

# Introducing Growth Track 360

## **Who we are**

Growth Track 360 is the “brand name” of the cross-border North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force. We joined together in 2016 to seek improvement in rail services and infrastructure in North Wales, Cheshire and Warrington and South Merseyside (principally in the Wirral). The Board pulls together representatives of: -

- Ambition North Wales
- The North Wales Transport Committee (Local Authority Cabinet Members)
- Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington
- The Mersey Dee Alliance
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- Transport for Wales
- Transport for the North
- Business Leaders – North Wales Business Council and the West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce.

## **What we Do**

We work with our local authorities, our Members of Parliament, Welsh Senedd Members and business leaders in England and Wales. We work primarily through face-to-face, briefing meetings with Ministers and stakeholders, alongside correspondence and publications.

## **Our Network and Where We Are**

Maps are attached below showing: -

- The West and Wales Strategic Rail Network (page 7)
- North Wales Rail Connectivity

## **Outcomes**

Our cross-border coalition is committed to delivering the outcomes of: -

- Sustainable economic growth by improving public transport networks on an integrated basis. This will expand local labour markets, improving agglomeration and network effects while also reducing carbon emissions.
- Improving health by achieving modal shift from the car to integrated public transport networks with rail at their core. This will increase health benefits from exercise including “active travel” and walking between interconnecting bus and rail services. Health outcomes will also be improved by better air quality through from reduction of road traffic congestion by modal shift.
- Improving access to employment on the part of those unable to afford a car, by improving the public transport offer.
- Reducing carbon emissions by encouraging modal shift from the motor car to sustainable modes by improving the public transport offer.

To achieve these goals Growth Track 360 seeks better rail services, which in turn require rail infrastructure investment to increase the capacity of the network to run more services. In addition, GT360 will support cross border partnership working between partners to integrate sustainable modes (rail, bus and active travel) to improve the public transport offer to travellers.

### **Priorities and Interventions Sought**

Growth Track 360 has identified specific schemes which will improve capacity and enable growth in rail services that will drive sustainable economic growth: -

<b>In-region</b>		
<b><i>Scheme</i></b>	<b><i>Benefit</i></b>	<b><i>Intervention and Costs</i></b>
Phased Upgrades to the North Wales Coast Main Line	Enable 5 tph and 1 freight path per hour.	Phase 1 Chester – Llandudno Junction £125m
Modernisation of Chester Station as a regional hub station	Enable additional through services from the North Wales Coast and the Marches line (Wrexham and Shrewsbury) to Manchester, Liverpool, London, Birmingham and Cardiff	Additional platform, crossovers, signalling upgrades and junction improvements. £160m.
Transformation of the Wrexham to Bidston Borderlands Line	Enable direct services from Wrexham to Liverpool Central deploying Merseyrail class 777 electric/battery trains starting at 2tph and increasing to 4tph over time	Phase 1, Padeswood Sidings, 2tph skip stop and 1tph freight, £35m Phase 2, Signalling, line speeds for 2tph all stops, £220m
<b>Wider Rail Connectivity from North Wales and Chester</b>		
Crewe HS2 Hub Station	Hub Station for interchange with HS2 Services	Requires new passenger transfer deck and station modernisation
Warrington Bank Quay NPR Hub Station	Hub Station for interchange with Northern Powerhouse Rail and the West Coast Main Line (North) as per the Integrated Rail Plan.	Requires re-opening of Warrington Bank Quay Lower Platforms and chords for services to and from Chester.
Access to Manchester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to NPR line at Warrington for new route to Manchester</li> <li>• Access for TfW services to Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport via the Castlefield Corridor.</li> </ul>	Requires routes to/from Chester to be planned into NPR and investment into central Manchester as advocated by TfN

### **Notes to the Table (Costs)**

Costs derive from initial business case work undertaken by Transport for Wales utilising funds from Welsh Government, Network Rail and the Union Connectivity Review. They were published in the report of the North Wales Transport Commission.

### **Electrification of the North Wales Coast Main Line**

Growth Track 360 also holds a long-term interest in electrification of the North Wales Coast Main Line from Holyhead to Chester and from Chester to Crewe and Warrington.

### **Alignment with the Goals of the new Labour Government**

Investment in GT360 priorities will enable the new labour Government to deliver two of its five missions: -

- Economic growth for all parts of the UK
- Accelerating the delivery of a net zero economy through reducing carbon emissions from transport, showing climate leadership.

GT360 seeks inclusion of its priorities into the new government’s proposed 10-year strategy for economic infrastructure investment. The GT360 priorities also: -

- Improve rail connectivity in the North
- Enable partnership working with local leaders and the Welsh Government
- Accelerates delivery of high-quality infrastructure to drive growth
- Breaks down barriers to opportunity

### **Endorsement of GT360 Priorities**

GT360's in-region priority schemes are endorsed by the North Wales Transport Commission and feature in the: -

- Wales Rail Board priorities agreed by the Welsh Government and the UKG DfT
- The Union Connectivity Review

### **Impact of the Cancellation of HS2 Phase 2 and the Announcement of Network North**

GT360 was disappointed by the cancellation of HS2 but hoped to secure capital funding for its priorities (above) to be included in a wider "electrification programme" which could have included partial electrification (to Chester or Llandudno Junction) from the £1bn repurposing of HS2 borrowing for North Wales in the Network North Programme.

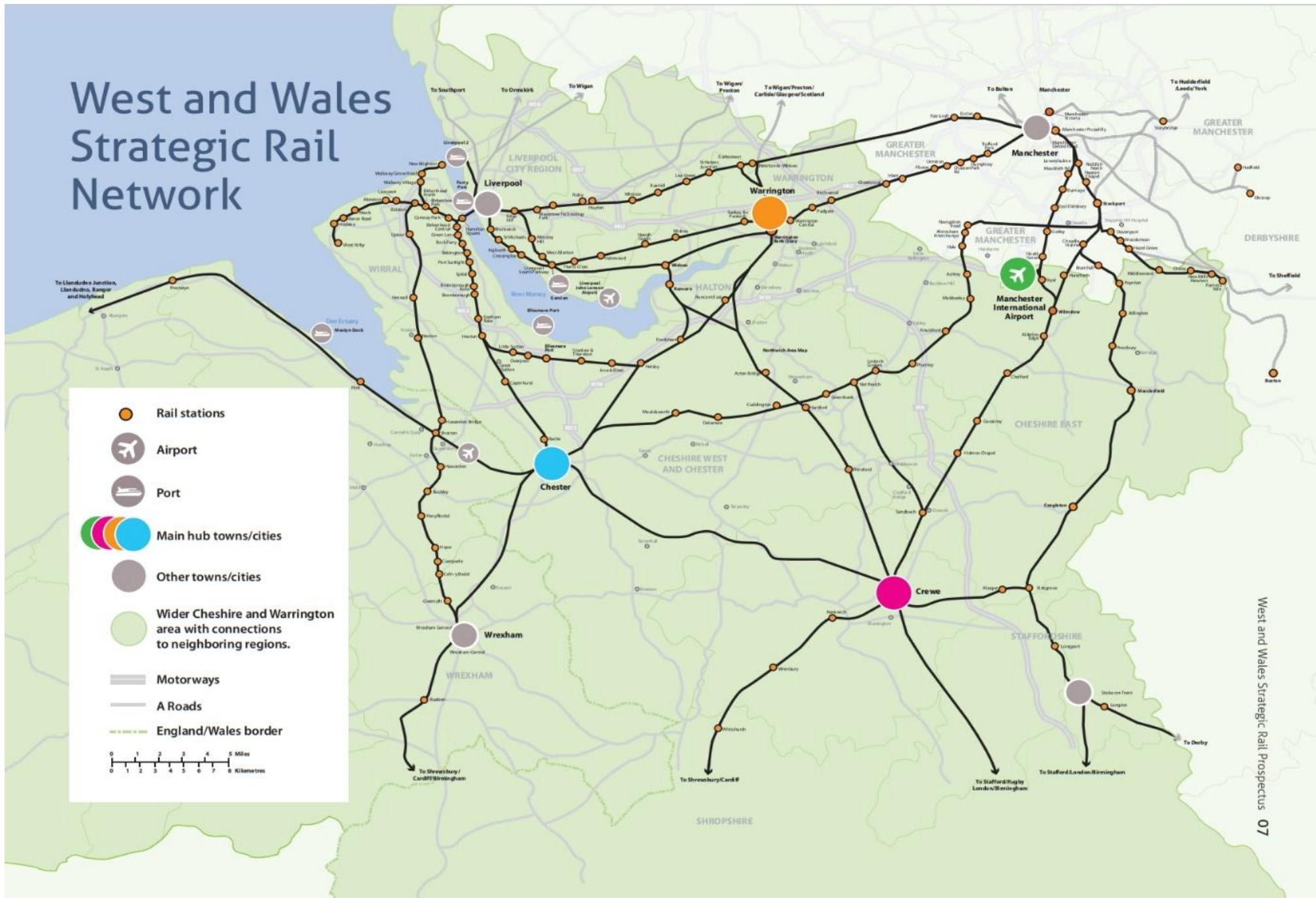
We recognise that Network North was a deeply flawed and unrealistic programme. However, it did reference significant capital investment in our region for the first time in the history of Growth Track 360's work.

The cancellation of HS2 Phase 2 will place pressure on the WCML north of Birmingham to the point where direct services between North Wales, Chester and London via Crewe may be put in doubt by the need to free up capacity for Northbound HS2 services to Manchester and Liverpool.

It is likely that investments to enable additional services along the NWCML, the Marches Line and through Chester Station will be required to drive up passenger usage in the region prior to a viable business case for electrification of the NWCML. Growth Track 360 will therefore prioritise funding for business case development for its priority schemes (Chester Station, NWCML capacity and line speeds and transformation of the Borderland's Line).

**Growth Track 360  
August 2024.**

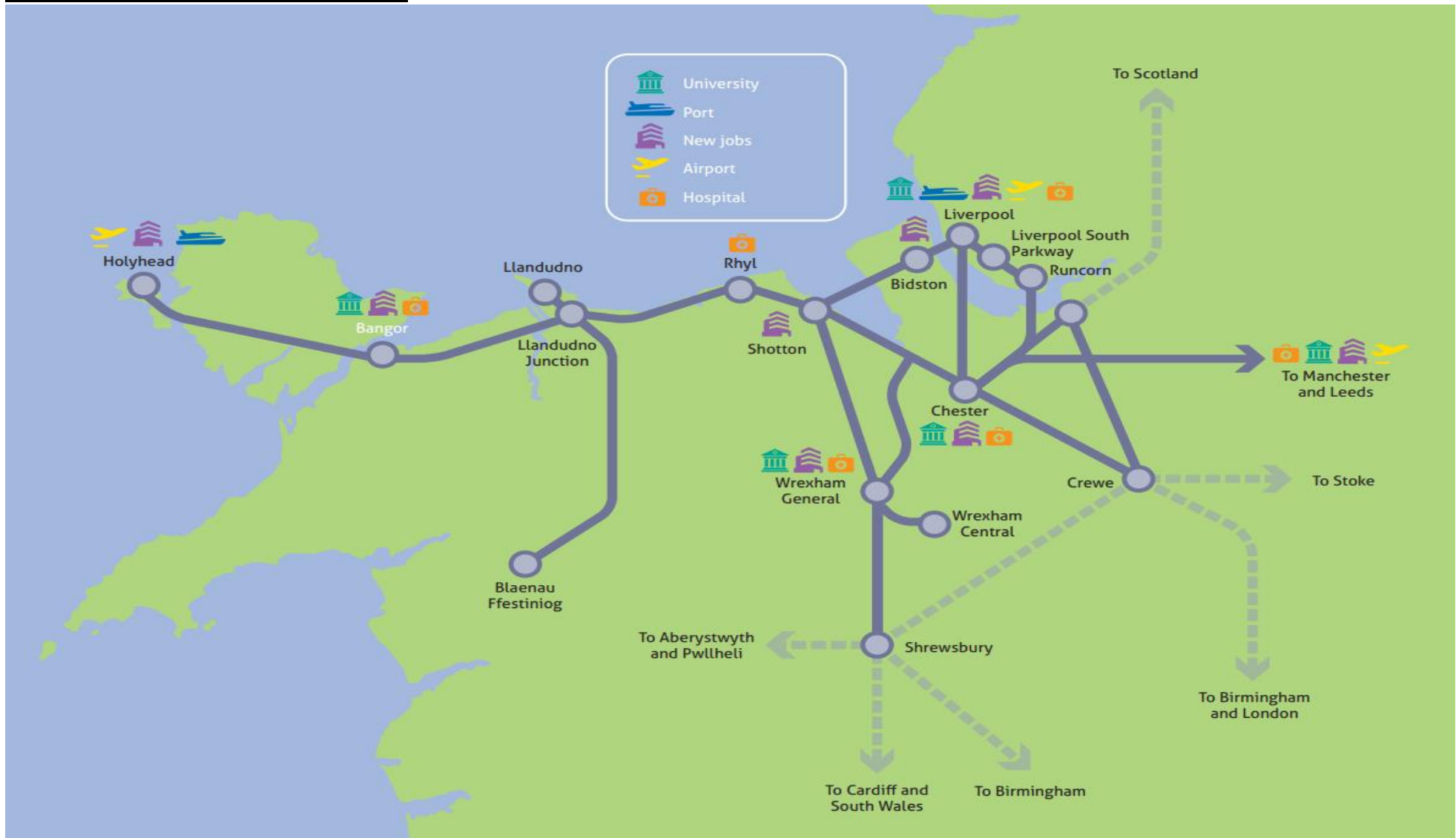
# West and Wales Strategic Rail Network



-  Rail stations
-  Airport
-  Port
-  Main hub towns/cities
-  Other towns/cities
-  Wider Cheshire and Warrington area with connections to neighboring regions.
-  Motorways
-  A Roads
-  England/Wales border

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles  
0 1 2 3 4 5 Kilometres

## North Wales Rail Connectivity Map



**Note:** Warrington is located southeast of Runcorn and is the hub for services between Chester and Manchester (East - West) and services from Crewe to Scotland (North-South)