

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	16 th February, 2021
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Hugh Evans, Lead Member Economy & Corporate Governance / Graham Boase, Corporate Director, Economy & Public Realm
Report author	James Evans, Lead Officer Inward Investment & High Growth
Title	Welsh Government Transforming Towns Programme

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 The report is about continuing to secure regeneration investment in Denbighshire from the Welsh Government (WG) Transforming Towns (TT) programme, previously known as the Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) programme.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To ensure that Members are provided with relevant background information and to seek approval of the recommendations, below that will enable the Council to continue accessing resources from WG, for the regeneration of targeted areas of the county.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 Following original Cabinet approval on 22nd May, 2018, that members approve, continued delegated authority for the Corporate Director, Economy & Public Realm in consultation with the Lead Member for the Economy & Corporate Governance, Head of Legal, HR & Democratic Services and Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer), for funding years, 2021-22 (Year 4) and 2022-23 (Year 5), to:

1. make any project funding applications necessary to secure resources from the Transforming Towns programme for the period of its operation
2. accept and undertake expenditure on projects accessing Transforming Towns programme support, including award of grants to third parties
3. renegotiate and enter into any new agreements with other North Wales councils as necessary to bid for or receive Transforming Towns programme funds

4. agree any changes/updates made to the North Wales Regional Regeneration Plan (RRP)

4. Report details

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 WG launched the TRI programme to provide funding for targeted regeneration projects across Wales from April 2018. WG invited each of the four regional economic development partnerships to develop long term plans to steer the TRI programme in their region.
- 4.1.2 On a regional level, the Regional Regeneration Officers Group (RROG) was set up to meet on a monthly basis, to oversee pipeline projects, endorse strategic projects (above £250,000 in value.) to be taken to the WG panel for approval and monitor regional project spend. In relation to the two 'thematic' schemes: Housing Renewal and Important Buildings (projects capped at £250,000.), they were administered and monitored by Wrexham CBC and projects were approved on a regional basis.
- 4.1.3 A North Wales RRP was developed and agreed by the region, setting out a vision and objectives for regeneration until 2035, providing a high level summary of priorities to steer development of future programmes of work. This aligned the regeneration process with that for economic growth operating to the same timescale.
- 4.1.4 Twelve towns were set as priority areas for urban regeneration interventions in North Wales. These towns were identified using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) rankings for overall levels of deprivation based on the presence of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which are among the ten percent most deprived in Wales. The two towns prioritised for Denbighshire were, Denbigh and Rhyl. These were ranked based on the population living in the most deprived LSOA's.
- 4.1.5 In total, around **£16,630,000** has been committed from TRI funding for projects in North Wales over the three year period. Of that amount, **£4,150,660** has been committed to DCC projects (see appendix 1 for details.).
- 4.1.6 This initial TRI programme was intended to operate for three years, until 31st March, 2021, but it has now been confirmed that it will continue for at least two more funding

years, from 1st April, 2021, until 31st March, 2023. There are some small changes, however (set out under 4.2), including a name change to the TT programme.

4.2 The Transforming Towns programme for North Wales, 2021-2023

4.2.1 The WG have confirmed two more years of funding, but there is a possibility for this to be extended beyond this period. £7.92m WG TT funding has been set aside for North Wales for 2021-22.

4.2.2 The region has agreed that 'up to' half of that amount will be used for the new 'Transforming Towns Placemaking Thematic' (TTPT) scheme during 2021-22, with the balance of that funding being set aside for Strategic projects. It is not yet known what the amount set aside for 2022-23 will be, but expected to be broadly similar.

4.2.3 There are already approved strategic DCC projects, continuing to be delivered in these two funding years, as well as the recently approved project, the first phase of Queen's Market development, with funding committed over 2021-22 and 2022-23.

4.2.4 In relation to the TTPT scheme, this is being administered by Wrexham CBC, who previously administered the Housing Renewal and Important Buildings Thematic Schemes. The thematic scheme is a change from the previous thematic schemes, offering a more holistic range of activities (See appendix 2 for latest WG draft.) and can be used for other town centres, as well as Denbigh and Rhyl.

4.2.5 As previously the case, strategic and thematic funding will continue to be made for housing and regeneration capital investment, with a clear emphasis on creating employment, urban renewal and housing.

4.3 Updated North Wales Regional Regeneration Strategy

4.3.1 An update of the North Wales RRP is to be undertaken during 2021, with each North Wales Local Authority having been awarded £5,000 WG TT revenue funding to pay for this. Flintshire County Council are leading on commissioning the work, with a contract to be in place to undertake the work before the end of March, 2021.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1 As well as supporting priorities relating to the regeneration of Rhyl, the TT programme will continue to make contributions to the 2017-2022 corporate priorities by:

- Developing new town centre housing targeted at younger people
- Bringing redundant space back into commercial and residential use
- Creating an attractive town centre which supports economic prosperity
- Improving the connection between residents and their town centre, shops, services and employment opportunities
- Developing town centres as places where young people want to live and work
- Enabling local people to plan and shape the future of their town centre

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 The TT programme still requires match funding for projects of 30%. Each council is responsible for securing match funding for its own projects and to enable it to secure resources from the regional thematic projects.

6.2 Required match funding for pipeline and new emerging projects may come from a range of public / private sources and will be considered via the usual Council procedures, including CET, SIG and Cabinet. It is important to state here, the match funding has been agreed for the first phase of the Queen's Market development, as DCC's most important regeneration project for Rhyl Town Centre, as well as the other projects currently being delivered.

6.3 Project proposals have and will continue to be developed with engagement of officers from across a number of service areas. In particular the proposals contribute positively to delivery of Service Plans for Facilities Assets & Housing and Planning & Public Protection. There may be a workload impact on the Legal, HR and Democratic Service in relation to legal and procurement work on property redevelopment schemes.

6.4 The long term regeneration of deprived communities in Denbighshire aims to improve community wellbeing and will reduce demand on a number of public services.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1 A Well-being Impact Assessment was originally undertaken, and this still remains relevant to the funding programme being extended. The Assessment was undertaken with input from officers across a number of disciplines during and scored 3 out of 4 stars. Overall, securing regeneration investment into an area suffering from multiple deprivation was recognised as positive.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1 Discussions with various Officers of the Council and collaborative development work on the RRP with WG / officers across the region.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 The opportunity to secure external funding to support priority areas is welcome. Careful consideration will have to be given to how the council's match-funding elements can be secured and whether there are revenue implications of any projects emerging. Projects will be subject to the usual internal scrutiny and approval processes, including submission of capital schemes to the Strategic Investment Group.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1 That insufficient staff time / expertise / money is available to develop and deliver proposed projects. Early identification of the gap in resources and re-allocation of staff time / financial resources to aid development / delivery will help.
- 10.2 That one of the Councils in North Wales does not approve the TT proposals for submission to WG. If this happens it is likely that the 2021-22 TT grant allocation will be lost from the region as there will be insufficient time to bid and deliver within this financial year. This has been mitigated to date, through close collaborative working but there remains some risk that political difficulties could arise in some councils.

11. Power to make the Decision

- 11.1 Section 2, Local Government Act 2000. The power to undertake activity for the promotion of the social, economic or environmental well-being of the area.