

North Wales Economic Growth Bid

Wellbeing Impact Assessment Report

This report summarises the likely impact of a proposal on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Denbighshire, Wales and the world.

Assessment Number:	184
Brief description:	The 6 North Wales Councils have developed and endorsed a vision for economic growth across the region. This proposal looks at the governance arrangements to support development of the strategy to deliver that economic growth. A further assessment will be carried out when the details of the Growth Strategy and bid are known.
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Responsible Service:	Planning & Public Protection
Localities affected by the proposal:	Whole County,

IMPACT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Before we look in detail at the contribution and impact of the proposal, it is important to consider how the proposal is applying the sustainable development principle. This means that we must act "in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Score for the sustainability of the approach

Could some small changes in your thinking produce a better result?

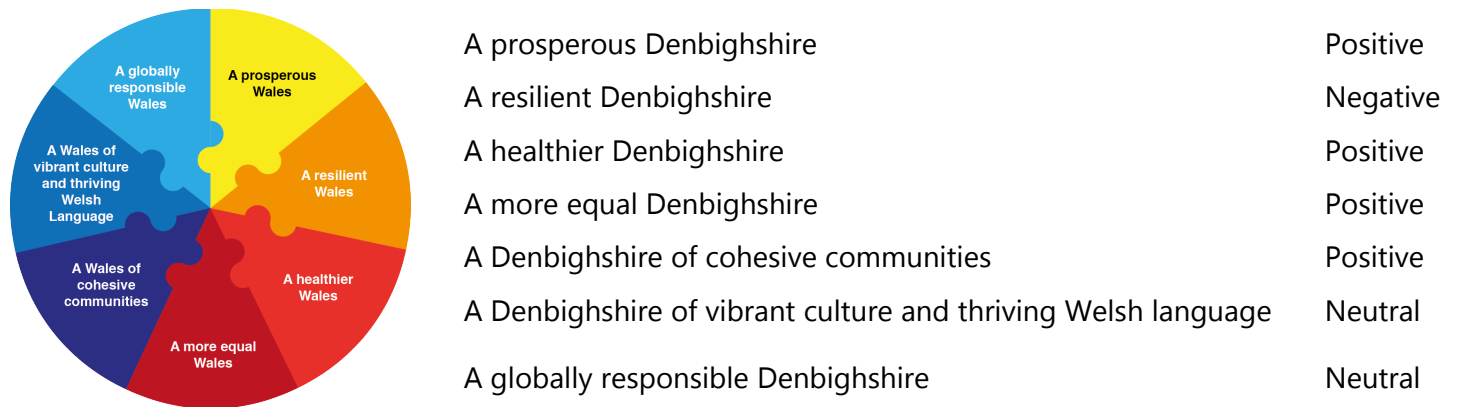
(3 out of 4 stars)



Actual score: 19/ 24.

Summary of impact

Wellbeing Goals



Main conclusions

On balance, the Growth Bid for North Wales is assessed as having a positive impact on North Wales generally and Denbighshire specifically. Its main benefits come from the increased employment opportunities, economic activity, personal and business wealth and wellbeing its activities will create, leading to more vibrant and sustainable communities with reduced deprivation and worklessness, and a reduction in the inequalities arising from deprivation.

There are risks, however - both in terms of how inclusive the growth will be and the impact that growth could have on the region generally and Denbighshire specifically.

Attention is already being paid to measures needed to ensure inclusive growth. Skills and Employment are a key feature of the Growth Bid proposal, with a specific focus on both skills for young people and also employability improvement for working age adults currently furthest from the workplace. Initiatives are also planned to ensure local supply chain and local businesses benefit from inward investment propositions and transformational projects, such as is already happening for HMP Berwyn and Wylfa Newydd.

Less well understood are the potential adverse impacts on natural environment, sustainability and Welsh Language and culture. Further work is needed on these to ensure potential adverse impacts are minimised and positive opportunities are captured.

The region's individual planning systems will have a strong role to play in ensuring growth does not overwhelm

what makes the region a good place to live currently.

There will also need to be careful and close working among all public services to ensure that any increase in population arising from the anticipated economic growth is managed and that services are planned and adequately resourced to deal with any increased demand.

THE LIKELY IMPACT ON DENBIGHSHIRE, WALES AND THE WORLD

A prosperous Denbighshire

Overall Impact:	Positive
Justification for Impact:	<p>The Growth Bid is specifically designed to grow the economy of North Wales, whilst at the same time safeguarding social, environmental and cultural well being. The Bid aims to support and retain young people in the region by creating new employment opportunities, increasing affordable housing options and creating a more vibrant lifestyle. The Bid is also intended to address worklessness and economic inactivity.</p> <p>Denbighshire is well positioned to benefit from an improved economy in North Wales as a whole. As well as having specific employment sites identified on which business growth can happen, the county's workforce will be able to travel easily to jobs outside the county, particularly to the East in the already strong economies of Flintshire, Wrexham and Chester where demand for workforce is already starting to outstrip supply.</p>

Positive consequences identified:

The Growth Bid features Energy, particularly renewable energy, as one of its sectors for growth. An increase in locally accessible high quality jobs will reduce the need for commuting, reducing carbon impact. Improved public transport connectivity is a key feature of the Growth Bid. This has the potential to reduce reliance on private car travel and reduce carbon consumption

The Growth Bid is intended to grow the economy of North Wales as a region significantly. It is also intended that this growth is spread across the region and not just clustered in one area.

Denbighshire is well positioned to benefit from economic growth, particularly in North East Wales and the immediate cross border area.

The Growth Bid envisages a growth of 120,000 new jobs over the next 20 years. By focusing on specific sectors of growth - energy and advanced manufacturing in particular - the expectation is that these will be high quality, high value employment opportunities. Denbighshire is well placed to benefit as it is located closest to the already strong economies of Flintshire, Wrexham and Chester and with improved employment opportunities and transport connectivity, it will be easier for Denbighshire residents to access the new jobs.

There are also 2 key strategic employment locations within the county - at St Asaph and Bodelwyddan. Growth in the region as a whole will make these attractive locations for businesses given their relative proximity to the North England economy and location on the strategic transport corridors of road and rail on the North Wales coast.

A core part of the Growth Bid is a Skills and Employment plan. Specific initiatives have been identified to ensure skills are developed among the regional workforce to complement the jobs being created.

The Growth Bid also highlights investment in communication and transport infrastructure as a key component in the economic growth envisaged. Broadband, mobile telecommunications and road/rail infrastructure are all specifically identified.

The need to invest in Housing delivery is also highlighted.

Unintended negative consequences identified:

There is a risk that improved connectivity encourages more commuting, particularly if new jobs are not spread across the region.

Increased business activity, particularly manufacturing, may increase carbon consumption through energy use, transport implications and use of raw materials.

There is a risk that growth is not spread and benefits are only felt by one part of the region

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Local businesses may struggle to compete with new employers offering higher quality jobs.

There is a risk that new jobs created will not benefit Denbighshire residents. Additional work will be required to ensure residents are well skilled, aware of the new employment opportunities and easily able to access them through improved transport infrastructure.

Local businesses may struggle to compete with new employers offering higher quality jobs. If schools and colleges are not sufficiently engaged, skill development will not happen for the local resident workforce and new job opportunities will be filled by inward commuters.

Without careful planning, there is a risk that housing growth may be more than local services are able to sustain.

As noted above, increased economic growth may also lead to increased travel - both to and for work, and may increase road freight if investment in rail is insufficient.

The Growth Bid does not specifically consider impact on childcare provision.

Mitigating actions:

The main potential for negative consequences arise from the risk that economic growth happens around Denbighshire and does not benefit the county. Officers are already working to minimise this risk through the Council's existing Economic & Community Ambition Strategy that seeks to support our indigenous business base to grow and develop, as well as creating an attractive environment for new businesses to set up and grow.

Within the Growth Bid work, programmes have been identified to ensure region wide skills development for the benefit of existing residents, including retaining young people who have traditionally left the region for employment.

There is also a programme focusing on connecting existing local North Wales businesses into supply chain opportunities that may arise from wider economic growth. This is already underway for North Wales Prison and Wylfa Newydd. Locally, DCC officers have been working hard to make it easy for local businesses to enter the council's supply chain and to connect local businesses with wider regional opportunities.

The risk of increased travel for and to work will in part be addressed by a focus on improving public transport infrastructure and services. In particular, the North Wales Rail Modernisation programme (Growth Track 360) and the forthcoming work on the North Wales Metro concept, will seek to address current deficiencies.

Creation of local jobs close to/well connected to major centres of population in the region will also help to mitigate commuting risks. There is currently a substantial outward migration of workers to jobs outside North Wales and outside individual counties within North Wales.

A resilient Denbighshire

Overall Impact:	Negative
Justification for Impact:	Increased energy consumption and most likely increased fuel consumption are inevitable consequences of increased economic activity. The Growth Bid has not considered explicitly environmental considerations at this stage. Implementation at individual project level will enable a closer analysis of issues, but is unlikely to remove entirely the potential for unintended negative consequences in this area.

Positive consequences identified:

A growth sector identified in the North Wales Growth Bid is renewable energy and clean technologies. This has the potential to impact positively.

Growth in advanced manufacturing and materials may increase the potential for reuse and recycling of materials, but nothing specific is planned.

Some potential for reduced fuel use if outward commuting can be reduced by creation of more jobs locally, or within closer distance.

Unintended negative consequences identified:

Development of employment sites may at times impact on issues of biodiversity or environment. It is expected that these will be managed through the Planning process.

An increase in both business activity and population risks having a negative impact on waste generated. North Wales councils have good levels of performance in recycling and waste avoidance. There is no reason to believe this will change.

Increased business activity will increase energy consumption in the county and across the region. Businesses themselves will be incentivised to keep this as low as possible (minimised costs) and will be likely to be seeking renewable sources.

Fuel consumption may increase if jobs are not evenly spread across the region (although there is significant outward migration already from the region for employment).

Travel for business (employees and goods/freight) may also increase leading to increased fuel use.

Mitigating actions:

Businesses will be encouraged to consider renewable energy sources

Employees (and businesses) will be encouraged to consider lower carbon modes of transport. Larger businesses will be expected - by the planning process - to demonstrate how they are encouraging Green travel among their workforce

Investment in public transport infrastructure will increase the likelihood of it being used in preference to private car.

All individual developments will be controlled for environmental and biodiversity impact through the planning process. The same will apply to flood risk management.

Growth in the renewable energy and clean technology sector as a result of the Growth Bid activity will increase Wales and the UK's ability to reduce consumption and reduce negative impacts on the environment.

A healthier Denbighshire

Overall Impact:	Positive
Justification for Impact:	Increased employment, economic activity and household income are all associated with higher levels of well being - or at least their lack is commonly associated with lower levels. By improving employment opportunities, Denbighshire and North Wales residents will be at less risk from the many various impacts of multiple deprivation.

Positive consequences identified:

Employment and economic activity has been shown to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing, and for deprivation to have a negative impact. The Growth Bid plans to increase employment opportunities, reduce worklessness and improve economic activity rates across the region.

In Denbighshire, the highest levels of unemployment, economic inactivity and low household income are in Rhyl. With its location on the main public transport network, and its proximity to major employment locations at St Asaph, Bodelwyddan and slightly further afield at Deeside, Rhyl is well positioned to offer its residents easy access to new job opportunities being created.

Employment and economic activity, together with higher household incomes, are associated with higher levels of emotional and mental well being.

Unintended negative consequences identified:

There is a risk that if population grows faster than the ability of health services to respond, access to healthcare may become harder.

Mitigating actions:

Careful planning will need to take place with BCUHB and other public services, including Councils' own services, to ensure that any population growth arising from the increased economic growth is planned for and that services can respond.

A more equal Denbighshire

Overall Impact:	Positive
Justification for Impact:	The main aim of the Growth Bid is to increase employment, reduce economic activity and bring higher levels of income to the region. This will address the economic inequality and deprivation that exists in many parts of the region. Rhyl is particularly well placed to benefit and has the highest levels of deprivation in the region.

Positive consequences identified:

Improved economic 'wealth' across the region has the potential to benefit all groups. Businesses will be required to consider their individual approaches to people with protected characteristics in their own employment policies. The Growth Bid specifically identifies a goal of improving the employment and retention of young people in the region.

Improved economic activity and reduced deprivation will have an impact on reducing health inequalities. The Growth Bid is specifically intended to improve levels of employment and address economic inactivity and worklessness. More people in employment and more higher value employment opportunities will increase household income across the region. There will be reduced reliance on benefits.

Unintended negative consequences identified:

There are no specific considerations given at Growth Bid level to the impact of economic growth on the well being of people with protected characteristics.

There is a risk that without additional focus on people already furthest from the workplace, the new employment opportunities will not benefit them.

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Mitigating actions:

The Growth Bid already envisages specific work with groups furthest from the work place - both young people and working age adults - through the Skills and Employment Plan to minimise the risk of excluding from economic growth. Work has already started in a number of locations, including Rhyl, with Dept for Work & Pensions to improve employment opportunities for local disadvantaged residents. Skills development work will also seek to minimise risk of exclusion.

As noted previously, Rhyl is particularly well located for its residents to have access to increased employment opportunities. This location, alongside the skills development work and investment in public transport infrastructure, will all help to minimise risks of exclusion/maximise potential for benefit.

A Denbighshire of cohesive communities

Overall Impact:	Positive
Justification for Impact:	It is anticipated that more economically active communities will be more resilient and feel safer. The Growth Bid is intended to deliver more economically active communities. On balance, it is expected that this growth will have a positive impact on cohesiveness of communities.

Positive consequences identified:

Increased employment/income and reduced deprivation may have a positive impact on community safety/may help to address issues of anti social behaviour (including drug and alcohol misuse) experienced in parts of the region at the moment.

More economically active communities may be more willing to participate and invest in their own resilience (fewer other things to worry about) - however, the evidence is not strong that this happens naturally.

Vibrant towns and communities are strongly associated with good levels of employment and household income. A more vibrant community is more likely also to be a more attractive place.

Unintended negative consequences identified:

There is a risk that communities become less rather than more connected.

There are some concerns that increased population resulting from inward migration, rather than retention of existing working age residents, may reduce community participation and identity.

There is a risk that increased economic activity leads to over development and/or urbanisation of the region and Denbighshire's natural environment, making it less attractive.

Mitigating actions:

Community development work will need to take place alongside the economic growth strategy to ensure that communities remain connected whilst growth is happening. Communities with a strong sense of identity will be better placed to absorb population growth without it impacting adversely.

The Planning system will be required to manage the potential for adverse impacts of new developments and to minimise these as far as possible through their planning decisions and conditions. Council's Local Development Plans will need to be clear about where employment and housing growth will and will not be allowed.

A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Overall Impact:	Neutral
Justification for Impact:	Economic growth in North Wales has great potential to offer employment opportunities to working age residents from the area, many of whom leave the region for work - either on a daily basis or permanently. In Denbighshire at least there is strong evidence that this section of the population is missing and increased employment may be a way of reversing this trend. Retention of existing residents is likely to have a positive impact on Welsh Language, culture and heritage through retaining language skills and personal history/affinity with local culture, traditions and heritage. There is a risk, however, that jobs will be filled by residents new to North Wales and that new businesses will not see the importance of Welsh Language and culture. This has the potential to reduce prominence of the Welsh Language and have an adverse impact on culture and heritage. On balance, the impact is likely to be neutral - with some jobs being successful in retaining existing residents who would otherwise have moved elsewhere for work and others being filled by new residents with less affinity for Welsh language, culture and heritage.

Positive consequences identified:

Research has suggested that increasing employment opportunities for young people in North Wales will help to retain that section of the population that is currently lost to the region. Given the quality of Welsh Language education within the school system, retention of more locally educated young people will have a positive impact on promotion and use of the Welsh language.

All Councils adhere to the Welsh Language Standards, which include a responsibility to promote use of the Welsh Language.

A higher profile for North Wales as a region has the potential to highlight the rich culture and heritage of the area. Tourism is acknowledged to be an important economic sector across the region and is likely to grow further as a result of more general economic growth.

Unintended negative consequences identified:

There are concerns that if new jobs are filled by people moving in to the region, there will be an adverse impact on use of the Welsh Language as the proportion of Welsh speakers is reduced.

Non Welsh companies moving to locate in North Wales may not have the same commitment to promotion and use of Welsh as indigenous businesses. This may dilute Councils' work to promote the language.

As noted above, if new jobs are filled by inward migration rather than existing residents retained, there is a risk that knowledge of local culture and heritage will be reduced without specific efforts to educate, inform and promote.

Mitigating actions:

All Councils need to be alert to the risk of adverse impact on Welsh language, culture and heritage. Welsh Language promotion and education will need to continue and perhaps be strengthened. Availability of Welsh language classes for new residents to the region could help to increase awareness and language skills.

Ensuring young people in particular are aware of the increased employment opportunities to encourage retention within the region will be important.

Availability of affordable housing for young families will also be important, close to new employment opportunities and providing good access to education, including in Welsh language.

The tourism sector should be encouraged to maximise the potential from local culture and heritage and to make sure it is prominent in their visitor offers. This can help to create a unique and attractive visitor brand as well as safeguarding and promoting the region's culture and heritage and the Welsh Language.

A globally responsible Denbighshire

Overall Impact:	Neutral
Justification for Impact:	It is difficult at this stage to assess the impact of the Growth Bid on global responsibility. The growth sectors identified (particularly energy and clean technologies, and advanced manufacturing) have the potential to increase global resilience but at strategic level it is impossible to assess this at present.

Positive consequences identified:

There is a specific strand of work within the Growth Bid proposals to ensure local supply chains are maximised in major inward investment propositions. Individual councils are likely to have social benefit clauses that incentivise use of local labour and supply chains. DCC has been successful in recent developments for ensuring local benefit for residents and businesses in this way.

Increased local/Welsh/UK business, particularly manufacturing and energy, may reduce reliance on imported goods and services.

The proposals are at too high a level to consider the impact on particular raw materials or supply chains.

Increased economic activity and wealth should have a positive impact on funding for local services, although increased population in itself may increase demand.

Unintended negative consequences identified:

There is a risk that if development is not carefully planned alongside service provision, that capacity to respond will be adversely affected

Mitigating actions:

As mentioned previously, growth needs to be carefully planned alongside other service providers to ensure that any growth in population does not cause an adverse impact on the ability of services to respond to population needs. It is generally expected that increased economic wealth will improve funding available for public services in the region but this is not guaranteed and will need to be carefully managed.