# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Transport Vision for North Wales** |
| **DATE** | **14 December 2017** |
| **BY** | **Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport** |

In September this year when I gave an Oral Statement to Plenary on the Metro developments in Deeside, I committed to making further statements over the coming weeks and months to explain my proposals for the other hubs being considered as part of delivering my vision for North Wales and North East Wales Metro.

Today I will update on the progress we are making with the developments in the Deeside and Wrexham hubs as these are further advanced than the other locations in north Wales. Early next year I will be focusing on our investments in North West Wales.

My vision is about spreading prosperity and supporting economic development across all parts of the Region. It is a vision of a transformed, integrated transport system in North Wales that delivers economic growth and achieves social, environmental, health and cultural benefits. It is about enhancing transport infrastructure and services to reduce congestion and improve journey times, both of which are recognised as being fundamental to prosperous economies and sustainable environments on both sides of the border.

We are turning this vision into a number of schemes that will:

* Provide the transport connectivity required to maximise economic growth in North Wales and opportunities from the Northern Powerhouse
* Connect communities to facilities jobs and services, including across the Wales-England border
* Encourage more sustainable travel modes reducing congestion and delivering health and environmental benefits.

The transport schemes are being developed using the recently published Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance 2017 toolkit that is aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations Act principles and the Well-being objectives. Scheme development is also done in collaboration with local authorities, business sectors, and bus and rail operators and is focused on targeting our investments in the transport system that can bring benefits to the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of North Wales and adjoining regions. Transport solutions can deliver a wide range of benefits if they are planned and delivered in a way which reflects considerations wider than just transportation infrastructure or systems.

Our main focus continues to be on creating integrated transport hubs at key employment sites across north Wales and the wider Mersey Dee area. It is about better connectivity within, to and from and between the hubs. In north Wales these hubs are centred in the Bangor, Abergele, Rhyl, St Asaph, Wrexham, and Deeside areas.

As part of improving connectivity between employment hubs in the Cheshire, Wirral and North East Wales areas, we are working with authorities and politicians on both sides of the border to develop a scheme that would ease traffic congestion west and south of Chester, provide better links to Broughton and reduce existing traffic impacts in the area. It also involves upgrading the A483/ A5 south of Wrexham. In addition, we are progressing to the next stage of development that will identify the preferred solution to address the current congestion at the Halton Roundabout on the A483.

In Wrexham itself, we are working with the Council to create a multi modal, integrated transport hub in the town centre that will enable access by sustainable modes to, from and within the town. This will contribute to providing the transport facilities and services necessary to deliver the Council’s emerging Local Development Plan aspirations however I recognise the need to address congestion issues on the A483 trunk road if the economic development and housing plans are to be realised fully. I am therefore committed to progressing with the development of initiatives to improve the A483 Junctions 3 to 6 and will include this scheme in an updated National Transport Finance Plan to be published later this month.

To deliver the integrated transport hub solution working with the Council and other partners including network rail, I am providing funding for

* Station and facility improvements at Wrexham General Train station
* Improved bus and active travel access and park and ride opportunities at Wrexham General Train station
* Better passenger facilities, information, security and measures to improve the flows of vehicles and accessibility within Wrexham bus station
* Improved connectivity between Wrexham general and the bus station by bus and active travel modes
* Review of the bus network to improve connectivity to key locations within and beyond the town centre

In Deeside we are continuing to progress the schemes I outlined in my oral statement of 26 September. I have made funding available to develop schemes for the integration of Shotton High/ Low stations, and develop a new Deeside Parkway through to GRIP Stage 3. Welsh Government funding awarded to Flintshire CC is programmed to be spent in early 2018 to improve the Deeside Industrial Park infrastructure including the introduction of a wide range of improved Active Travel provision. The authority will also be consulting on its proposals for improving public transport services including journey time and reliability. The aim from our investments in Deeside is to provide a multi-modal, low carbon travel option for everyone in the area which will boost the economy of the wider region and beyond.

Importantly, the improvements support the Deeside Plan published earlier this year by Flintshire County Council.

The way we are procuring future Wales and Borders rail services will improve the way that we can grow services across North Wales, and my first priorities are for improved services between North Wales and Liverpool via the Halton Curve as well as faster south to north Wales services in the morning and evening. In addition, bidders are incentivised to enhance service levels in the North East Wales Metro area including improvements to Sunday services. Transport for Wales will soon be receiving final tenders from bidders, and I will provide further updates over the course of the coming months.

Having secured investment from UK Government to develop a business case to justify investments to improve journey time and capacity along the North Wales mainline and the Wrexham-Bidston line, we will now be proceeding with these studies. This work will be undertaken in collaboration with the Department for Transport and Growth Track 360.

As our focus is now shifting from planning and development into delivery and from quick wins to projects that are more complex, have a greater lead-in time and require the express assistance of statutory and non-statutory funding bodies across the border, I intend to set up a Transport for Wales business unit in north Wales. This business unit will support the work of the North Wales and North East Wales Metro Steering Group already established. This is an interim arrangement and I will make a further Statement when the permanent arrangements have been finalised.

The Steering Group and the Transport for Wales business unit working together and collaborating with other key partners, will deliver modern and connected infrastructure, create an integrated public transport network, encourage active travel thereby improving health and the environment and enable better co-ordinated planning of infrastructure, housing, employment and services.