

Press release: Fuelling the momentum for a North Wales Growth Deal

The time has come for North Wales to become an economic powerhouse, UK Government Minister Guto Bebb will say as he embarks on a two-day visit to fire up discussions on a growth deal for the region.

Mr Bebb will meet with business leaders and representatives of local authorities and higher education to discuss their vision for a North Wales Growth Deal and to underline the UK Government's support for the area's economy.

The UK Government has already delivered the £1.2 billion Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and, earlier this year, the Prime Minister signed the Swansea Bay City Region Deal.

The Government is now turning its attentions to delivering a growth deal for North Wales, working with local partners and the Welsh Government to identify the best way to strengthen the region's economy and make the most of its connections to the Northern Powerhouse.

UK Government in Wales Minister Guto Bebb said:

City and Growth Deals are about revolutionising the way our towns and cities govern themselves, shifting powers down from Whitehall and Cardiff Bay to local leaders who are better placed to take decisions that affect their communities.

This is North Wales' opportunity to benefit from this movement. I want to see what progress is being made on developing the vision for the region's economic future.

We want to work closely with the Welsh Government, local economic ambition board, education institutions and local authorities to agree a new deal that will successfully drive growth across the region.

I have no doubt about the ambition of local leaders in North Wales to get this right, and I am determined that powers and tools are handed down to them to grow their economy.

Mr Bebb will use the meetings to reinforce the message that North Wales has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to capitalise on the benefits the Northern Powerhouse will bring.

He added:

The Northern Powerhouse, coupled with a growth deal represents our best chance to bring transformational change to North Wales. The region is perfectly positioned to benefit from the Northern Powerhouse. Its export base and reputation for big energy projects makes it a perfect partner for closer collaboration to expand the economy of North.

It is these expertise and links that the North Wales Growth Deal visionaries must build on. They are now in the driving seat to deliver.

The Minister's visit to North Wales will also see him visit two companies leading the way in groundbreaking design and research in support of the Wales Festival of Innovation.

He will see a fusion of academia and industry during a visit to the Optic Technology Centre at Wrexham Glyndwr University in St Asaph – a research hub and business incubator that has created dozens of hi-tech companies and hundreds of high quality science-based jobs over the past 12 years.

Professor Maria Hinfelaar, Vice-Chancellor of Wrexham Glyndwr University, said:

The OpTIC Centre places Wrexham Glyndwr University at the heart of science and technology industry in North Wales.

It's fantastic to be involved with world-leading research and innovation and the centre's role as a hub for incubation is integral to the university's drive to support entrepreneurship. OpTIC Glyndwr is already playing a critical role in the triple helix of academia-industry-government which will help to create jobs and grow the economy of the region.

Mr Bebb will then visit Qioptiq in St Asaph which was recently awarded a £82m Ministry of Defence contract to maintain surveillance and targeting equipment for the UK's Armed Forces.

Managing Director at Qioptiq, Peter White said:

St. Asaph in North Wales is home to one of the UKs largest clusters of high technology optical and optronic innovators and Qioptiq has been the catalyst for many of them. Winning a major contract such as this provides security and allows us to invest in the infrastructure and in our people and this in turn helps the local economy and our supply chain. We are recognised worldwide for our technology, capability and innovation and this reflects on the UK in a very positive manner.

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Notes to Editors: On 6 September 2016, the six local authorities of North Wales and the region's leading higher and further education institutions published A Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales.

The vision centres on developing the energy, advanced manufacturing and digital economic clusters in the North Wales region as a means of driving economic growth and raising productivity. The vision focuses on improving transport and digital infrastructure, developing the region's skill base and promoting business growth. You can view the vision [here](#).