

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cross-Party Group for North Wales in the Welsh Senedd Friday 19th May 2023

Present

Senedd Members:

Mark Isherwood (Chair), Gareth Davies and Ken Skates

Local Authority Leaders:

Cllr Ian Roberts (Flintshire), Cllr Mark Pritchard (Wrexham) and Cllr Jason McLellan (Denbighshire)

Speakers:

Alan Raymant, CEO Cwmni Eginio

Elliw Williams, Cwmni Eginio

John Allcock, Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users' Association Chairman

Hedd Vaughan- Evans, Ambition North Wales

Officials:

WLGA:

Chris Llewelyn (Chief Executive), Tim Peppin (Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development), Lucy Sweet (Group Secretary), Dilwyn Jones (Communications and Public Affairs Manager)

Welsh Government:

Wendy Boddington

Actions Agreed

1. Contact Transport for Wales, to:

- Ask them to publish the NW section of prospectus for investment in Wales rail infrastructure ASAP, so the NW CPG can pursue lobbying.
- Ask them to send a representative to the CPG on a regular basis.

2. Contact the Welsh Government, to:

- Request meeting of CPG and user groups with TfW and the First Minister.
- Back calls for an independent review and suggest experts who could undertake the review.

[1. Welcome from the Chair and Introductions](#)

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 10 February '23 and Matters Arising

There was an unusual situation where none of the group members present had attended the previous meeting, therefore it was not possible to approve the minutes from 10 February. This item is carried forward to the July meeting of the CPG.

3. Cwmni Eginio

Cwmni Eginio met recently with Sam Rowlands MS regarding their proposals to restart nuclear power generation at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station. Whilst Trawsfynydd is outside of the North Wales regional constituency, a development of this kind would almost certainly have an impact on the North Wales region. CEO Alan Raymant attended this meeting to present to the group and raise awareness around their project at Trawsfynydd. Main points from Alan's presentation:

- Cwmni Eginio (CE) was set up to deliver socio economic growth opportunities around Trawsfynydd.
- Project will bring significant inward investment, £2/3 bn inward investment so significant socio-economic benefit.
- Lifetime project of 60 years, 400 direct jobs + supply chain work. Looking at how to maximise opportunities for local companies. One of the key factors UKG will think about is what is the overall footprint of these technologies.
- Policy position for nuclear is strengthening.
- Cwmni Eginio MOU with Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, who own site. CE have looked at what can fit on site, not selecting tech at this point but looking. Socio value strategy in place to set out how to capture socio economic benefits.
- Primary focus now- confirmation of the project in the UK programme.
- Cross-party support- Alan said he doesn't see there being a big policy divide over whether to go nuclear or not, divisions more likely to be about how priorities are developed for each site.
- Timescale- Roughly 5 year programme to get through consenting and planning processes before main construction begins, but smaller scale works maybe before then. Expectation that tech will be confirmed by end of this year.
- Cost- model used for Hinkley Point not going to work going forward. 'Regulatory Asset Based Model'- shares key risks between consumer, govt and developer. Massively reduces finance cost for production.
- Safety- generic design assessment process (4 years), confirms design is safe and suitable to operate in UK. NRW on environmental side. Site specific safety case will be undertaken, that all regulators will need to improve. There is a lot of oversight. Independence of the regulator to provide confidence.
- 2 main stages to project now:
 - Get sponsorship/funding for development phase
 - Secure funding for construction
- Sponsorship stage is very important, as it means colleges etc can start to plan, as there's a real chance of the project materialising.

4. Minister of State for Transport's letter to the CPG (Stephen Jones)

Stephen Jones (Secretary to the Board, North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force) presented the letter received 21st March, which he described as a 'holding reply'. Main points:

- Need to seek early publication of what TfW are proposing for the DfT to enable timely lobbying for future budgets and spending reviews.
- Positive that the Wales Rail Board mentioned in the letter - there might be a case to involve more stakeholders in the Wales rail Board meetings over time.
- Overall- a positive response and the key action is for elected reps in the region to keep up pressure for allocation of capital money.

Action- Ask TfW to publish NW section of prospectus for investment in Wales rail infrastructure ASAP, so the NW CPG can pursue lobbying.

5. Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users' Association (John Allcock, Wrexham-Bidston Rail Users' Association Chairman)

The Chair of the NW CPG was contacted by WBRUA's Chairman, identifying Transport for Wales (TfW)'s 'ongoing failures in relation to the Wrexham-Bidston line'. John requested to attend a meeting of the CPG. Key points from his presentation:

- There is a lot of frustration with TfW's lack of customer focus (TfW joint bottom for customer service with TransPennine Express).
- TfW have consistently promised improvements but consistently failed to deliver on them.
- Accountable to and subsidiary of WG - what needs to be done to hold TfW to account?
- Rail users' groups covering Merseyside, Cheshire and Shropshire have written an open letter, asking for WG to hold an independent review of the performance of TfW Rail Ltd.
- Ken Skates MS - joint open letter contains info that is really concerning. Need to be very forceful on the issue as CPG.
- Members suggested a TfW rep should be present in CPG meetings from now on.

Actions:

- **Speak to TfW about a representative being present in CPG meetings from now on**
- **Back call for independent review (members to suggest, via secretariat, boards/experts who could undertake the review).**
- **Request meeting with TfW and FM- such a serious matter for the region, need to go to FM (John Allcock to be present).**

6. Update from Ambition North Wales

See separate update.