

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
EIS 13 Cyngor Sir y Fflint	EIS 13 Flintshire County Council

Your Ref/Eich Cyf

Our Ref/Ein Cyf AS/HMS

Date/Dyddiad 25 August, 2016

Ask for/Gofynner am Aaron Shotton

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To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the priority setting process for the National Assembly for Wales Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee during the Fifth Assembly.

Flintshire County Council is a unitary authority in North East Wales with a population of approximately 152,506. The County is a major economic driver for North Wales and North West England and is host to one of the largest concentrations of manufacturing employment in the UK, especially in the advanced manufacturing sector. Through the Deeside Enterprise Zone, up to 7,000 new employment opportunities are forecast for the County and the challenge for the future is to ensure that economically inactive residents across the sub-region are able to benefit from this opportunity.

There are a number of areas of the economy that the Council would welcome the consideration of the Committee:

Advanced manufacturing and materials is an area of the economy that offers high productivity and good quality employment opportunities. It is estimated that there are 20,000 Flintshire jobs in the sector which has been recognised by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board as one of the three critical sectors to their economy. There is considerable potential to safeguard and grow the sector and great progress has already been made in the Deeside Enterprise Zone. The Council would welcome consideration by the Committee of how the sector can best be supported and developed further.

Flintshire functions as part of a cohesive economic area that overlaps the national boundary. Employers, employees, service providers and learners cross the border in both directions on a daily basis with little regard to its presence; a situation which is unique in UK. This brings considerable opportunities due to the overall scale of the regional economy but also major challenges in ensuring that the economic area can be managed effectively to meet the needs of employers and the labour market. Great progress has been made to date, in particular through the Mersey Dee Alliance, in building partnerships across the border. The Council would welcome the consideration of the Committee on how the benefits of the cross-border regional economy can be maximised and the administrative and governance challenges of the national boundary minimised.

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There are also considerable opportunities emerging from the development of growth deals across the UK. The North Wales Growth Strategy and Vision was submitted to the UK Government in July 2016 and proposes major employment and housing growth in North Wales facilitated by targeted investment in infrastructure and the devolution of key decision-making to ensure the North Wales economic area can be effectively managed. In addition, the Growth Deal strategy submitted by the Cheshire and Warrington Local Economic Partnership highlighted the importance of Flintshire and Wrexham to the economy of their area and the need for investment to realise its potential to benefit North West England. The Council would welcome consideration by the Committee of how the potential growth deals can be facilitated to maximise their benefit, how the effective devolution of powers can facilitate more effective economic management and how the cross-border nature of the economy in North Wales can be reflected effectively.

Infrastructure is key to the success of the economy of Flintshire. Flintshire's location has played an important part in its economic success to date but the transport infrastructure has changed little in recent decades and is likely to form a brake on further growth. The North Wales Economic Ambition Board has identified and prioritised infrastructure requirements across North Wales to unlock the potential of the region. The Council would welcome Committee consideration of how the infrastructure of the region can be developed to unlock potential growth opportunities.

The economy of the region is also dependent upon the supply of a suitably skilled workforce and there is evidence in the emerging North Wales Skills Plan that there is a considerable gap between supply and demand. Too few young people are entering the key growth sectors in North Wales leaving employers struggling to recruit. Apprenticeships are a key element in training skilled workers and the new Apprenticeship Tax Levy will raise funding to support apprenticeships. Use of the Levy in Wales, though, needs to safeguard existing successful apprentice programmes. The Council would welcome the consideration of the Committee on how the current and future workforce skill needs of employers can be met.

The Council would also welcome the consideration of the Committee on the Tata Steel situation and in particular upon how, through some of the key areas identified above, the resilience, productivity and adaptability of the manufacturing sector can be developed to reduce the risk of similar threats in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Aaron Shotton
Leader of the Council



Councillor Derek Butler
Cabinet Member for Economic Development