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**REPORT TO THE NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD**  
**17 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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**TITLE:** Programme Assessment Review 2021

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the 2021 Programme Assessment Review (PAR).
- 1.2. It is a requirement of the Final Deal Agreement that the North Wales Growth Deal undertakes an annual external gateway review.

**2. DECISION SOUGHT**

- 2.1. That the Board note the findings of the 2021 Programme Assessment Review.
- 2.2. That the Board notes that the report will form part of the 2021-22 annual funding award submission.
- 2.3. That the Board note that the Portfolio Management Office will be developing an action plan to deliver against the recommendations.

**3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

- 3.1. As stated in the report.

**4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1. In December 2020, the NWEAB and the Welsh and UK Governments agreed the Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal.
- 4.2. It is a requirement of the Final Deal Agreement that the North Wales Growth Deal undertakes an annual external gateway review of the portfolio and five programmes.
- 4.3. The OGC Gateway Process examines programmes and projects at key decision points in their lifecycle. It looks ahead to provide assurance that they can progress successfully to the next stage; the Process is regarded as best practice in central civil government throughout the UK.
- 4.4. OGC Gateway Reviews deliver a 'peer review', in which independent practitioners from outside the programme/project use their experience and expertise to examine the progress and likelihood of successful delivery of the programme or project. They are used to provide a valuable additional perspective on the issues facing the internal team, and an external challenge to the robustness of plans and processes.

- 4.5. It has been agreed with the Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub that there will be an annual Portfolio and Programme Project Assessment Review (PAR) focusing on the delivery of the Growth Deal.

Findings of the review

- 4.6. The review team have given the North Wales Growth Deal a delivery confidence assessment of ‘Amber/Green’. This is the second highest rating available and an improvement on the ‘Amber’ rating received in 2020. The rationale behind the rating is summarised in the table below:

<b>Delivery Confidence Assessment:</b>	<b>Amber/Green</b>
<p>The Review Team finds that successful delivery of the North Wales Growth Deal (NWGD) appears probable at this stage. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery:</p> <p>Our confidence is based on the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strength of leadership</li> <li>• The professionalism of the PMO and its sufficiency of suitably qualified and experienced personnel</li> <li>• The impressive cohesion and support of stakeholders and partners</li> <li>• The current strong regional focus and ethos</li> <li>• The robust PPM processes and controls in place</li> </ul> <p>Our concerns focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current uncertainty around private sector investment and lack of a cohesive Portfolio level strategy to identify and attract</li> <li>• Risk of adverse impact of local authority elections, CJCS and change of senior members/officials</li> <li>• The need for an agreed approach to identify and manage projects that may become unviable</li> </ul>	

- 4.7. The report includes five recommendations as set out in the table below:

Ref. No.	Recommendation	Urgency	Target date for completion
1.	The Portfolio should institute a regime of horizon scanning to identify potential new projects if current ones become unviable and to give early consideration to any changes that will be required to existing projects from policy changes. Criteria should be developed by which a project will be deemed to be no longer viable.	E- Essential	By end of December 21
2.	The Portfolio should re-baseline its key milestones and programme plans as early as possible and seek approval.	E- Essential	End October 2021
3.	In order to maintain quorate for key decisions and achieving agreed milestones, the EAB	E- Essential	Before next EAB meeting

Ref. No.	Recommendation	Urgency	Target date for completion
	voting members should ensure the appointment of deputies. In addition, an “out of committee” mechanism for urgent approvals should be agreed for the delivery phase.		
4.	A Portfolio level strategy for attracting and securing private and other sector investment should be developed and adopted.	E- Essential	By end December 2021
5.	The Portfolio should review the risks and consequences of the lack of revenue funding and consider how the impacts can be mitigated.	R - Recommended	

4.8. None of the recommendations were labelled as “C-Critical” which would have required immediate action. The recommendations are considered helpful and reasonable by the Portfolio Management Office who will be developing an action plan to deliver against these recommendations.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. While there are no direct financial implications associated with this report, the completion of the Programme Assessment Review is a key milestone as the report forms part of the submission to Welsh Government and UK Government to secure the next tranche of funding.

## 6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. It is a requirement of the Final Deal Agreement that the North Wales Growth Deal undertakes an annual external gateway review.

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## APPENDICES:

**Appendix 1** North Wales Growth Deal – 2021 PAR Report

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**STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:**

- i. Monitoring Officer – Host Authority:**  
Any comments will be made at the meeting.
- ii. Statutory Finance Officer (the Host Authority’s Section 151 Officer):**  
“Regarding ‘Funding’, we are aware, as noted in Recommendation 5 under part 4.7 of the covering report, and in section 10.6 of the Welsh Government’s Programme Assessment Review, that the WEFO ESF funding will cease in 2023. Hence, the Economic Ambition Board must plan to ensure that the portfolio management costs are affordable, either by reducing future revenue commitments, or by securing an additional alternative funding source post-2023. To date, the focus has been on establishing the Portfolio Office operationally and budgeting accordingly, but during 2022 I will be working with the Portfolio Director to produce plan for the medium term.”