolio Director	4	5	20	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Consenting remains a high risk, however the approval of the Harbour Revision Order (HRO) for Holyhead Gateway removes a significant project consenting risk. Adoption of LDP by WCBC is a positive development for the risk probability for Land and Property.	16/01/24
R013	21/10/20	Reputational and Social Impact	Political Change	Portfolio Director	If stakeholders are not managed effectively, there is a risk that political change could impact support for the portfolio, programme and projects.	4	4	16	↔	Frequent engagement with UK, Welsh Government and local government politicians and officials. GA2 and Final Deal agreement to confirm commitments of all parties. New members to be briefed on the Growth Deal Portfolio following the change in leadership Engagement with new UK Government Ministers	N/A Complete Complete Ongoing	NWEAB, PMO NWEAB PMO PMO	2	4	8	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. The risk remains low at present as there are no local elections in Wales during 2024. However with a UK General Election having to take place no later than 28 January 2025 this risk may increase in the future.	16/01/24
R007	21/10/20	Financial	Private Sector Investment	Portfolio Management Office	If the private sector investment is not secured, there is a risk that projects will not be delivered or delivered at reduced scale impacting on the benefits to the region.	4	5	20	↔	Continued engagement with Project Sponsors and private sector partners Development of robust project business cases and contractual agreements for Growth Deal funding Delivery of project process for identifying replacement Growth Deal projects Following PAR recommendation, an investment strategy has been developed with further work to be commissioned in early 2023	N/A N/A July 2023 March 2023	PMO, Project SROs PMO, Project SROs NWEAB, PMO PMO	4	4	16	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Securing the private sector investment for the Growth Deal remains a high risk, however the position has improved with the selection of five new projects through the project replacement process.	16/01/24
R008	21/10/20	Financial	Public Sector Investment	Portfolio Management Office	If the public sector investment is not secured, there is a risk that projects will not be delivered or delivered at reduced scale impacting on the benefits to the region.	4	4	16	↔	All NWEAB partners have signed up to the Growth Deal and Governance Agreement 2. Development of robust project business cases and contractual agreements for Growth Deal funding Support project sponsor applications for other public funding sources where appropriate	Complete N/A As required	NWEAB PMO, Project SROs PMO	4	4	16	↔	Open	Risk reviewed and mitigations updated. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. As per private sector investment, the risk rating remains high due to the low number of FBCs approved to date and funding agreements entered into.	16/01/24
R018	01/10/20	Financial	Revenue Funding	Portfolio Management Office and Project Sponsors	If sufficient revenue funding is not in place to support the activities of the NWEAB and delivery of the Growth Deal, then project delivery and achievement of spending objectives and benefits may be impacted	4	5	20	↔	NWEAB has approved extension of fixed term contracts to March 2025. Longer term solutions continue to be investigated Partners and project sponsors responsible for sourcing revenue funding to support non-NWEAB led projects PMO working to identify additional funding opportunities for NWEAB led projects PMO exploring the potential capitalisation of project salary costs. Growth Deal top slice increased to 2%, allowing extension of FTAs to March 2025 SPF bid to 5 local authorities successful, separate application submitted to Wrexham.	N/A N/A N/A N/A May 2023 Sep 2023	PMO PMO, Project SRO PMO, Project SRO PMO PMO, Portfolio Board PMO	3	4	12	↔	Open	Risk reviewed and mitigations updated. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Revenue position has improved through the increase in the top slice from the Growth Deal to 2.15% and securing SPF funding. Outcome of SPF application to WCBC pending.	16/01/24

Risk ID	Date Raised	Risk Category	Risk Name	Risk Owner	Description of the Risk	Current Gross Risk Rating			Trend	Mitigating Actions	Action Due Dates	Action owner	Residual Risk Rating			Trend	Status (Open / Closed)	Commentary	Date of last update
						P	I	Score					P	I	Score				
R010	21/10/20	Reputational and Social Impact	Spending Objectives	Portfolio Director	If projects fail to deliver against the portfolio spending objectives, there is a risk that the Growth Deal may not meet its targets in relation to job creation, GVA and investment.	5	4	20	↔	Robust business cases will be developed for each programme and project in line with 5 Case Business Model and will need to set out contribution to portfolio spending objective targets Project review and change control process in place. Replacement project process was completed in July 2023 with five new project selected to join the Growth Deal. Investment strategy has been developed. Principles approved by Board in December 2023 with full strategy to be presented in early 2024.	N/A N/A Complete In place	PMO, Project SROs PMO NWEAB, PMO PMO	4	4	16	↔	Open	Risk reviewed and mitigations updated. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. The latest iteration of the Portfolio Business Case submitted to both governments in October 2023 demonstrates how the Growth Deal can still deliver on these targets, however the contingency has now reduced therefore the residual risk remains high.	16/01/24
R019	01/10/20	Programme and Project Delivery	Supply Chain & Skills Capacity	Portfolio Management Office	If the regional supply chain does not have the capacity to deliver projects, then projects delivery could be impacted and regional benefits could be lower.	4	4	16	↔	Project business cases and implementation plans to clearly set out risks to project delivery and mitigations, including supply chain risks. RSP working with PMO to identify regional supply chain / skills challenges and identify mitigations Additional funding secured for skills activity Projects to conduct early market engagement where appropriate	N/A N/A In place N/A	PMO PMO PMO Project Sponsors	3	4	12	↔	Open	Risk reviewed. No changes to gross or residual risk scores. Close collaboration between the PMO and the RSP on skills and supply chain is key to reducing the probability of this risk. This is an ongoing activity to ensure the capacity and skills are in the region to take advantage of the opportunities through the Growth Deal.	16/01/24

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Progress Report on the Recommendations from the Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation
Date of meeting	21 March 2024
Author	Gwern ap Rhisiart, Head of Education
Cabinet Member for Education	Councillor Beca Brown

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CATEGORY 3 SECONDARY SCHOOLS SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS		ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED
1.	That the Authority makes annual requests to the schools for data on the language medium of their provision and checks the situation.	<p><i>The Department has already been collecting language medium data for secondary schools annually and the data for the current year has been collected and collated.</i></p> <p><i>The Department is not currently in a situation to be able to check the situation, but attention is given to the Welsh language and schools' ethos in each visit held for schools.</i></p>
2.	That the Education Authority sets specific targets to increase the Welsh-medium provision for all secondary schools which are compatible with the county targets, and monitors attainment.	<p><i>The Department has decided not to implement this recommendation until an alternative Education Language Policy has been drawn up for Gwynedd.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, the landscape is unclear in terms of the exact requirements of the categorising procedure when it becomes statutory, as well as the final direction and content of the Welsh Language Bill.</i></p> <p><i>The departmental capacity to monitor detailed individual targets is currently scarce, and as the discussion develops around the language policy in Gwynedd and the Welsh Language Bill, it can be considered to plan, target and monitor on a cluster level.</i></p>

3.	That the Education Authority again asks the WJEC to annually publish the number of candidates who complete examination papers through the medium of Welsh and English for each subject. The figures should be published at national and county levels and individual school figures given to those schools.	<i>A letter has been sent to Ian Morgan, WJEC Chief Executive, by the Head of Education responding to this recommendation and making this request solid.</i>
4.	That the Education Authority adapts the model Language Policy for schools, putting more emphasis on the Welsh language and making it clearer regarding what is meant by "bilingualism".	<p><i>The Education Authority has commissioned Meirion Prys Jones to collaborate with the Department as a freelance consultant to revisit Gwynedd's Education Language Policy as a result of national changes in the field, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- Cymraeg 2050</i> <i>- Curriculum for Wales</i> <i>- The procedure of categorising schools according to Welsh-medium provision</i> <i>- The Welsh Language Bill</i> <p><i>The Department, jointly with Meirion Prys Jones, will engage with schools, members and wider stakeholders by revisiting the Language Policy over the next few months.</i></p>
5.	That the Education Authority unequivocally outlines its position in terms of dealing with appeals to requests rejected by schools to change the medium of learning to English for specific learners.	<p><i>It is a requirement to follow the school's complaints procedure, but it is hoped that revisiting the Education Language Policy by commissioning Meirion Prys Jones would offer more clarity in terms of expectations.</i></p> <p><i>It is also hoped that the requirements, in terms of provision through the categorisation procedure, will become statutory.</i></p>
6.	That the Education Authority develops and increases the collaboration with the two Category T3 schools in a way that will speed up their journey to become Category 3 schools.	<p><i>The Department shares the same eagerness to see progress in the transitional schools. The Department acknowledges that leadership is key to this success. The Department also acknowledges that linguistic planning, changing culture, changing behaviours and developing skills is a process that is likely to take time to embed and ensure the desired results for our children and young people, and that in an extremely challenging period in terms of resources to support this change.</i></p> <p><i>It must also be acknowledged that the most linguistically challenging of the two transitional schools has faced immense and unprecedented challenges this year in terms of school leadership, which means that linguistic planning has been difficult.</i></p>

7.	That the Education Authority, in partnership with schools, finds new ways of promoting the benefit of studying through the medium of Welsh.	<p><i>Promoting the advantages of a Welsh medium education is a consistently important field for our schools.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, some secondary schools have been received a visit to promote the Welsh language by Ameer Davies Rana, as part of the Hansh Dim Sbin team, S4C, during the autumn term 2023. There were presentations, a quiz and workshops on creating TikTok videos. The visits were successful, and it was clear that the pupils had enjoyed themselves. The Secondary Language Strategy Coordinator has hosted 'Language Awareness' sessions in some schools - Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen, Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle, Ysgol Bro Idris, Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn. There was an opportunity to consider the advantages deriving from being bilingual, and specifically when preparing for the world of work. Pamphlets and posters promoting the advantages of bilingualism have been shared with the schools.</i></p>
8.	That the Education Authority strengthens the partnership with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and focuses on showing young people and parents that there is a wide range of Welsh-medium courses in higher and further education.	<p><i>All the secondary schools in Arfon (except for Ysgol Friars), Dwyfor schools and Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn have received a visit by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol during February/March 2024.</i></p> <p><i>The purpose of the visits was to promote the benefit of studying through the medium of Welsh and encourage pride in their Welshness. In addition, there were opportunities to promote the benefit of studying Welsh at A-Levels. There were visual presentations and an opportunity to ask and listen to panellists (some were former pupils of the schools that they visited) discussing the value of studying Welsh at A-Levels to follow various careers. The visits were well-received by the pupils, and considerable attention was given to the events on the Coleg Cymraeg's social media.</i></p>
9.	The Authority should provide more guidelines/training on how to educate latecomers who have no Welsh or English. The Education Authority should also consider using examples of learners' successes, promoting the advantages of Welsh-medium education. Similarly, the advantages of attending a Language Centre should be communicated to latecomers, reporting on specific learners' experience and conveying the perspective of their parents to show other parents	<p><i>The Immersion Education System has welcomed learners who have no Welsh or English to the immersion units and continue to do this e.g., a number of Ukrainian refugees were referred to the units and the learners managed to acquire Welsh very well. Grant funding was received to support them and an ipad was bought for each immersion unit to be able to use the 'Say hi' app. This app translates oral language simultaneously and has proved to be a powerful tool at the beginning of the courses to facilitate understanding and communication with the learners.</i></p> <p><i>By working with the University's Education Department, a podcast was created to advertise the advantages of learning Welsh and share good practices, and this was done, for example,</i></p>

	the benefit of attending a Language Centre for their children.	<p><i>through interviewing former pupils of language centres and their families to share their experiences of learning the language.</i></p> <p><u>Podlediad Am Filiwn (ypod.cymru)</u></p> <p><i>A meeting was also arranged jointly with Hunaniaith, Menter Iaith Gwynedd for the parents of learners who attend the units termly to share the advantages of learning Welsh.</i></p>
10.	That the Education Authority strengthens the linguistic provision/support for latecomers joining in years 10 or 11.	<p><i>The Authority has made a successful application to partake in the Welsh Government's 'Say Something in Welsh' pilot programme. This programme is now in place in the county's secondary schools to support year 10 and 11 learners to learn Welsh.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, the units' staff support school staff by providing resources for this cohort of children that arrive Gwynedd schools in year 10.</i></p>
11.	That the Education Authority collaborates with other organisations and the Gwynedd Language Initiative to increase the provision of Welsh-medium social activities for young people.	<p><i>The Authority works with Menter Iaith Gwynedd to increase the provision of Welsh medium activities. We are trialling a specific workshop with children in Ysgol Pont y Gof in Botwnnog. We have commissioned Anni Llŷn to create a show with the children and perform it to the parents in a community event. The children will perform in Canolfan Congl Meinciau Botwnnog on 20 March. The intention is to then use this model in other target communities in Gwynedd.</i></p> <p><i>Menter Iaith Gwynedd also collaborates with the priority areas - namely Botwnnog, Godre'r Berwyn and Bangor catchment areas. A gig with Tara Bandito will be arranged in Ysgol Botwnnog before the end of the spring term. Tara Bandito will also host workshops on Well-being and Women in Music, if the school wishes. Five other secondary schools would benefit from the journey, that is being arranged jointly with Selar and Golwg 360.</i></p> <p><i>At the request of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn, the Menter Iaith will support opportunities for year 7 pupils to attend a day in Gwersyll Glan-llyn to have extra-curricular experiences through the medium of Welsh. The enterprise will contribute £1000 towards the trip.</i></p> <p><i>As part of the choices arranged in catchment areas as part of the Welsh Language Grant plans, numerous opportunities are arranged for pupils to collaborate with various artists.</i></p>

		<i>There were also opportunities, as a result of the Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod 2023, for schools to attend gigs organised as part of Taith Maes B.</i>
12.	The Education Authority should promote the offer from the Welsh Government to provide free Welsh lessons for teachers who wish to develop their Welsh skills.	<i>The Authority has received confirmation that the Welsh Government will fund parents to attend Cymraeg Mewn Blwyddyn courses. This is part of the transitional schools' plans to increase their Welsh language provision. Similar plans will also be released soon for assistants' courses. These courses will start in September 2024. The schools have received the application forms to be completed by the end of March</i>
13.	That the Education Authority promotes the opportunities/benefits that derive from teaching in the county to attract more Welsh-medium teachers to work in Gwynedd. It should also support the efforts to increase the number of bilingual teachers available for the whole of Wales.	<p><i>The education department is actively consistent when recruiting as wide as possible and promoting our key education posts.</i></p> <p><i>Also, a key priority project has been included in the Council's Plan regarding the Workforce Planning. The main aim of the project is to ensure that the Council has an adequate supply of qualified staff to enable it to provide services to the county's residents, and that we can ensure that that supply is in place for the long term. We will address specific staff recruitment issues in key fields such as in the social care and education field. This year, for example, support has been given to fill two Learning Support Apprenticeships in the Additional Educational Needs field, which is of course a key area where there is high demand for expertise.</i></p> <p><i>Discussions are also already underway with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to collaborate on two relevant projects:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dysgu'r Dyfodol</i> <p><i>The aim of the Dysgu'r Dyfodol plan is to increase the numbers joining the Welsh education workforce. The plan offers mentoring sessions and work experience for university students who speak Welsh on any degree plan and who is interested in knowing more about a career as a schoolteacher. The mentoring sessions are an opportunity for students to understand more about how to train to become a teacher, the experience of being a teacher in Wales, and what is available for teachers early on in their careers. The intention is to inspire students to take a step towards a career in Wales' world of education, and specifically to follow a Welsh-medium Teacher Initial Education course.</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadw Cyswllt <i>The aim of the Cadw Cyswllt plan is to create and keep in contact with students who speak Welsh and study in a university outside of Wales - in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England. The intention is to create a community of students outside of Wales to inform them of every possible opportunity - events, resources, training, grants and scholarships, jobs, studying opportunities (including Teacher Initial Education) and research in Wales, to try and attract them back after they graduate.</i>
14.	That the Education Authority requests that Secondary Schools' Senior Management Teams pay specific attention to their Welsh-medium provision by regularly putting it on meeting agendas.	<p><i>There is a member of every secondary school in Gwynedd's Senior Management Team with a specific responsibility for the Welsh language in that school and the application to ensure that the field of Welsh is discussed on an appropriate level.</i></p> <p>The Strategy Group of the Secondary headteachers have recently discussed the Welsh language and they will be included in detail in the process when reviewing the Language Policy.</p> <p><i>There is close contact between the senior designated manager and the Language Strategy Coordinator. Any opportunities that arise for pupils to undertake any activities or competitions within the County will be cascaded with the schools.</i></p> <p><i>The strategy implementation is evaluated annually, and targets are set for schools to implement during the academic year.</i></p>
15.	That the Education Authority requests that the Secondary Headteachers' Forum places the Welsh-medium provision as an item on the Forum's meeting agendas at least once a year.	<i>The Department already acts in accordance with this recommendation.</i>
16.	The Welsh Government should tackle the lack of study resources in Welsh, especially on-line.	<p><i>All our secondary schools, except for one, are active members of CYDAG and regularly put pressure nationally for resources and education through the medium of Welsh. In fairness, an improvement has been in this field over the last year and we draw attention here to three key stages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Welsh Joint Education Committee, as the national examining board in Wales, is publishing all its resources bilingually and, by now, they also develop study and</i>

		<p>support resources that are also available completely bilingually: WJEC Educational Resources Website (wjec.co.uk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Welsh Government, for years, has developed a HWB stage to host all its resources and digital tools - and all of these resources are obviously available in Welsh: Hwb (gov.wales) • The Welsh Government has also, fairly recently, established the company Adnodd to commission standard resources to support Curriculum for Wales with Emyr George, who is now Chief Executive. Once again, there would not be a resource on Adnodd that is not completely bilingual: Adnodd - dyfodol adnoddau i gefnogi'r Cwricwlwm i Gymru Addysg Cymru (llyw.cymru)
17.	<p>That the Education Authority holds discussions with GwE in relation to support on issues that are specific/unique to the County.</p>	<p>The Welsh Government published its intention to review the roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales on 12 July.</p> <p>Professor Dylan Jones was commissioned to lead on the work and he had a meeting with a representative of Gwynedd's Headteachers and officers of the Education Department during the autumn term.</p> <p>Professor Dylan Jones' letter is available here.</p> <p>On 31 January, the Minister for Education, following a meeting with the review team in December, published the main findings of the review, and that being a few months early, by noting that there are consistent messages in each part of the education system.</p> <p>According to the Minister, the feedback was clear regarding the preferred direction amongst school leaders and the majority of local authorities. Considering the fact that these messages correspond with the wider evidence, he came to an agreement with the review team that continuing to discuss the features of the current system and people's viewpoints across the system is not the best way to benefit from the review.</p> <p>He moved the review forward to a new step and decided to use this step to examine the best ways of supporting the work of improving schools on three levels:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support work between schools on a local level 2. Support collaboration and networking between schools across local authorities and on a national level 3. Support the work of improving schools on a national level

		<p><i><u>From this point forward, it was clear that the Government does not intend to continue with the Consortium arrangements or Regional Partnerships.</u></i></p> <p><i>Considering that the landscape will change substantially over the next few months and the next year in the context of schools improvement support and the role of local authorities, the Department will also give specific attention to the support given to the Welsh language in those discussions.</i></p>
--	--	--

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Free School Meals
Date of meeting	21 March 2024
Author	Gwern ap Rhisiart, Head of Education
Cabinet Member for Education	Councillor Beca Brown

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 On 17 December 2021, Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for the Welsh Language and Education, published a written statement which extended the right to Free School Meals to all primary school children in Wales.

1.2 The policy is part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru and stems from the understanding that younger children are more likely to be living in relative income poverty, and by implementing the Free School Meals scheme, that 196,000 more children would become eligible for free school meals in Wales. Here is a link to the full statement by Jeremy Miles, Minister for the Welsh Language and Education: [Written Statement: Extending Free School Meal entitlement to all primary school children \(17 December 2021\) | LLYW.CYMRU](#)

1.3 In realising the commitment, the Welsh Government believed it would be a way of contributing to:

- tackling poverty / the problem of children going hungry,
- ensuring the well-being of future generations and reducing inequality,
- removing stigma,
- healthy eating habits and attitudes.

1.4 In April 2022 it was decided to include free school meals for primary pupils as a priority in the Council Plan to reflect the national priority, and to address the necessary changes that would be required to the infrastructure of our school dinners provision.

2. WELSH GOVERNMENT CAPITAL AND REVENUE INVESTMENT

2.1 The Welsh Government announced that £25m of capital funding would be invested in kitchens and dining halls in Welsh schools as part of the plans to introduce free school meals to all primary school children in Wales over a three-year period, starting with the youngest children, with the aim that all primary children would be able to have free school dinners by September 2024.

2.2 Eligible expenditure for this funding included the following capital costs:

- purchasing new equipment;
- upgrading existing equipment;
- upgrading existing dining/kitchen facilities; and
- work to increase the capacity of the school meals infrastructure

- 2.3 In February 2022, Cyngor Gwynedd received a grant letter allocating £1,121,603 of capital funding (100%) from the Welsh Government.
- 2.4 The Education Department began working with the Property Development Team in the Housing and Property Department to secure appropriate equipment and kitchen space and adequate dining areas in all the county's primary schools.
- 2.5 49 primary and special schools received new kitchen equipment. The Council invested in alterations or extensions to the kitchen or dining area in 16 primary schools to address the higher numbers of children who would need to be provided with a school meal.
- 2.6 The spending period for the capital finance will end on 31 March 2024, and the Education Department has managed to spend all this capital funding.
- 2.7 In March 2022, the Welsh Government also announced that revenue funding of up to £200m would be allocated to local authorities to fulfil the commitment, with the funding being provided to local authorities over three years as follows:
- £40m in 2022-23
 - £70m in 2023-24
 - £90m in 2024-25
- The main purpose of this revenue funding is to assist with higher staffing costs in light of the increase in the numbers of learners that would take up the offer of free school meals.

- 2.8 As a result of the financial investment and the joint-working between the Education Department and the Housing and Property Department, the Council succeeded in realising the offer of free school meals for all primary children in Gwynedd by 1 September 2023. In Gwynedd, the offer was brought in gradually as follows:

YEARS	TIMETABLE
Reception and Year 1	1 September 2022
Year 2	1 January 2023
Years 3 and 4	5 June 2023
Years 5 and 6	1 September 2023

- 2.9 We managed to fulfil the commitment of providing free schools meals in Gwynedd exactly one year ahead of the national timetable. The Welsh Government agreed to fund any Local Authority that would be in a position to offer free school meals before the national timetable.

3. THE NUMBERS WHO HAVE TAKEN UP THE OFFER OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2023

- 3.1 The Education Department have been gathering data on the numbers that have been taking up the free school meal offer since introducing the offer in every school back in September 2023. Gathering the data helps us to identify schools to target.
- 3.2 Data is gathered across the 79 primary schools (not including the two special schools, nor the latter schools). Data is collected, based on whole schools and per school year. We gather data on
- Number of eFSM meals and pupils (Eligible for Free School Meals)

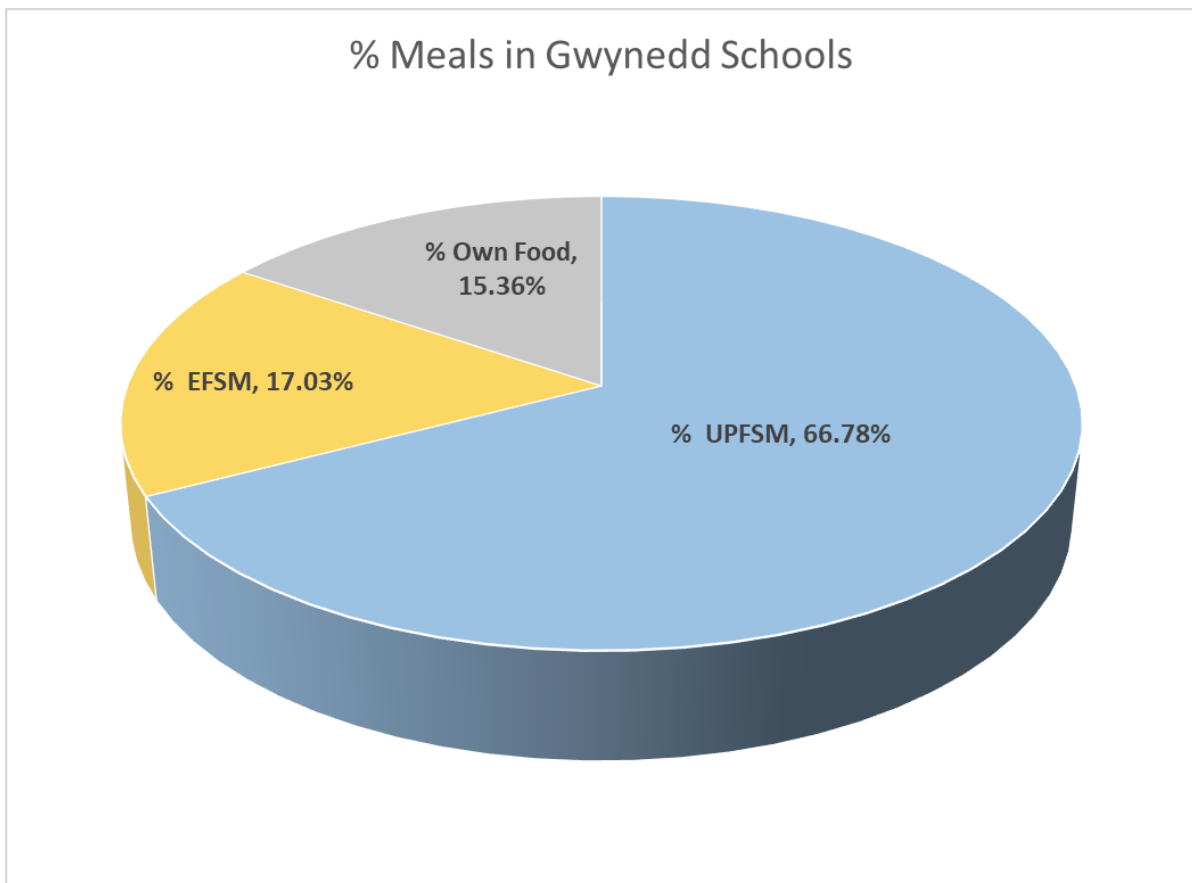
- Number of FSM meals and pupils (Free School Meals)
- Numbers of meals and pupils not taking up the free school meal offer but choosing to take their own lunch box to school instead.

3.3 Although every child is now eligible for free school meals in the primary sector, we continue to gather data on the eligibility for FSM as it is an indicator used as a proxy for deprivation regarding the additional spend requirement on education and other services in the settlement, but it is not used as a proxy for the spending requirement on school meals.

3.4 We report monthly to the Welsh Government on the number of meals provided.

3.5 The data presented below is for the period September 2023 to the end of January 2024.

3.6 On average to date, 66.75% of the meals provided are FSM, and 17% are eFSM meals (83.79% in total), and 15.34% are own food (lunch box).



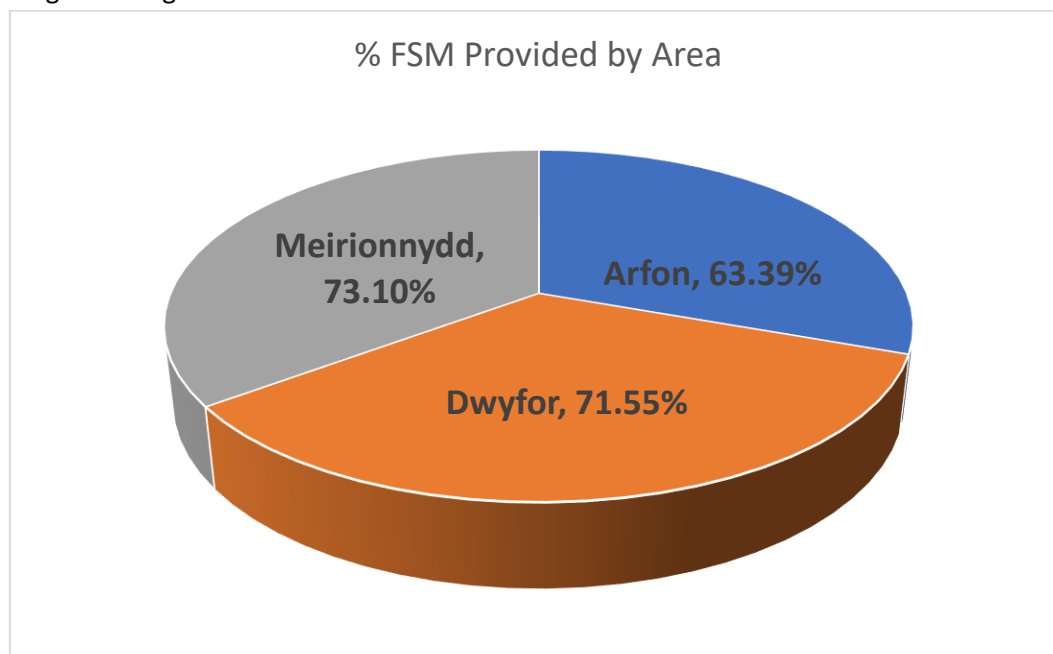
3.7 Prior to the introduction of the Universal Free School Meal Offer there were 1674 children receiving sFSM in our primary schools at the end of the 22-23 school year. The free school meal offer was introduced for all at the start of the 22/23 school year (see 2.8 above).

3.8 The number of children receiving free school meals varies daily, and varies from school to school due to issues such as absences, school trips, training days, and the child's preference for taking school meals some days and packed lunches on other days.

3.9 We gather the numbers of children who receive school meals by sample, on one day of each month. The numbers of children receiving FSM by month are set out below. Over 4000 more children are receiving school meals as a result of this scheme.

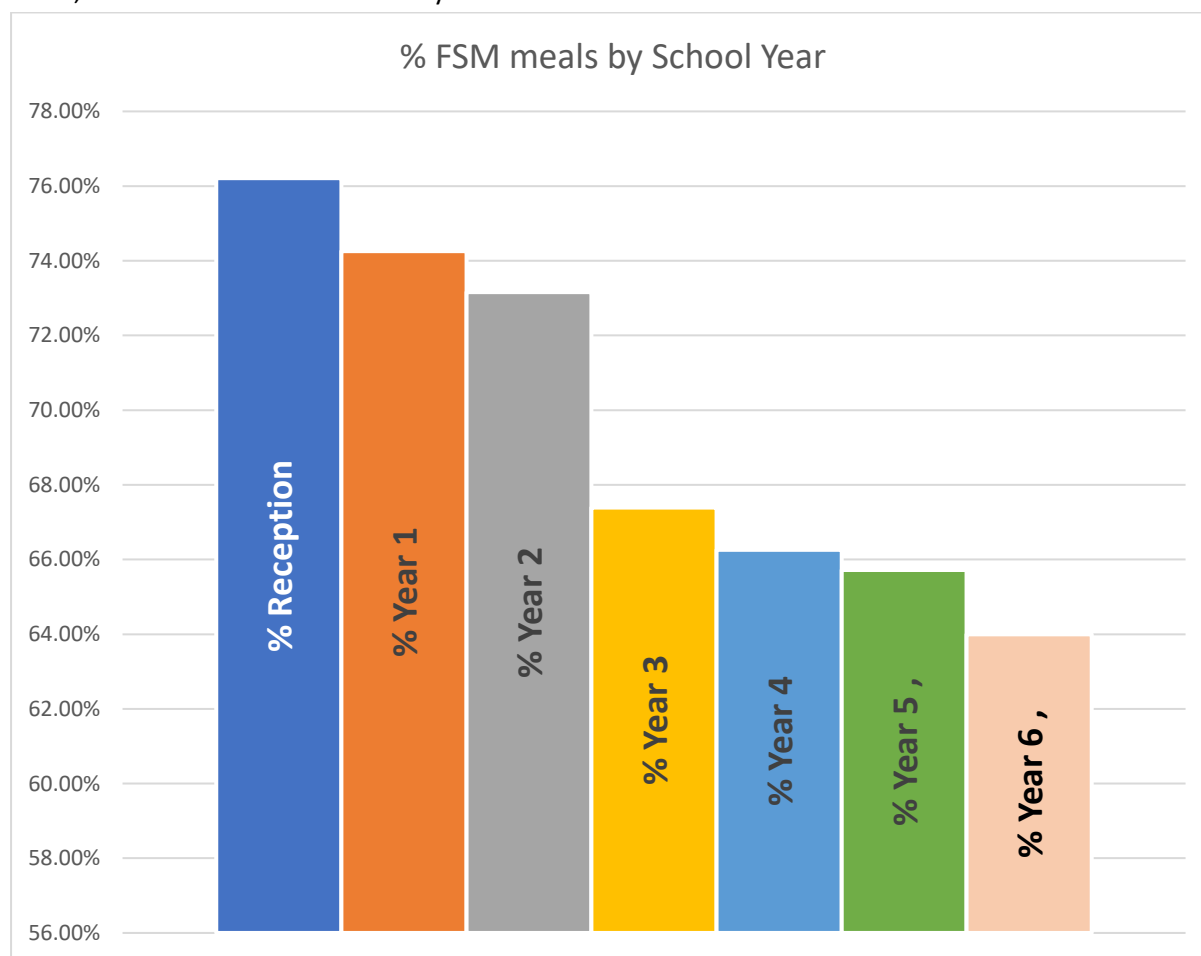
Month	Number of Pupils receiving free School meals on the day	Percentage of pupils receive free School meals on the day
September 2023	5937	78%
October 2023	6169	81%
November 2023	5969	78%
December 2023	5847	76%
January 2024	5806	76%

3.10 Based on the number of meals provided there is a variation in the average uptake across individual schools and areas, as follows :- Arfon has the lowest average with 63% of FSM meals provided, followed by Dwyfor with 71%, and Meirionnydd with the most children taking advantage of the FSM offer at 73%.



3.11 The school with the highest percentage of FSM meals provided, has an average of 96%, and the school with the lowest percentage of FSM meals provided, at 30%.

3.12 Overall, there are higher rates of FSM provided to children in Reception, years 1 and 2, and then the rates reduce in years 5 and 6.



4. LEARNERS' OPINIONS OF SCHOOL DINNERS

4.1 As well as data on the numbers taking up the offer, we also gather information on children's opinions and satisfaction with the provision.

4.2 The school iPad is used and the children are asked to input their opinion through a purposeful app. The data is gathered over the course of a week out of every month so that the children can note their opinion after tasting a variety from the weekly menu. We do not gather the opinions of every school at the same time, we gather data from a sample of schools.

4.3 We ask the school to ensure that only the children complete the questionnaire without input from the teachers, assistants or the kitchen staff.

4.4 Since September 2023 we have had 448 responses, and 78% are satisfied with the choices.

4.5 The app also gives children the opportunity to write comments about the provision, and here are some of the comments we received:

"I like everything there and the way they are cooked"

"Need to mash the potatoes more"

“Want a bigger portion please”

“I like meatballs, thumbs up for the cake and custard”

5. LEARNER OUTCOMES SINCE IMPLEMENTING THE FREE SCHOOL MEALS OFFER

Headteachers' Opinions

- 5.1 The headteachers of all primary schools in Gwynedd were asked for their opinions on learner outcomes since implementing the free school meals scheme for every primary aged pupil. We received 52 responses out of a possible 78 (66%). Many interesting and useful comments were received as possible reasons why some pupils were still choosing not to receive school meals. A breakdown of the questionnaires and a summary of the headteachers' comments can be seen here – [Free School Meals questionnaire data.docx](#)
- 5.2 75% of the headteachers who responded stated that they were of the view that more pupils were eating more healthily since the scheme was implemented, and 23% noted that they did not see a difference. The percentage of pupils who were already having school dinners was high in most of the schools that had indicated that they did not see much difference.
- 5.3 36% of headteachers noted that they thought that the behaviour of the pupils receiving school meals had improved, with 49% stating an improvement in concentration levels, 40% stating an increase in pupils' commitment and 40% noting improved achievement in the afternoons.

6. CHALLENGES FOR THE CATERING SERVICE IN PROVIDING THE OFFER

- 6.1 The biggest challenge for the catering service is having a sufficient workforce across all the schools, which includes a relief workforce for filling in at any school during periods of absences. The Catering and Cleaning Service has faced this challenge since the start of introducing the offer and are still failing to secure an adequate workforce. At the beginning of March there were nine vacant posts across the service as well as a high number of sickness absences.
- 6.2 The Service is currently responding to this by recruiting for posts regularly, attending jobs fairs, advertising jobs on social media, and distributing recruitment posters in community centres, libraries, surgeries and Byw'n lach centres.
- 6.3 From the recruitment that has been undertaken, in some cases we do not manage to attract candidates in some areas (Dwyfor and Meirionnydd).
- 6.4 Feedback from employees suggest that the hours, pay levels, and the increase in responsibilities are proving a barrier to attracting candidates.
- 6.5 Currently we are looking at options for responding to these recruitment challenges, jointly with neighbouring authorities.
- 6.6 Our inability to recruit enough is also contributing to sickness levels in the service. Many of the workers are taking on extra hours to cover the shortage of staff in nearby schools.

- 6.7 Another challenge for the Service is ensuring that the scheme is financially viable. Since the start of the scheme, the Welsh Government has been paying a fee of £2.90 to the Council for every meal that is provided to a child (excluding children of parents on Low incomes).
- 6.8 The Welsh Government have acknowledged that this amount as a "unit price" is low, therefore they have now increased the amount from £2.90 to £3.20. However, the cost of producing a meal before the Free School Meals for All Children scheme began, was around £4.30.
- 6.9 At present, the Council is plugging that gap by making some savings on the basis that an increase in numbers means we can make savings on fixed costs, which reduces the cost per meal, but this is unlikely to fully close the gap.
- 6.10 As food prices and employment costs increase, it is paramount that the "unit price" received from the Welsh Government for the provision increases to a rate that would see the Council receiving a "unit price" that covers the actual cost.
- 6.11 The Education Department with the support of the Finance Team are in continuous discussions with the Welsh Government to review the "unit price".

7. RAISING AWARENESS AND PROMOTING THE FREE SCHOOL MEALS OFFER

- 7.1 Since launching the scheme the Welsh Government has led a national marketing and publicity campaign which started back in June 2022. The Press Team have been supporting this campaign and have been using the resources from the pack to carry out promotion work locally. That campaign has been a public campaign, targeted through the schools.
[Claim help with school costs | LLYW.CYMRU](#)
- 7.2 In addition, the Family Information Service in the Children's Department have been promoting the offer through the Families Newsletter; and a dedicated section about the offer has been developed on the Council's Costs of Living web-page.
- 7.3 The Council has appointed a temporary post in the Education Department to undertake work with specific schools and localised campaigns.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The School Meal Promotion post is now working alongside one of the Council's Well-being Promoters to engage directly with families who are continuing to take a packed lunch rather than take advantage of the free school meal offer. These officers are working with the two schools that have the lowest rates of children receiving free school meals. They will contact the families directly and complete a questionnaire with them.
- 8.2 The initial calls suggest that parents are providing packed lunch for their children due to reasons such as not being aware of the scheme, being uncertain of the food and the menu; and worrying about dietary requirements.
- 8.3 The officers will respond to the findings of their surveys in the school by arranging further discussions with the families; providing information about menus; arranging taster sessions etc.

- 8.4 Supporting a family to take up the offer would give them a saving of around £500 per child annually.
- 8.5 Supporting a child to take up the offer would ensure that the child has their daily nutritional requirement of fat, saturated fat, sodium, carbohydrates, fibre, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, zinc and several others.
- 8.8 Supporting a family to take up the offer would bring further income to the authority of £608 per child per annum, with perhaps only a very low increase in the cost of provision.
- 8.9 The work of increasing the numbers that take up the offer will run concurrently with the ongoing work to recruit a sufficient workforce; gathering information on satisfaction and reviewing the menus; and collaborating the Welsh Government to review the "unit price".

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The members are asked to accept the content of the report.

Free School Meals Questionnaire (January 2024)

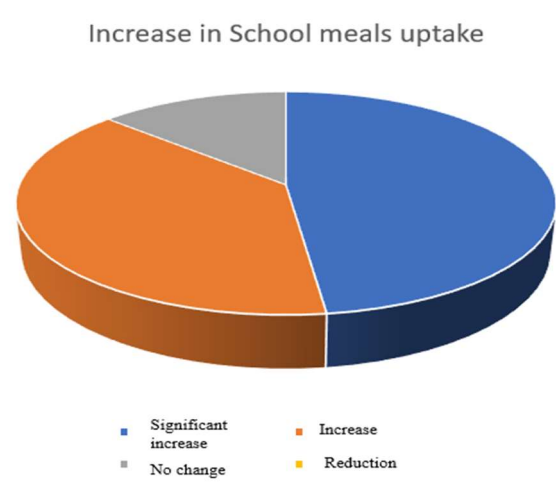
Questionnaires were shared with all headteachers of the County's primary and special schools to analyse the benefits that have come with the free school meal provision scheme for all pupils of Gwynedd Primary schools since September 2023.

66 % of primary headteachers responded to the questionnaire.

1. Has the number of pupils eating school lunches increased since the free school meals for all scheme started in September 2023?

48% responses reported significantly higher school meals uptake, with **38%** reporting higher numbers and **13%** reporting similar numbers. The **13%** who reported small increase were schools with fewer than 55 children where a high percentage ate school dinners ahead of the scheme.

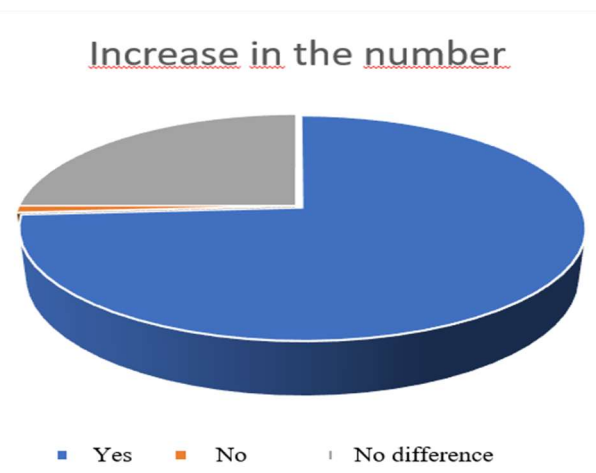
Significantly higher	48%
Higher	38%
Didn't change much	13%
Reduced	0%



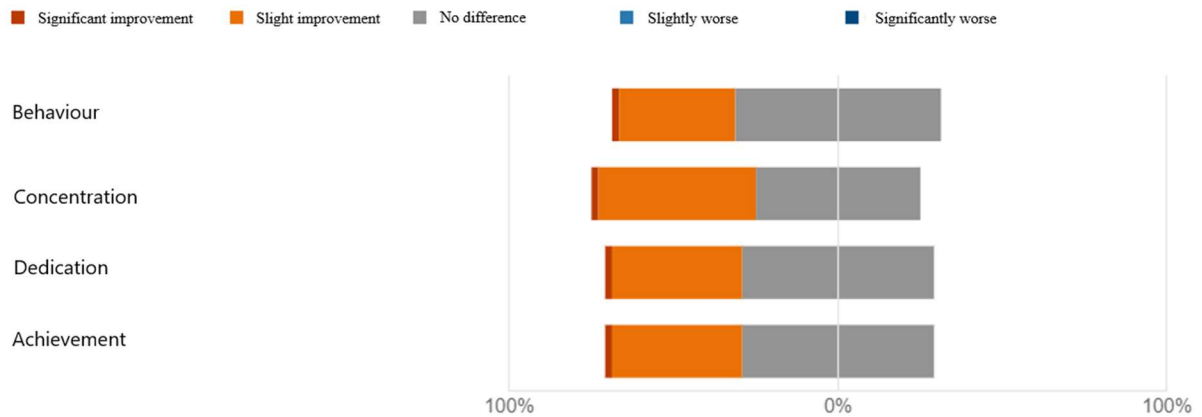
2. Do you think more pupils are eating more healthily after the free lunch scheme started?

75 % thought pupils ate more healthily after the free school meals scheme started, with **23%** of the opinion that there was no difference.

Yes	75%
No	1%
No difference	23%



4. In your opinion, do you think the following improved in the afternoon as more pupils ate school dinners?



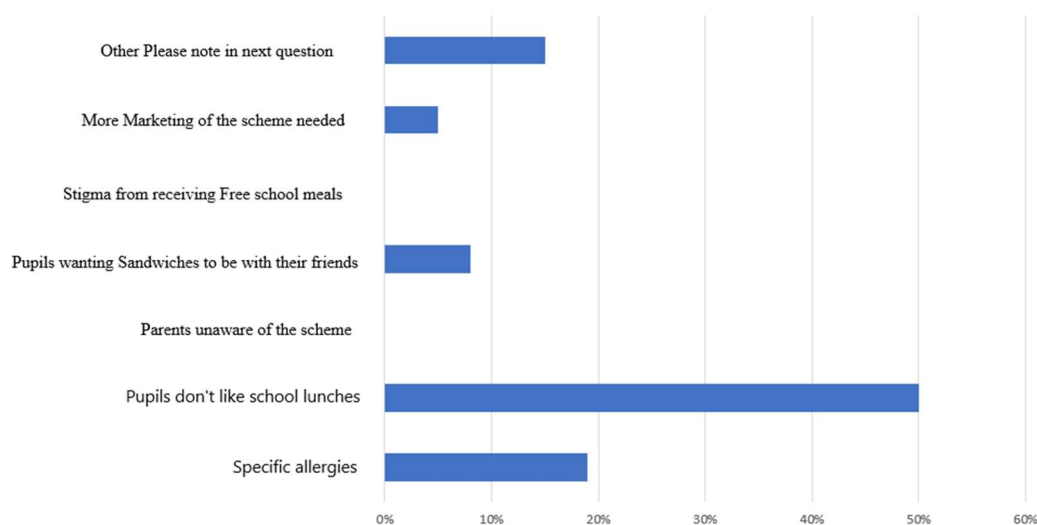
Behaviour – 36 % thought the behaviour of pupils receiving School meals had improved with 2.1% reporting a significant improvement. The rest did not report a difference in pupils' behaviour in the afternoons.

Concentration – 49% reported an increase in pupils' concentration level in the afternoons with 2.1% reporting a significant improvement. No one reported that the concentration level had worsened.

Dedication - 40.4% reported an improvement in pupils' level of dedication in the afternoons. No one reported that dedication level had worsened.

Achievement – 40.4% reported an improvement in pupils' achievement in the afternoons. No one reported that pupils' achievement had worsened.

5. A low % of Gwynedd pupils choose to continue to have a lunchbox. What do you think is the reason for this?



Headteachers reported that the main reason some pupils did not bring a lunchbox was that they did not like School lunches (50%), with 19% reporting that pupils with allergies chose to bring a lunchbox rather than take school lunches. 5 % indicated the offer needed further marketing and 8% indicated pupils brought a lunchbox to eat with friends. 15% cited other reasons (summary of other reasons below)

"Limited home eating habits"

"don't like fish/pasta/potatoes".

"Cohort of fussy kids"

"Some foods don't appeal on the menu e.g lobsgóws. They prefer to bring sweet things from home"

"Don't like the choice that's on the menu"

"Children insisting on having a way of their own – insisting on a lunchbox because they are not happy to try new foods. Parenting problem."

6. In your opinion, what extra do you think the Council could do to increase the number of pupils who take advantage of the offer of free lunch?

30 responses to the question came here – Summary below:

Informing and highlighting the financial saving for parents

Giving pupils input to the menu

Offer a taster session for parents during parents' evenings.

Holding "special" days i.e. Chinese new year, Santes Dwywnwen, St David's Day

That there is an alternative for children who really don't like something specific i.e.. curry

Give two options on a daily basis - enabling pupils who don't like certain foods to receive a free lunch

Attractive posters for schools to share with parents / social media are an easy idea for everyone.

Tasting sessions have gone down well in the past

Offer for nursery children to have lunch at School.

More choice

7. Do you have any further comments that would be useful for the Council to consider relating to the free lunch scheme?

The free lunch scheme has been extremely popular with parents and children at this school, and only 2 children remain on a lunchbox. It would be a very good thing if the scheme was extended to the Secondary as well.

Ensure lunch is bulky enough for some of the learners. A few primary children are taller than their teachers, grow and play a lot in a day. Two fish fingers and a scoop of mashed potatoes aren't enough to sustain them.

The free lunch scheme has been very popular within the school. However, a few days on the menu are more/less popular than others with the pupils.

Very grateful for the scheme

A very valuable scheme, but only two pupils who have moved from a school in Powys are getting sandwiches as they are very fussy.