

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	Executive Committee
Date:	28th November, 2016
Subject:	Growth Track 360
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr. Ieuan Williams
Chief Executive:	Dr Gwynne Jones
Report Author:	Dylan J. Williams – Head of Service Economic & Community Regeneration Service
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Local Members:	Of relevance to all Elected Members

A – Recommendation/s and reason/s
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To Adopt Growth Track 360 as the Council's Rail Improvement Programme. 2. To write to the UK Government Secretaries of State for the Wales Office and Transport (DfT) giving the Council's support for Growth Track 360. 3. To write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer with copies to the DfT and the Wales Office seeking £130m to be provided for implementing the Growth Track 360 Short Term Programme in the 2016 Autumn Statement and 2017 Budget. 4. To write to the Welsh Government Minister for Economy and Transport regarding the Growth Track 360 proposed Service Pattern for North Wales to be specified in the new Wales and Border Franchise. <p>The North Wales Councils identified poor transport infrastructure as a barrier to economic growth on establishing the North Wales Economic Ambition Board in 2011/2012 and gave priority to a campaign to modernise the railway network in North Wales. The Mersey Dee Alliance Board (MDA) has also long recognised cross border transport infrastructure as a priority area of work and agreed to support the campaign of the NWEAB. The campaign identified its priorities as: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rail electrification supported by • Faster and more frequent services to connect North Wales with Liverpool and Manchester and their airports. <p>The package of faster, more frequent services to destinations linked to employment zones along with electrification is designed to make the network more competitive with the private car and capable of assisting economic growth in the region.</p>

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them?

1. Do Nothing – Continuing with the status quo in terms of the current provision of transport infrastructure will not enable growth in the North Wales economy.

C – Why is this decision for the Executive?

It is critical that the Growth Track 360 is unanimously endorsed by each Executive Committee from the 6 Local Authorities to provide a mandate for the Task Force to work closely with the Welsh Government and Department for Transport.

As Anglesey is the most westerly of all Authorities it is imperative that the County Council demonstrates its commitment to the proposal to ensure that transport and infrastructure connections are improved for our residents.

CH – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

The proposed way forward is consistent with the IACC's Corporate Plan and Economic & Community Regeneration Service Delivery Plan (2015/ 16).

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

The proposed way forward is consistent and aligned with the approved budget of the Economic & Community Regeneration Service.

DD – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	
4	Human Resources (HR)	
5	Property	
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	
7	Scrutiny	
8	Local Members	
9	Any external bodies / other/s	

1	Economic	
2	Anti-poverty	
3	Crime and Disorder	
4	Environmental	
5	Equalities	
6	Outcome Agreements	
7	Other	

F – Appendices:		
1. Briefing Paper – GT 360 Priorities October 2016		
2. Rail Modernisation in North Wales and the Mersey – Dee Areas		

FF - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):		



**BRIEFING – GT360 PRIORITIES
OCTOBER 2016**

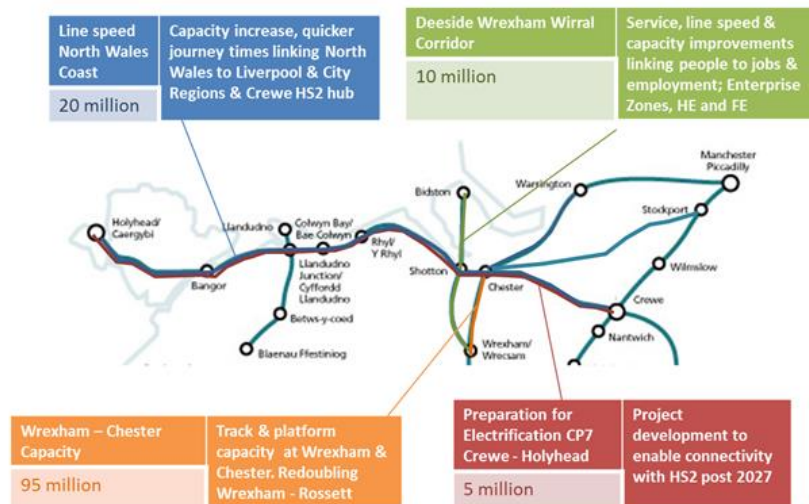
The GT360 campaign has identified key priorities to help give definition to the immediate requests to government and industry. These priorities address both the infrastructure improvements that are needed to unlock the sub-regional network and also service improvements that are required in franchise renewals.

Growth Track 360 remains fully committed to the long-term aim for electrification and connectivity to Crewe Hub and HS2. A key lobby point remains for increased HS2 services to Crewe with the potential for long-term of classic-compatible services to Holyhead which intrinsically requires electrification.

Governance

The North Wales and Mersey-Dee Cross Border Rail Task Force has established and embedded a governance structure for the GT360 programme (Appendix A). This delivers both political and strategic leadership and technical project development with industry in the Growth Track Industry Group.

Priority Infrastructure Projects for inclusion in CP6 Planning – £130 million



This suite of infrastructure improvements has been identified in the Wales and Border Route study and will help provide the catalyst for growth. These improvements will allow increased service capacity with quicker journeys and will provide the first step towards transformational change within the cross-border economy. These initial infrastructure projects are required to enable enhanced services to be delivered.

Detailed Table of Prioritised Infrastructure Improvements

Improving Today's Railway (Initial Industry)		
Project	Estimated Cost	Comments / Benefits
Wrexham – Chester Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track and Platform capacity at Chester Station Track and Platform capacity at Wrexham General Station Redoubling Wrexham – Rossett 	£40 million £10 million £45 million	Three linked projects combining; Additional track and signalling infrastructure with additional capacity at Chester and Wrexham General stations, all of which are critical to enable service growth and improving connectivity with the Northern Powerhouse and other regions.
Rail Capacity Supporting Economic Growth		
Line Speed Improvements Holyhead to Warrington / Crewe	£20 million	Capacity and journey time reductions linking North Wales, Chester, with Manchester and Liverpool City Regions and Crewe HS2 Hub
Deeside – Wrexham – Wirral Corridor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrexham Bidston Improvements Shotton Hub 	£10 million	Service, line speed and capacity improvements linking Enterprise Zones, Higher Education and Further Education provision and population
HS2 Enabling Project		
Preparation for Electrification CP7 Preparation work for CP7 Delivery – Warrington / Crewe – Holyhead Electrification	£5 million	Funding to undertake development work towards electrification to ensure that North Wales and cross border services can fully benefit from HS2 and enable classic compatible services after 2027.

Essential Minimum Franchise Commitments For Service Improvements

Two way service patterns providing a minimum 4 trains per hour (tph) along the North Wales coast and 2 tph between Wrexham and Chester by combining through trains, joining up of trains at Chester or robust connections to provide the connectivity of:

- 1 x tph Holyhead / Bangor / Llandudno / Chester to London through services (Inter City West Coast franchise)

- 2 x tph North Wales Coast to Manchester - ideally one of these a fast service (Wales and Borders franchise)
- 1 x tph North Wales Coast to Chester continuing to Birmingham International or Cardiff Central on alternate hours. (Wales and Borders franchise)
- 1 x tph N Wales Coast and Wrexham to Liverpool via Halton Curve (Wales and Borders franchise)
- 2 x tph between Wrexham and Bidston (Wales and Borders franchise)

For N Wales coast services alternative trains could operate from either of Holyhead / Bangor / Llandudno to give a balanced service to all destinations.

An optional approach would be to have stopping services along the coast from Holyhead to Llandudno / Chester allowing longer distance services to be accelerated by not having to stop at all intermediate stations.

All stations to have at least 2tph (Llandudno Jct to Chester) and 1 tph (Llandudno Jct to Holyhead).

Rolling Stock

The new Wales and Borders franchise should include a rolling stock strategy that should be:

Flexible - To avoid using too many train paths at busy parts of the network, consideration to link trains at hubs should be given. E.g. 2 coach train from Bangor joins a 2 coach train from Llandudno at Llandudno Jct. A further 2 coach train from Wrexham would join at Chester giving a 6 coach service to Manchester / Liverpool at peak times.

Long distance rolling stock to be min 100 mph, with good quality Wi-Fi, plug sockets and plenty of tables for business use. Local and commuter stock would be configured differently.

Franchise Management Options

The new franchise could include options for more localised management of the franchise to ensure close connections with communities and rail users.

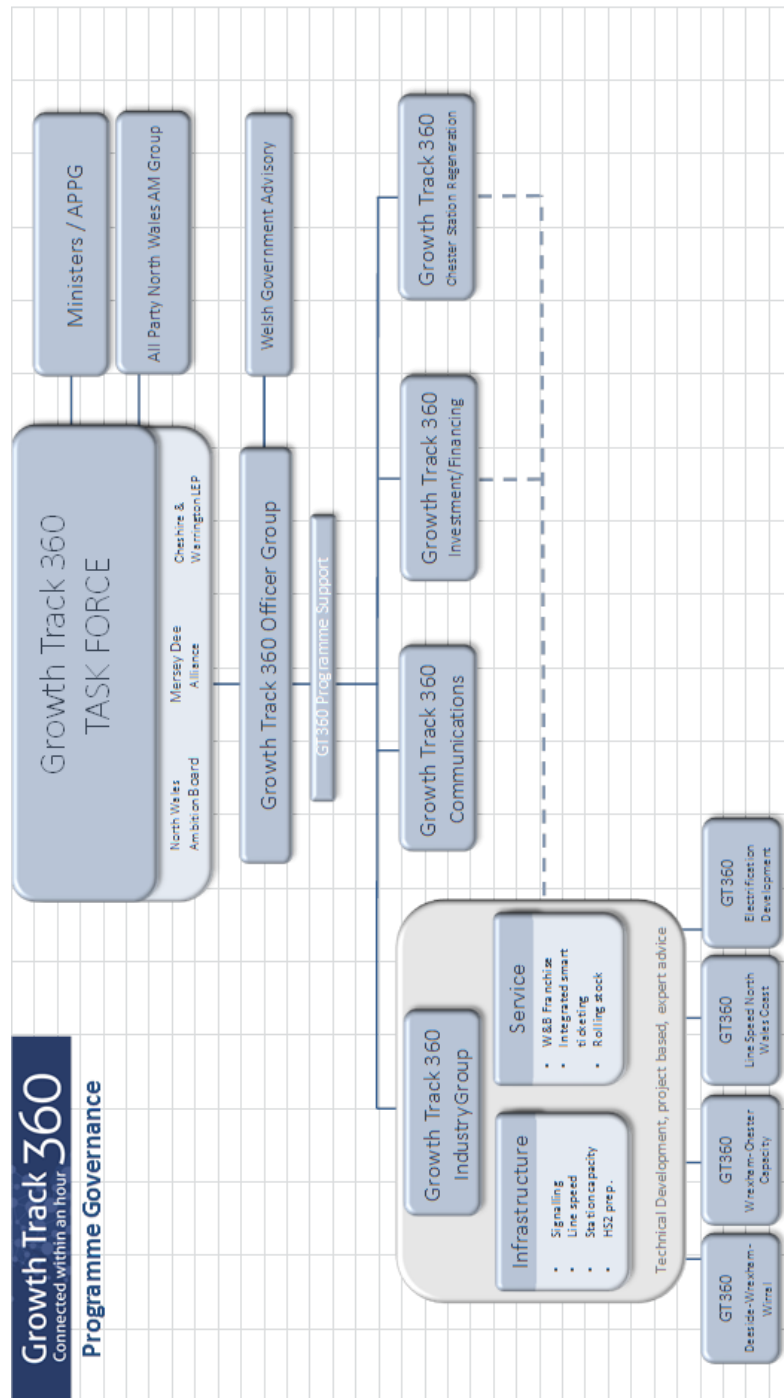
Having scope for a local management unit for "local / stopping" services on the N Wales Coast and between Wrexham - Bidston and on the Conwy Valley line would be useful. Local management issues could include

- Ticket and fare strategy
- Marketing
- Time table
- Demand improvement measures including car parking and station facilities

- Initiatives to encourage small and medium sized businesses and social enterprise

Flexibility to vary the franchise and service specification to suit changing services is essential. If the franchise extends beyond the period when HS2 or electrification takes place, there should be scope for a fundamental review of services.

Appendix A



Rail Modernisation in North Wales and the Mersey – Dee Areas

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to inform elected members of work being undertaken to secure improvement of the rail network in the North Wales and Mersey Dee Area, how it is being undertaken and by whom.

The Report summarises proposals for: -

- Investment in rail infrastructure, such as signalling, track and stations which are the non-devolved responsibility of Network Rail and UK Department of Transport (DfT)
- Service improvements through the renewal of the Wales and Borders Franchise which is devolved to the Welsh Government from early in 2017 and

There are recommendations on how the Council can express its support to the UK and Welsh Governments for the proposals being made.

The Growth Track 360/Connected Within an Hour campaign document is attached for information.

Background – Starting Point and Objectives

The North Wales Councils identified poor transport infrastructure as a barrier to economic growth on establishing the North Wales Economic Ambition Board in 2011/2012 and gave priority to a campaign to modernise the railway network in North Wales. The Mersey Dee Alliance Board has also long recognised cross border transport infrastructure as a priority area of work and agreed to support the campaign of the NWEAB. The campaign identified its priorities as: -

- Rail electrification supported by
- Faster and more frequent services to connect North Wales with Liverpool and Manchester and their airports.

The package of faster, more frequent services to destinations linked to employment zones along with electrification is designed to make the network more competitive with the private car and capable of assisting economic growth in the region.

The campaign led to a rail summit in November 2015 attended by the then Welsh Government Minister for the Economy and Transport, Edwina Hart AM, the Rail Minister in the UK Government, then Claire Perry MP and the Wales Office Minister, Alan Cairns MP, now Secretary of State for the Wales Office.

It was a great achievement to bring three ministers together and unify UK and Welsh Government Ministers in support of improving the North Wales Rail Network.

Their advice to North Wales, the Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) and the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (C&WLEP) was to join forces to campaign for improvements to the rail network given that the Network crosses administrative boundaries and serves a functional cross border economy

The Rail Summit therefore led to the creation of a cross border Rail Task Force to take forward a campaign to modernise the North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Network and improve its Connectivity to the North West of England and the wider UK Rail Network.

The North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force

The North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Taskforce brings together representatives of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Mersey Dee Alliance, the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership and Merseytravel along with Business Representatives from North Wales and Cheshire.

The Task Force has the political support of the Welsh Government which took a leading role in sponsoring the establishment of the Rail Task Force in order to maximise the support for the modernisation of North Wales' Rail infrastructure by linking it the Northern Powerhouse concept and harnessing political support for investment in North Wales from outside Wales.

The UK Department for Transport (DfT) welcomed the formation of the Task Force and advised it to work on a template developed by "Norwich in 90" which successfully secured support for improvements to the Great Eastern line from Liverpool Street in London to Norwich in Norfolk.

The focus of the advice from the DfT was to secure widespread public and business support for a set of coherent and realistic improvements led by committed, locally based politicians.

The Task Force therefore set about lobbying for rail investment in North Wales and the Mersey Dee area by putting the case for investment in a much wider, cross border economic context and seeking business, public and political support for improvement.

A key step in widening support for investment was the formation of the Mersey Dee and North Wales All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) in Westminster. This group brings together back-bench MPs from all parties representing constituencies in North Wales, the Wirral and Cheshire and also Life Peers sitting in the House of Lords associated with the area.

This group is active in lobbying Ministers and the Rail Industry and brought the issue of investing in the North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Network to the attention of the then Chancellor George Osborne MP who received a delegation from the Rail Task Force and the APPG in April 2016. This meeting helped open up the possibility of a Growth Deal for North Wales that is now being worked on by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board on behalf of the six North Wales Councils.

Growth Track 360/Connected Within an Hour

The Rail Task Force has published its prospectus for Rail investment in North Wales and the Mersey Dee areas in a report titled “Growth Track 360” which also captures the universal support in the combined regions for the proposals within.

The strap line “Connected within an Hour” describes the aspiration to have more frequent and faster services that will join up communities and key employment zones and offer public transport as a realistic option for commuting in an area where the vast bulk of travel for work is by car and where rail has one of the lowest shares for commuting in the UK.

The North Wales and Mersey Dee cross border economy runs on an East West Axis. Business regards it as essential that North Wales and the Mersey Dee area has good access to Manchester, Liverpool and their airports, particularly Manchester.

The Tourist Industry is also strongly behind Growth Track 360, seeing it as a potential means to increase visitor numbers to the region from large British cities and from abroad via the airports of Manchester and Liverpool.

Improving East West links will also improve connectivity between the employment hubs at: -

- Bangor, Wylfa/Anglesey, Llandudno and the Enterprise Zones in North West Wales (Anglesey and Snowdonia)
- Deeside (Enterprise Zone and Industrial Park)
- Wrexham – Town and Industrial Estate
- Chester – City and Business Park
- Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone (including Ellesmere Port)
- Birkenhead – Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone
- Warrington
- Crewe

The wider cross border economy (North Wales, Cheshire West and Chester and Wirral) has a £25bn GVA and the potential to double GVA to £50bn. Rail Investment is required to enable this growth.

The key ingredients of Growth Track 360 are: -

- Short Term Rail Infrastructure Investments to enable more and faster services that connect employment zones and tourist hubs with population centres.
- More frequent and faster services to key city destinations (London, Manchester, Liverpool, Manchester and Liverpool Airports, Leeds, Cardiff and Birmingham via Chester) to be achieved via the new Wales and Border Franchise
- Being HS2 Ready by 2027, requiring electrification from Crewe to Holyhead
- Evidence of widespread business, public and political support for the proposed programme of investment.

Improved rail services then need to be supported by improved facilities at stations, like parking, CCTV and connecting bus services to enable better access to the network.

HS2 Ready – Electrification by 2027

The UK Department for Transport considers the current case for electrification of the North Wales line (Crewe to Holyhead) as relatively weak. The current cost of electrification is around £800m and its benefits would only just recover its cost over a 60-year period.

In addition, there have been considerable cost-overruns in the Network Rail Investment Programme scheduled for Control Period 5 (CP5) up to 2018/19. This means that much of the work scheduled for CP5 has now been re-costed and rescheduled for CP6 2019/20 to 2024/25.

The DfT have therefore advised the Task Force to develop a short term and relatively low cost package of infrastructure investment, which, when linked to improved services (faster more frequent and direct to employment zones) from the Wales and Borders and West Coast Inter City Franchises will lead to greater usage of rail in the area. Greater usage will then gradually improve the business case for electrification over time.

It is therefore unlikely that electrification of the North Wales Crewe to Holyhead line will be included in CP6.

However, it then becomes essential that: -

- North Wales Electrification, (Crewe – Chester – Holyhead) is completed in CP7 prior to the commencement of HS2 services to Crewe.
- Services are improved especially via the Wales and Border Franchise Renewal which will also require additional revenue funding from the Department for Transport to support growth in the devolved franchise.

Short Term Improvements

Short term improvements need to be delivered in Rail Control Periods (CP) 5 (current to 2018/19) and (CP) 6 (2019/20 to 2024/25).

The Programme that the task Force will be seeking in the 2016 Autumn Statement for CP6 and financing by the UK Government is costed at £130m: -

Improving Today's Railway - Wrexham and Chester Capacity (£95m)

- Upgrades to Chester Station to allow more services from North Wales to Liverpool and Manchester and to provide for future electrification to North Wales £40m
- Redoubling of the line Rossett to Wrexham (completing the redoubling programme from Chester to Wrexham) £45m
- Wrexham Station Capacity £10m

Rail Capacity Supporting Economic Growth (£30m)

- Line speed and capacity Improvements Holyhead to Crewe £20m
(Investments in the network that improve speed, increase the number of services that can use the North Wales lines and reduce speed limits, like re-signalling, footbridges replacing pedestrian crossings etc. are a necessary pre-condition for electrification.)
- Wrexham Deeside Wirral Improvements and a Shotton Hub £10m
(Wrexham – Bidston/Birkenhead Line Improvements)

HS2 Ready (£5m)

- Project Development Costs scoping and preparing for electrification of the North Wales Line Crewe – Holyhead by 2027 £5m)

The Halton Curve, an already committed scheme, enabling services from North Wales to Liverpool Lime Street via Chester must be delivered alongside the improvements sought by the Task Force.

The Wales and Border Franchise Renewal

The new Franchise will commence in 2018 and will be funded and specified by the Welsh Government. The level of funding will be largely determined by devolution of funds from the UK Department of Transport and will need to recognise the growth in usage over the initial “no-growth” franchise.

The Infrastructure Improvements sought in CP6 are directly linked to the services the task Force is specifying for the inclusion in the Franchise by the Welsh Government.

The service pattern is detailed at page 16 in the Growth Track 360 Document: -

- 2 x tph N Wales Coast to Manchester - ideally one of these a fast service
- 1 x tph Wrexham to Manchester
- 1 x tph N Wales Coast / Wrexham to Liverpool via Halton Curve
- 1 x tph to Cardiff / Birmingham International as per existing
- 1 x tph to Crewe
- 2 x tph on Wrexham – Bidston

Long distance rolling stock to be minimum 100mph, with good quality WiFi, plug sockets and plenty of tables for business use. Local and commuter stock would be configured differently.

The new franchise should also enable new management arrangements for localised services on the Conwy Valley and Wrexham/Bidston lines and seek to simplify ticketing

Next Steps

The Task Force will continue to work closely with the Welsh Government and the DfT.

It is essential to the delivery of the Growth Track 360 Programme that a rail industry advisory body is set up to work with the Task Force. This will help with costing out proposals and identifying economic and rail benefits. Most importantly it will help co-ordinate investment and services across administrative boundaries.

The Task Force will continue to work with regional stakeholders, including its sponsoring bodies (NWEAB, MDA and C&WLEP) and the public in the North Wales and the Mersey Dee economy to foster support for investment in the rail network serving the combined North Wales and Cross Border Regions.

The Task Force will work with C&WLEP and MDA members to identify linked investments in Cheshire and Wirral that will enhance the economic case for investment in the North Wales Rail Network, particularly with regard to the Crewe HS2 Hub in Cheshire East. These will be consolidated with existing proposals in updates to the GT360 Programme which will in turn be reported to Councils in the North Wales and Mersey Dee areas as they are developed.

The Task Force will seek to identify and obtain funding to maintain its work in developing investment and service improvement proposals backed up by lobbying and public relations work.

Recommendations

1. To Adopt Growth Track 360 as the Councils Rail Improvement Programme
2. To write to the UK Government Secretaries of State for the Wales Office and Transport (DfT) giving the Council's support for Growth Track 360
3. To write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer with copies to the DfT and the Wales Office seeking £130m to be provided for implementing the Growth Track 360 Short Term Programme in the 2016 Autumn Statement and 2017 Budget.
4. To write to the Welsh Government Minister for Economy and Transport regarding the Growth Track 360 proposed Service Pattern for North Wales to be specified in the new Wales and Border Franchise

Impact Assessments

Financial

Growth Track 360 has been financed by contributions from bodies funded by Councils like the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the MDA.

Councils have made small direct contributions to the rail campaign in the past of £10k.

No direct contributions are being sought at present, but it is possible that small contributions of up to £10k per council could be sought in the future, either directly or via the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

Economic

Rail Investment is part of a strategy to double GVA over 20 years in the combined geographies, with a potential 70,000 new jobs.

North Wales has articulated a Growth Vision which seeks to grow the economy by £7.2bn over 15 years, a 56% increase on the current £12.8bn regional GVA. Rail investment is a key part of enabling that vision.

It is likely that rail investment will increase economic growth and offer opportunities to increase employment. In most parts of North Wales and the Mersey Dee area.

Rail investment will support council economic strategies for growth.

Equality

Improved rail services will require new rolling stock that will improve disabled access to rail.

Improved rail services will offer new employment opportunities in some deprived communities, if effectively allied to connecting bus services.

Improved rail services and station facilities will increase access to transport services.

Sustainability

Rail travel is less harmful to the environment than the dominant mode of transport, the private motor car.

Growth Track 360 is designed to make the railway more competitive with the private motor car and achieve a modest modal shift from the car to rail. Rail's current share of modes of commuting is around 1%, below the Welsh average of 2% and radically below that achieved in the Merseyrail area where frequent, accessible and affordable services yield rates of over 10% in parts of the catchment area.

In the long term Growth Track 360 will improve the environment, particularly should electrification be achieved.

Well Being of Future Generations (Welsh Language)

The Rail Investment proposals are consistent with the requirements of the Future Generations Act sustainability principles, working in favour of greater equality, economic and social being and a lower carbon future.

With regard to the Welsh Language it is intended that an improved rail network will enable people who live in the region and speak Welsh will more easily be able to commute to better jobs via an improved transport network and especially rail without having to move home out of their Welsh speaking communities.

In this way it is hoped that more welsh speaking young people will stay in the region and also enjoy access to better employment opportunities outside their home communities.