

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau/ Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Committee
Bargeinion Dinesig ac Economiâu Rhanbarthol Cymru / City Deals and the
Regional Economies of Wales
Ymateb gan Cynghair Mersi a'r Ddyfrdwy / Evidence from Mersey Dee Alliance

RE: Inquiry into City Deals and the Regional Economies of Wales

Thank you for your letter asking the Mersey Dee Alliance to assist with The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee Inquiry into City Deals and Regional Economies of Wales. Please find below a response on behalf of the Mersey Dee Alliance. Although we appreciate the inquiry is broader than the information we have provided below, we have focused on the questions that are relevant to the cross border Mersey Dee region.

Background

The Mersey Dee Alliance is a strategic cross border economic partnership covering North East Wales and North West England; Flintshire, Wrexham, Cheshire West and Chester and Wirral.

The Alliance focuses on cross border transport infrastructure and skills issues to make travel to work and learn journeys quicker and better connected and to ensure businesses can access a skilled labour pool and residents can access skilled and well paid employment within and outside the Mersey Dee region.

The key sectors in the Mersey Dee region are energy, advanced manufacturing, high tech, engineering, automotive and financial and professional services.

The Mersey Dee Alliance works with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Cheshire and Warrington LEP and Liverpool City Region LEP to ensure joined up working towards achieving a shared ambition for economic growth in the Mersey Dee region. The cross-border agenda is included in both the North Wales Growth Vision growth deal proposal and the Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Deal proposal.

A Mersey Dee and North Wales All Party Parliamentary Group is in place and a North Wales and Mersey Dee All Party Assembly Member Group is being established to raise cross border transport infrastructure and skills priorities with UK and Welsh Governments. The Mersey Dee Alliance is also a member of the Mersey Dee and North Wales Rail Task Force.

Response

- The potential benefits offered by a possible Growth Deal for North Wales;

From a cross border point of view a growth deal for North Wales will support the work being carried out to unlock the full economic growth potential across the Mersey Dee and North Wales region, providing job and inward investment opportunities to residents (including skilled and well paid opportunities for young people) and businesses of North Wales. A growth deal for North Wales will work towards the delivery of the Mersey Dee's ambitious transport infrastructure investment programme, allowing workers, students, residents and visitors to travel more easily, when they need to, across and within the region and the rest of North Wales thus supporting priority growth sectors including energy, automotive, aerospace and tourism.

The Growth Deal for North Wales will ensure the skills of the local workforce reflect the demands from businesses across the region.

A North Wales Growth Deal will also provide the opportunity for economic growth priorities in North Wales to be aligned with similar priorities in the Cheshire and

Warrington Growth Deal which will ultimately provide for greater growth across a wider region, in turn supporting the Northern Powerhouse agenda.

It is important to make clear that the cross border priorities and ambitions for economic growth in the Mersey Dee region are a part of both the North Wales Growth bid and the Cheshire and Warrington growth bid. Local Authorities on both sides of the border are working together to the benefit of the local economy on a geographical basis despite there being a national border through the middle of the economic region. Continued support from Welsh Government to maintain this unique approach would be welcomed.

- The degree to which the growth and city deals could solve or exacerbate existing inequalities, both within and between regions.

Growth and/or city deals on either side of the North Wales and North West England border could help manage the differences in Welsh and English policy affecting businesses in the cross-border region, particularly around apprenticeships, business support and careers advice. They could help to coordinate business support services and support further collaborative working between Welsh and English authorities. To avoid inequalities in services and economic growth it is important to ensure that the North Wales Growth Deal and the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Deal complement each. Complementary Growth Deals on either side of the border could help fund cross border transport infrastructure schemes and innovative skills development projects.

Both the Growth Deal bids (North Wales and Cheshire and Warrington) will look at the social value aspects of the programmes being developed to address worklessness and low wages.

As economic policy in Wales around Growth and /or City Deals develops, the Mersey Dee Alliance would welcome the opportunity to discuss the detail above further.

We trust the Committee finds this information useful and we look forward to the outcome of the inquiry.