
NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD
15.11.2019

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors:- Hugh Evans (Denbighshire Council), Llinos Medi Huws (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire Council), Sam Rowlands (Conwy County Borough Council), Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council) and Dyfrig L.Siencyn (Gwynedd Council) (Chair).

Advisors – Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), Maria Hinfelaar (Glyndwr University), Bryn Jones (Bangor University), Jim Jones (North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council) and Askar Sheibani (Business Delivery Board).

Chief Officers - Annwen Morgan (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Iwan Davies (Conwy County Borough Council), Judith Greenhalgh (Denbighshire Council), Ian Bancroft (Wrexham County Borough Council), Colin Everett (Flintshire Council).

Officers in attendance - Dafydd Edwards (Statutory Finance Officer), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Jane Richardson (Chair of the Executive Officers Group), Andrew Farrow (Flintshire Council), Sian Lloyd Roberts (Manager of the Regional Skills Partnership), David Roberts (Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership) and Annes Siôn (Democratic Services Officer).

Jane Richardson, Chair of the Executive Officers Group, was welcomed to the meeting and thanked for taking over the reins temporarily.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from David Jones (Coleg Cambria), Prof. Iwan Davies (Bangor University) and Dilwyn Williams (Gwynedd Council).

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 the EAB held on 18 October 2019, as a true record.

5. GROWTH DEAL UPDATE

The report was submitted by Colin Everett, Lead Chief Executive.

RESOLVED

To accept the report which provided an update on the North Wales Growth Deal and to agree to add the following risks to the risk register:

- A slippage in the timeframe to reach a Final Agreement would affect the drawing down of Growth Deal funds from the Government, which would subsequently affect the ability to deliver projects successfully within the timeframe.
- Welsh Government's Economic Plan does not align with the EAB's Growth Vision

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The report was submitted in order to provide an update on the development of the North Wales Growth Deal and attention was drawn to the signing of the Heads of Terms, appointments to the programme office together with reporting on the work of reviewing and updating the Work Programme and the risk register.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the Heads of Terms had been signed prior to the electoral period. It was added that, in so doing, a £240 million investment had been secured and that the final deal would need to be signed during the third quarter of 2020/21.

It was explained that five appointments had been made to the Programme Office and that the location of the Programme Office had been confirmed. It was noted that further discussions would be held on the work programme and risk register at the next meeting. It was stressed that a risk would need to be added to the register noting that should a slippage occur in the timeframe to reach a Final Agreement, this would affect the drawing down of Growth Deal funds from the Government.

The dates of meetings in 2020 were noted and staff were thanked for their work during the interim period.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- The structure of the Programme Office was discussed.
- Members were thanked for going to sign the Heads of Terms.
- In relation to the risk register, it was noted that Welsh Government's Economic Plan did not align with the Growth Vision and that this could be a risk.
- It was added that the next meeting had been scheduled for the day after the election; consequently it was resolved to postpone the meeting.

6. ESF FUNDING APPLICATION

The report was submitted by Jane Richardson, Conwy County Borough Council.

RESOLVED

Resolved to:

- Delegate authority for Gwynedd Council acting as Host Authority to prepare and submit the Business Plan to WEFO on the basis set out in the report
- Delegate the authority to the Chief Executive of the Host Authority in consultation with the NWEAB Lead Director and the Host Authority Section 151 Officer to accept a WEFO grant offer based on 50% of the total project cost (£5.6 million) for the period July 2018 up until June 2023.
- Confirm that the NWEAB accepts that it will contribute match funding at 50% primarily by a combination of capitalisation of project costs and core budget (from partner contributions).

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

It was noted that the Executive Officers Group had been working on a European Social Fund (ESF) application to design and build the necessary capacity for delivering the North Wales Growth Deal. It was added that the ESF grant would provide funding to the region to progress the development and delivery of the Growth Vision, through the establishment of a Programme Office. It was noted that the first stage of the application had been completed and WEFO had confirmed that the NWEAB may proceed to the Business Planning stage.

It was added that the Executive Officers Group had developed the details for the Business Plan and the Plan would be presented to WEFO following the NWEAB's approval.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and attention was drawn to adjustments in the financial section of the report. It was added that the first stage of the application had been completed and WEFO had confirmed that the NWEAB may proceed to the Business Planning stage.

It was also added that a staffing structure had been created and that some members of staff would need to be in place by April in order for WEFO to look at the application favourably. It was noted that if the EAB was successful with the application, it would be possible to back-date staffing costs and allow the region to reclaim staffing costs from July 2018.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- It was noted that the EAB had kept on-costs low and being able to reclaim staffing costs would ensure that reserve funds would be available to subsidise various costs.
- A member asked what the timeframe was to be told whether or not the application was successful. It was noted that it would be difficult to get a definite date but that things would be clearer after the application was submitted to WEFO.
- It was explained that posts appointed from April onwards would be dependent on confirming that the EAB was in receipt of the grant funding and that the posts would not be advertised until confirmation was received of the grant funding.

7. REGIONAL SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PLAN

The report was submitted by David Roberts, Chair of the Regional Skills Partnership and Sian Lloyd Roberts, Manager of the Regional Skills Partnership

DECISION

To endorse the regional Skills and Employment Plan and agree to the three priorities as set out in the plan.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

It was noted that the North Wales Skills and Employment Plan 2019-2022 had been developed to inform Welsh Government's strategic approach to the delivery of skills and employment provision in the region.

It was noted that this was a report to the Board on the regional Skills and Employment plan which had been produced by the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership following consultations with regional stakeholders and providers and the industry between April and July 2019.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that it outlined some of the schemes following an extensive consultation held during the summer. It was explained that it was hoped that Welsh Government would agree to the plan to enable the schemes to progress. It was also noted that a Skills Summit would be held in November which would highlight the main focus.

It was stressed that the priorities had been created following evidence gathering with stakeholders. The priorities were outlined, noting that the next step would be to develop the priorities further in order to create a specific and detailed action plan which would also act as a delivery plan over the next three years.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- The Board was grateful for the presentation and the three priorities were agreed to, possibly adding a fourth - sustainable jobs. It was added that staff needed to be kept in their jobs in order to reduce staff turnover and to retain talent in the area.
- It was noted that there was a need to stress that the tourism field in Wales was one that could be developed and receive high salaries.
- It was noted that the work by the Manager of the Skills Partnership had had a positive impact on how the Regional Skills Partnership was seen by the Universities and Colleges.
- Attention was drawn to the Welsh language and it was highlighted that only one sentence referred to the Welsh language in the Plan. It was stressed that the Welsh language needed to be highlighted.
- It was explained that rural issues would arise in terms of access difficulties, and it was noted that the Leader scheme was available but that it may come to an end and that, consequently, it needed to be noted as a threat.

8. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The report was submitted by Andrew Farrow (Chief Officer - Planning, Environment and Economy - Flintshire Council)

DECISION

To amend the response to the consultation on the National Development Framework as set out in Appendix 2, to include any matters arising during this meeting of the NWEAB and submit them to WG by 18 November.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

It was noted that the National Development Framework determined where developments would happen within the region. It was added that it was essential that the National Development Framework accurately reflected the aims of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the adopted Regional Economic Ambition Strategy and the emerging Growth Deal.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that the National Development Framework stated where developments would occur up to 2040. It was noted that discussions had been held on the framework and that 13 points had been raised by the EAB. The 13 points were highlighted.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that there was an opportunity to discuss these matters with the Cabinet Members next Thursday.
- It was expressed that transport needed to be looked at over the border in England and not focus on Wales alone.
- It was expressed that the Government would expect Local Development Plans to be adapted to align with the National Development Framework.
- It was stressed that the response needed to be sharpened and the risks noted clearly by adapting the first paragraph. It was noted that each local authority would be sending responses also.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 2.30pm.