



REPORT TO THE NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD

31st July, 2020

TITLE: *North Wales Growth Deal - Engagement with the Private Sector*

AUTHOR: *Alwen Williams, Programme Director*

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To present an overview of the current relationship and engagement channels between the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the private sector in North Wales (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.2. To present an update to members on the status of the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council as a partner of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (**Appendix 2**).
- 1.3. To present a proposed draft Terms of Reference presented for consideration by the interim Chair of the Business Delivery Group (**Appendix 3**).
- 1.4. To propose next steps and approach to strengthening the relationship, engagement and involvement of the private sector in the North Wales Growth Deal (**Appendix 4**).

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. To note the status of the current relationships and engagement channels with the Private Sector.
- 2.2. To note the intent of the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council to withdraw as a partner of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.
- 2.3. To note a draft Terms of Reference presented by the interim Chair of the Business Delivery Group and to ask for a further report by the Programme Director in consultation with the Host Authority's Monitoring Officer on proposed revisions to the terms of reference for the Business Delivery Group adopted by the Economic Ambition Board.
- 2.4. To endorse the proposed next steps and actions to improve private sector engagement and understanding.

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. A decision is required in order to enable the Programme Office to invest in designing and delivering mechanisms for enhancing engagement with the private sector in North Wales.

4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. The Growth Deal projects are designed to help the region to overcome the barriers to investment currently faced by the private sector. The approach to deliver the Growth Deal successfully is founded on a strong and collaborative relationship between the Welsh and UK Governments, regional partners and the private sector.

4.2. From the outset, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board has comprised the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council as a partner. This relationship has enabled the business community, who are members of the NWMD Business Council, to have their voice represented.

4.3. Play a central role in supporting, challenging and advising the design and delivery of key interventions to address those barriers and issues.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. None.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Although active in the work of the Economic Ambition Board the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council were not parties to Governance Agreement 1.

7. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None.

8. IMPACT ON EQUALITIES

8.1. None.

9. CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN

9.1. Proposal received from the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council on 16th June, 2020.

9.2. The Chair and Programme Director for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board met with Chair and Vice Chair of the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council to discuss possible opportunities for strengthening the relationship with the private sector through the business council on 7th July, 2020.

9.3. The Programme Office issued a short survey to members of the Business Delivery Group to understand the current sentiment towards the co-working and engagement with the North Wales Growth Deal.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	Overview of private sector engagement with the Growth Deal
Appendix 2	Summary of letter received by the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council
Appendix 3	Proposed Draft Terms of Reference received from the Business Delivery Group
Appendix 4	Proposal for strengthening the Private Sector Engagement

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer – Host Authority:

“This is a timely report and offers positive steps to develop the relationship between the Ambition Board and the private sector following the decision of the NWMDBC. The Business Delivery Group was established by the Ambition Board in April 2019 to be a body which would advise it, develop contacts and bring forward expertise, Investment and experience. It’s sensible that the review takes place and the draft terms of reference in the report prepared by the Chair of the Business Delivery Group provide a basis for that review. Nevertheless as a body established by the Ambition Board and which is acknowledged in the Heads of Terms it’s important that the review ensures the appropriate balance in the relationship from a good governance perspective but to also ensure that the arrangements are effective and meet the needs of the Ambition Board.”

ii. Statutory Finance Officer (the Host Authority’s Section 151 Officer):

“Further comments will be submitted verbally, as necessary, at the Joint Committee (NWEAB) meeting.”

APPENDIX 1

North Wales Growth Deal – Engagement with the Private Sector

Background

At the meeting of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) on 12th June, 2020 a decision was taken to postpone proceeding with the process of appointing a Chair for the Business Delivery Board in order to give the NWEAB an opportunity to consider whether the role of the Business Delivery Board needed to be revised.

An action was noted that further consultation with the private sector representatives was to take place and a further report and recommendations presented to the NWEAB.

Update on progress and action taken

North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council

- Chair and Programme Director for the North Wales Economic Ambition board met with Chair and Vice Chair of the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council to discuss possible opportunities for strengthening the relationship with the private sector through the business council. A proposal whereby the NWMDBC would convene a new Business Senedd/Parliament comprising of 60 individual businesses from across North Wales to represent the full business voice was presented for consideration.
- Chair and Vice Chair of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board received a letter stating their intent to withdraw as a partner due to changing priorities and circumstances driven by Covid-19 and the need to focus resources on directly supporting their member organisations on the private sector during this time (**Appendix 2**).

Business Delivery Group

- Dyfrig Siencyn, Chair of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board has attended the last two meetings of the Business Delivery Group and will continue to attend regularly.
- The role of secretariat for the Business Delivery Group has been handed over to the Programme Office. This decision was mutually agreed due to current Covid-19 refocusing priorities for the current secretariat which was carried out by Gerry Beer, Glyndwr University.
- The Programme Office issued a short survey to members of the Business Delivery Group to understand the current sentiment towards the co-working and engagement with the North Wales Growth Deal.
- The Business Delivery Group have collaborated to create a draft Terms of Reference which outlines their proposed framework for co-working with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (**Appendix 3**).

Summary of current situation

The withdrawal of the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council as a member of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board leaves the board without a representative partner who can participate and speak on behalf of the private sector in North Wales. The Business Delivery Group Chair is invited to attend each meeting of the Economic ambition Board in an advisory capacity.

The relationship with the advisory body, the Business Delivery Group is strengthening. The outcome of the survey conducted with members has given clear areas for increased engagement but also identifies that some of the actions already put in place are having an impact.

APPENDIX 2

Letter received by the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council

On the 16th July, 2020 the Chair of the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council wrote to Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn, Chair of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to notify their intent to withdraw from the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

The letter explains that the impact of Covid-19 has dramatically affected their business, the Business Council Membership organisations and in consequence the Business Council itself.

It goes on to state:

“If we are to continue making a positive difference to our region’s economy, we have to focus our very limited resources where they are needed most, and we can make the greatest immediate impact. As you know over the last few years we have dedicated much of our resource to working hand in hand with the other NWEAB members and now the central programme office to help formulate and deliver the North Wales Growth Deal.”

“With that in mind we must unfortunately formally withdraw from the NWEAB, as we do not have the resources available to devote to both NWEAB work and private sector focused work/the securing of our long term future. We have set our withdrawal date as the 3rd August, 2020.”

“Over recent years the Business Council and its membership have valued the partnership with the other members and officers of the NWEAB and we wish our withdrawal to be an amicable one. We will still be very open to organizing our membership and wider private sector for engagement on the NWEAB and the Growth Deal but as with all other organizations we have had to make hard choices because of the impact of Covid-19.”

APPENDIX 3

North Wales Growth Deal Business Delivery Group

Draft Terms of Reference, 22nd July 2020

Purpose of the group:

To support the NWEAB in achieving the best possible return on investment from the North Wales Growth Deal.

Membership:

- Up to 18 members, all from private sector businesses.
- Members must aim to be available to attend at least 80% of the meetings.
- 80% of the members must have a track-record in entrepreneurship and building their own successful businesses.
- Members must be independently minded and have a passion for North Wales and its economic development.
- Members ideally must have a wide network of businesses, especially within North Wales.
- Where possible, the membership will have a balance across various sectors of business and will have within it experience of capital investment.
- The group will aim to be as diverse as possible.
- Members of the group will be selected according to their track record and expertise, and do not have to be from North Wales.
- Members for the Business Delivery Group will be nominated by the Chair and approved by the Group.
- All the group members including the chair will be selected for two years and can stand to continue for a further two years if the group approves.
- All the expenses of the Group will be undertaken by the NWEAB or the Programme Office.
- The chair of the Group and the members will offer their work on a voluntary basis only.
- The Group will appoint a Vice Chair at its discretion, if required.

The specification for the chair of the group:

- An entrepreneur with a solid track record in building businesses.
- Experience in working with Local, Welsh and UK governments.
- A leader who can represent North Wales at a National and International level.
- A leader who has awareness of the economic potential of North Wales.
- A person with credibility and respect within the business community.
- A person who has knowledge of the programme areas outlined in the visionary document.

Selection of the Group Chair will be carried out jointly with representatives from the NWEAB and the Business Delivery Group.

The chair will work very closely with the Programme Director for the North Wales Growth Deal and the chair/vice chair of the NWEAB.

Accountability:

- The Group will operate as an independent body.
- The Group will scrutinise and analyse all the North Wales Growth Deal projects and will report its findings and give feedback to the NWEAB. The respective Chairs of both bodies will indicate and report on a formal basis the level of support or concern associated with each project contained within the NWGD Program and report any formally raised items to all involved with the project.
- The Chair of the NWEAB will have an open invitation to the Business Delivery Group to raise any issues of concern or merit.
- The chair will be the responsible person for reporting the Group's recommendations and advice to the NWEAB on each project.

Review:

- The terms of reference will be reviewed by the Group every six months and will be amended as appropriate.

Meetings

- The Group must meet minimum six times a year. All Group members will meet together.
- The venue will be arranged by the programme office.
- The secretariat will call the meeting and the chair of the Group will chair the meeting.
- The Chair will decide on the agenda items for each meeting.
- The meeting papers will be circulated two weeks before the meeting.
- Non-members from the programme office and the NWEAB will be invited to meetings as appropriate.
- The programme office will provide the secretariat for the group.
- The Group members will scrutinise and challenge the NWGD projects and should be viewed as "program/project stakeholders" requiring an informal sign-off on the plans, activities and actions of any related program/project. The final recommendations will be put forward to the NWEAB.
- External independent experts may be invited to the meetings to as necessary in order to provide advice.

APPENDIX 4

There are a number of actions proposed to support the continued strengthening of the private sector engagement.

If supported by the Board, the programme office will lead on this work and will present a report on progress at the next meeting.

1. The development of a communications and engagement strategy that clearly defines the private sector as a key audience for messages and involvement and illustrates the channels for this to happen. The strategy will include the development of an on-line communication channel where the work of the Economic Ambition Board can be targeted to key sectors and industries to help build awareness and understanding.
2. Continued working with the Business Delivery Group to strengthen relationships and build on the understanding and involvement in programme business case development.
3. A proposal on how to bring a representative private sector partner to work with the NWEAB given the circumstances outlined by the North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council.
4. Assess and implement options to work with existing Growth Deal partners on a joined up approach to building private sector engagement and involvement. This should feel like a movement which once it gains understanding and support will build momentum and support in the run up to achieving a final deal this year.