# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE**  | **North Wales Investments** |
| **DATE**  | **05 February 2020** |
| **BY** | **Ken Skates AM, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales** |

During 2019, my first year as Minister for North Wales, there have been some exciting investments in the North Wales region.

I am particularly pleased that all parties, namely the Welsh Government, UK Government and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, have signed the Heads of Terms for the North Wales Growth Deal.  This will offer the opportunity for nearly £1bn of investment across the region, including £120 million each of investment from both Governments.  In November, I joined the First Minister in officially opening the new Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre Cymru in Deeside, supported by £20m Welsh Government investment.  Airbus is the first tenant for the Centre, which is predicted to increase GVA in the region by as much as £4bn over 20 years.  I was also pleased to announce a £1m financial boost to 11 North Wales foundational economy projects through our Foundational Economy Challenge Fund, which is vital in ensuring money is retained locally.

Our support for businesses continued through Business Wales, which supported 109 North Wales businesses during 2018/19.  In fact, since April 2015, Business Wales has supported over 6,600 individual entrepreneurs and businesses in the region.  To date, this has generated a combined investment of £31.6m and £30.2m in exports, creating over 3,700 new jobs and almost 850 new enterprises in North Wales.  The Development Bank of Wales has also invested over £40 million into businesses in North Wales since April 2016.  The Economy Futures Fund supported 9 projects in North Wales, with a combined value of over £14 million and in May, Anglesey-based Minesto received a £12.6m EU boost in support of the North Wales tidal industry.

Transport in the region has seen significant investments during 2019, not least through the new Transport for Wales franchise which is delivering real change through its new Business Unit in Wrexham. It is providing more routes and services, with new state of the art trains to serve the North Wales coast due to arrive in 2023.  In the meantime, refurbished rolling stock will be introduced later this year to improve passenger comfort. It is investing in railway stations, including the deep-cleaning of every railway station across the region and undertaking testing on innovative forms of demand responsive bus travel across Wales. Two of the four trials are in North Wales, with one already underway in the Conwy Valley.

Work continues to improve cross-border transport links with the North of England to benefit both sides of the border. We have signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding with Transport for the North, helping to strengthen those cross-border transport links. A West and Wales Transport Forum has been established, which brings together key transport stakeholders from both sides. An extended timetable from North Wales to Liverpool is now in place, using the enhanced Halton curve infrastructure, with options being explored to increase service frequency on the route to further improve connectivity. More services are also being provided on the Wrexham/Bidston line.

On our roads, work is progressing on the £300m Flintshire Corridor Scheme with the process of procuring designers to develop the scheme. We announced the preferred option for the £90m A494 River Dee Bridge and we will be soon be publishing Draft Orders for the scheme. We have started construction on the £135m Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass and will be starting construction on the £26m A55 Aber to Tai’r Meibion Improvements during this Spring. We also announced preferred options for Junctions 15 and 16 on the A55 and intend to publish draft Orders during this Spring. I officially opened the final section of the Llangefni link road following a £10m investment, bringing great benefits to the local area and Anglesey as whole. In addition, we continue to be committed to the Third Menai Crossing. These schemes amount to more than half a billion pounds of investment in North Wales infrastructure.

In the roads pinch point programme, we are progressing with a number of schemes through the WelTAG process to ease congestion, increase safety and ensure journey time reliability. The schemes are at two points on the A483 and one at the A55/A470 Glan Conwy interchange.

Local transport projects have been supported through local transport grants, with almost £17m being awarded across North Wales. We also made available an additional £20m for North Wales Metro projects for spending in 2020/21. We will be investing in all modes to deliver the modern, high quality transport system that is fundamental to achieving our sustainability and climate change objectives and delivering economic growth.

I was pleased to see a reduction in emissions of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) at all 5 locations on the motorway and trunk road network in Wales where 50mph speed limits were introduced, including the A494 at Deeside and A483 near Wrexham. The trialling of average speed cameras has also meant fewer collisions on the A55 at Rhuallt Hill.

Other investments in the North Wales region during 2019 include £3.25m of Welsh Government regeneration investment to transform empty houses in Gwynedd and Anglesey back into homes. We also supported the building of brand new schools including Ysgol Pen Barras and Rhos Street, Ruthin, both part of a £280m investment to modernise North Wales schools between 2014 and 2019. A new development in Conwy has also benefitted from £1.5 million investment through EU funding. Match funded by Conwy County Borough Council, the site aims to support neighbouring enterprise zones and strategic sites, both delivering local and more regional employment, boosting the North Wales economy.

Superfast Cymru provided over 230,000 properties with access to fast fibre broadband at a cost of around £62m. Many areas of Wales would be without any access to superfast broadband without Superfast Cymru. In North Wales this includes whole counties such as Conwy, Gwynedd, and Anglesey. We are rolling out fibre broadband further in North Wales through our new fibre roll-out project with Openreach and our grant schemes continue to be available to help those who need access to fast, reliable broadband.

I chaired the second meeting of the Cabinet Committee for North Wales on 30 January. The Leaders of the six North Wales Local Authorities joined the meeting which included a discussion on building momentum around the North Wales Growth Deal as well as how we collaborate and align our work to best deliver for the region.

Finally, recognising the need for Welsh Government to have a presence across the whole of Wales, in addition to our offices in Caernarfon and Llandudno Junction, scoping work to establish an office for the Minister for North Wales in the North East of Wales is underway to complement our other offices in the region.

I will continue to keep Members up-dated as matters develop across the North Wales region.