



News Release

Monday, 31st January 2022

For immediate use

Growth Track 360 welcomes introduction of HS2 Crewe to Manchester Bill and calls for direct high-speed trains between North Wales, Chester and London

Business and local authority leaders from North Wales, the Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester in the Growth Track 360 partnership today welcomed the introduction into Parliament of the High-Speed Rail (Crewe to Manchester) Bill which will facilitate construction of the next phase of Britain's new main line railway, HS2.

Confirmed plans include a new junction north of Crewe station – previously called for by Growth Track 360 - enabling high speed trains to switch easily between HS2 and the existing West Coast Main Line. Under current plans, trains from London will divide at Crewe with one portion travelling to Warrington and Liverpool and the other to Lancaster (with trains recombining at Crewe in the reverse direction).

Growth Track 360 believes that direct high-speed (HS2) trains should also serve Chester and North Wales given the vast tourism and commercial potential of North Wales and the Mersey Dee area. Chester is the rail hub for a significant part of North West England and the whole of North Wales. Chester is also one of the busiest stations in the North West region by passenger usage and is a substantial business and tourism destination in its own right.

Were electrification of the Chester and North Wales main line to coincide with completion of HS2 to Crewe, it would be possible to introduce direct, electric, high-speed services over this route at the same time. Simultaneous electrification between Chester and Warrington would transform connectivity with Manchester and its Airport given the Government's declared plans to restore the low-level platforms at Warrington Bank Quay station as part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals.

Growth Track 360 Chair and Leader of Cheshire West & Chester Council, Councillor Louise Gittins, said:

"In November, Sir Peter Hendy's Union Connectivity Review carried out for the UK Government recognised North Wales and North West England as a highly integrated cross-border economy that will benefit from a programme of transport improvements that will improve union connectivity. It's time to join up the thinking, the planning and the financing of our railways so that electrification brings to West Cheshire, the City of Chester and the whole of North Wales the full benefit of the major investment in HS2 being made using taxpayers' money to which all of our residents and businesses contribute."

Growth Track 360 Vice Chair and Leader of Flintshire Council, Councillor Ian Roberts, said:

"Our industrial, commercial and tourism destinations would receive a tremendous boost through enhanced direct rail connectivity with London, Manchester and Manchester Airport provided by HS2 if our local lines are upgraded at the same time. Growth Track 360 will be working closely with local MPs from all parties and the Welsh Government to ensure that our case is made in Parliament during the passage of the HS2 legislation."

We will also look to the Union Connectivity Review to allocate development funding and capital monies to invest in the rail infrastructure necessary to deliver our objectives of an electrified North Wales Coast Main Line between Crewe and Holyhead and an upgraded Chester Station that can handle the increase in passengers our vision will generate. This is essential to enable frequent and fast connectivity for our communities to HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail at Crewe and Warrington".

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Notes for Editors:

1. Growth Track 360 is a public-private partnership established in 2016 uniting North Wales, the Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester. Its goal is improving cross-border transport connectivity with specific emphasis on rail.

2. Growth Track 360 works closely with key stakeholders, their policies and objectives including the Welsh Government, Transport for the North, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Mersey Dee Alliance, North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Transport for Wales, the West and Wales Transport Forum and the private sector.
3. The Growth Track 360 news release calling for a new north junction at Crewe to be included in plans for HS2 is here: <http://createsend.com/t/y-811732544DE12DAD2540EF23F30FEDED>.
4. The UK Government's news release on the High Speed Rail (Crewe and Manchester) Bill is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/north-west-on-track-to-benefit-from-faster-and-more-reliable-train-journeys-as-bill-for-next-phase-of-hs2-to-be-laid-in-parliament>.

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