



News Release

Thursday, 12 October 2023

For immediate use

Growth Track 360 cautiously welcomes the UK Government commitment to electrify the North Wales Coast Main Line Railway.

Business and local authority leaders from North Wales, the Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester in the Growth Track 360 partnership cautiously welcomes the commitment given by the UK Government to electrify the North Wales Coast Main Line railway.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak MP referenced the electrification of the NWCML in his speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 4 October 2023. The document 'Network North: Transforming British Transport' published by the UK Department for Transport (DfT) describes how savings projected by the UK Government from the cancellation of the unstarted sections of the HS2 rail project will be redeployed.

Electrification of the North Wales Main Line is a long-term strategic objective for Growth Track 360 to enable fully electrified services to run from North Wales and Chester to London and Manchester in the future. However, prior to electrification, GT360 must work with partners to deliver enabling and complementary investment to drive up rail infrastructure capacity and passenger usage that will strengthen the business case for electrification. The enabling investments are: -

1. Wrexham to Liverpool Transformation: Twenty-First Century Travel in a Corridor of World Class Industries
2. North Wales Coast Mainline: Expanding Overseas and British Tourism Sustainably in an Area of Extraordinary Beauty, and
3. Chester Station Modernisation: A Millennial Gateway for a City of Millennia.

Growth Track 360 hosted fringe meetings on these themes at the Conservative Party Conference on 2 October and at the Labour Party Conference on 9 October.

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

"Whilst I am bitterly disappointed by the cancellation of the Northern Leg of HS2, this week's announcement on the North Wales Main Line from the Prime Minister represents a huge achievement for the advocacy by the cross-border and all-party Growth Track 360 alliance over the past seven years. We have succeeded in moving this project from the fringes of transport policy into the mainstream of rail investment decisions. I will press for the re-instatement HS2 because Growth Track 360 has always envisaged an electrified North Wales Main Line being fully integrated with HS2 at Crewe and Northern Powerhouse Rail at Warrington. Nevertheless, GT360 recognises the huge value the modernised route North Wales route will have when connected to the existing rail network."

The government cannot deliver electrification of the North Wales Coast Main Line without a business case. We look forward to seeing more details of how the commitment made by the Prime Minister will be implemented and how Chester station will be transformed as the gateway to North Wales and Cheshire.”

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

“Efforts by Growth Track 360 and our allies amongst parliamentarians of all political parties have secured vitally important recognition at the highest levels of the UK Government that the North Wales Main Line railway is a vital economic artery deserving of substantial modernisation. We now need to see the detailed proposals set out in a business case for implementation of the scheme by a future government. The case must be backed by robust financing with sensible forecast dates for completion, so that local business and new investors in our cross-border region can make their decisions with confidence.”

Ashley Rogers, GT360 Business Representative, Chief Executive, North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council, said:

“Having been presenting the case for electrification of the North Wales Main Line to Conservative politicians and activists as recently as Monday, I was delighted to see the pledge from the Prime Minister – backed up by a DfT document – on Wednesday. I pay tribute to all my colleagues in Growth Track 360 from both sides of the border, all political parties and the business community in reaching this landmark moment. Our work is far from over, however, as we must ensure that the project is delivered in full and as soon as practicable along with the other important elements of the Growth Track 360 programme. I look forward to the government announcing development funding and the starting on business case work forthwith.”

ENDS

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, Ambition North Wales, Transport for Wales, the West and Wales Transport Forum and the private sector.
3. The aims of Growth Track 360 are described in a YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2FokJJDIZA> taken from an event held in the Houses of Parliament on 20 February 2023.
4. The DfT document ‘Network North: Transforming British Transport’ is here: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/651d64646a6955000d78b2e0/network-north-transforming-british-transport.pdf>

Contacts

- Councillor Louise Gittins, Chair GT360, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council: Telephone: 01244 972216 Email: pressoffice@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk



- Councillor Ian Roberts, Vice Chair of Growth Track 360, Leader of Flintshire Council, Telephone 01352 702115, Email communication@flintshire.gov.uk



- Ashley Rogers, GT360 Business Representative, Commercial Director, North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council: Telephone: 0797 047 6599 Email: jarogers@nwmdbusinesscouncil.org

