Investing in Success
Action Plan

2008 - 2011

October 2007

Investing in success

Contents

Executive Summary

- The NW Regional Economic Strategy recognises that Cheshire & Warrington continues to be a high performing sub-regional economy. Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita has consistently exceeded the UK average, household earnings are high, the population is highly skilled and unemployment is low. In addition, the natural environment, combined with such factors as high educational attainment mean that Cheshire & Warrington is a place where businesses want to locate; people want to live, and where residents enjoy a high quality of life. Cheshire & Warrington's success is vital to the success of its neighbouring cities and of the Region.

- The detailed economic analysis and forecasts which underpin this Sub-Regional Action Plan, are very clear that CWEA (and therefore NWDA) cannot afford to be complacent about continued economic growth, so this SRAP brings forward a range of effective, value-added projects and programmes which will underpin and stimulate economic development as well as tackling key areas of deprivation.

- The priorities in *Investing in Success* are supported and endorsed by senior business and public sector leaders as effectively meeting the needs of the local economy – underpinned by detailed economic analysis and forecasting

- Linked with both private and public sector investment, these projects will produce the following outputs:-

  - 10,000 new jobs – many in knowledge-intensive businesses, most in the key sectors identified in the RES.

  - £2.4BN of GVA growth, including £0.5BN through the high impact ICT strategy.

  - 1900 new businesses started and supported to initial maturity.

  - The 'renaissance' of Chester, making it a 'must-see' European destination by 2015 – linked to £1BN of private investment.

  - A kick-start for the delivery of Warrington's £2BN Vision – including Omega.

  - The £500M investment in Crewe as a significant transport Gateway to the NW.

  - Regeneration of mid-Cheshire's urban and rural economies.

  - More flexible working plus more local employment opportunities, leading to a reduction in commuting and overall CO_2 emissions.

  - A reduction of 9000 in the number of people with no academic qualifications, focussed on deprived areas and those not currently in the workforce.

- CWEA and its wide range of partners have demonstrated how investment in Cheshire and Warrington is an investment in success.

Introduction

This is the second annual Sub-Regional Action Plan for Cheshire & Warrington. It is a 'light touch' review of the 2006-10 Plan, bringing delivery proposals, costs and profiles up to date. Key changes and additions are:

- More detailed implementation plans for the Chester Renaissance, reflecting the impact and prioritisation work completed over the past year.
- An exciting programme of action to support major private investment in Warrington, including substantial master planning work.
- Master planning work in Crewe to capitalise on recent growth and prepare for the next major developments.
- New 'People & Jobs' programmes to extend and develop pilots from last year's plan into a co-ordinated sub-regional package.

The economic landscape of Cheshire & Warrington is changing. Output and productivity in Cheshire in particular, though still above the national average, are now growing more slowly. Although there continue to be high levels of investment, especially in Chester, Warrington and Crewe, there is increasing out-commuting from mid-Cheshire, reflecting faster growth in and around Manchester and Liverpool.

Because Cheshire & Warrington's continued success is so central to the success of these city regions, and to the Northwest as a whole, CWEA and NWDA have recently commissioned a very detailed Economic Review and Forecast, which has also assessed how well the current 'Investing in Success' and Sub-Regional Action Plan address the key emerging threats and opportunities. This year's SRAP has taken account of this analysis.

Starting in October 2007, CWEA will be leading a comprehensive update of Investing in Success reflecting this latest economic intelligence. In preparation for the proposed new Integrated Regional Strategy, which will combine economic planning with spatial, transport and housing strategies, the revised Investing in Success will provide a sub-regional input across the whole agenda.

In the light of the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration, and likely Local Government reorganisation in Cheshire, next year's Action Plan will be a more comprehensive review, commissioning new programmes to address these priorities. This year's plan follows Investing in Success' six main priorities, five spatial and one sub-regional. In addition there is a programme of sub-regional projects supporting employment sites and environmental issues.

Three of the spatial priorities – around Chester, Warrington and Crewe – build on places already recognised in the RES as established economic drivers for the region. The fourth, Weaver Valley, is aimed at developing the next major economic driver, Mid-Cheshire, where there is currently a mismatch between jobs and local people. The fifth, North East Cheshire Growth Engine, makes a key contribution to Manchester City Region.

DEESIDE HUB

Centred on Chester, it will enable the benefits of the city's economic success to be spread across a wider area including Ellesmere Port, Wirral and North Wales. The Action Plan includes measures to create investment sites in Ellesmere Port & Neston, improve Ellesmere Port's image, improve employability and access to jobs across this wider 'Chester city region' area, and to improve the visitor economy and attractiveness of Chester as a business location through Chester Culture Park (now branded as Chester Renaissance) and Super Zoo initiatives.
Delivers RES Transformational Actions 28, 44, 45, 55, 66, 101 and 119

CREWE GATEWAY

Building on Crewe's recent success in creating 6,000 jobs in 6 years (a 32% increase), the Action Plan includes measures to bring on-stream the Basford strategic regional site, to regenerate the town centre, the Rail Station and the whole area which links them together, and to link resulting job opportunities to areas of disadvantage.
Delivers RES Transformational Actions 28, 44, 45, 55, 66, 80, 85 and 119

WARRINGTON CROSSROADS

A suite of investments designed to capitalise on the massive private sector investment in the town centre, and new commercial developments, including the £1,000m Omega strategic regional site. The focus of the Action Plan is on linking these opportunities with people, through skills and transport accessibility, and on master planning an integrated vision for Warrington through a series of employment zones – including bringing forward new employment opportunities.
Delivers RES Transformational Actions 28, 44, 45, 55, 66 and 80

WEAVER VALLEY

Mid Cheshire is economically the weakest performing part of the sub-region with far fewer (and lower paying jobs), than local residents available to fill them. Sustainable economic growth has until now been constrained by ongoing physical and social regeneration needs in places like Northwich and Winsford and by underperforming market towns. Based on opportunities created from mine stabilisation in Northwich, revitalised investment interest in Middlewich and other centres, and from new visitor economy opportunities arising from emerging Regional Park plans, the Action Plan includes an ambitious package of measures. The ambition is to recreate in the Weaver Valley the economic success enjoyed in Chester, Warrington and Crewe. As the rural heartland of Cheshire, rural regeneration is a strong focus of the activity, led by a new, co-ordinated approach to regenerating market towns.
Delivers RES Transformational Actions 56, 85, 113 and 119

ENTERPRISE & PEOPLE

Enterprise Generator is a programme which will complement the 'new' regional Business Link and start-up programmes with measures to develop the enterprise culture in education, in disadvantaged areas, in rural areas and among under-represented groups; to accelerate the sub-region's start-up performance; and to bring forward vital new workspace.

People & Jobs is a 'sister' programme aimed at linking people in need with job opportunities, through recruitment and skills initiatives targeted at pockets of deprivation.
Delivers RES Transformational Actions 1, 13, 26, 28, 31, 43, 44, 45, 52, 56

1. State of the Sub-Regional Economy

PRODUCTIVITY

Cheshire & Warrington continues to be a high performing sub-regional economy. Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita has consistently exceeded the UK average, household earnings are high, the population is highly skilled and unemployment is low. In addition, the natural environment, combined with such factors as high educational attainment mean that Cheshire & Warrington is a place where people want to live, and where residents enjoy a high quality of life. Cheshire & Warrington's success is vital to the success of its neighbouring cities and of the Region.

But success is never guaranteed and there are worrying signs confirmed in the economic analysis. Recent growth in GVA per head has slowed dramatically, and a number of major employers have reduced staffing levels, including AstraZeneca and Vauxhall Motors.

Cheshire & Warrington underperformed the North West and UK in terms of GVA growth over the period 2000-04, a turnaround from the previous two decades. Growth was faster in Merseyside and Greater Manchester over this period. The relatively weak GVA performance in Cheshire & Warrington was mainly due to slower productivity growth in manufacturing. Some service sectors also saw slower relative growth than in the North West and UK, although only professional services is estimated to have seen slower productivity growth, and education and miscellaneous services saw falls in employment. Although Warrington's GVA growth performance remains strong, the figure for the Cheshire County Council area has declined from being the highest in the North West in 1994 (16% above the UK) to being just 3% above the UK figure in 2004.

There are high levels of private investment across the sub-region, but some areas are missing out in terms of replacing 'old' industries with new, knowledge economy jobs, most notably mid Cheshire. Likewise, pockets of deprivation persist in the sub-region and require support to stimulate growth and to ensure linkages between areas of opportunity and areas of need.

The view of the Cheshire and Warrington sub-regional economy underpinning the Sub Regional Action Plan is developed from a major economic review and forecast project carried out for CWEA and NWDA by SQW Consulting in association with Cambridge Econometrics. In addition other studies have contributed, including a major study of worklessness in the sub-region, and an enterprise strategy, both carried out by Regeneris. The SQW/CE study generated forecasts for the sub-regional economy, taking account of data on local job losses/ gains and reflecting known interventions, including from the last Sub Regional Action Plan.

The recent relative underperformance of the Cheshire & Warrington economy compared to the North West is expected to be a short term phenomenon, and the long term outlook is that the trend growth within the sub-region will again be faster than for the Region as whole. However, much depends on the prospects for key sectors, and in particular pharmaceuticals, and on the key new development of Omega in Warrington achieving its potential. Although GVA growth is expected to recover, the relative performance of the sub-region will be weaker than was seen during the second half of the 1990s – unless there are interventions to address this.

EMPLOYMENT

Despite the forecast improvement in relative growth prospects, employment in Cheshire & Warrington, which has lagged growth in the North West in recent years, is only expected to grow at a similar rate to the North West average in the long term, and slightly slower than the UK average. While the total population in the sub-region is expected to rise in line with that across the North West, the age profile is such that the working age population is expected to fall.

Investment within Cheshire & Warrington has generated 26,100 new jobs since 2000. All districts in the sub-region experienced job growth at or above the Great Britain level between 2000 and 2005, apart from the mid-Cheshire districts of Vale Royal and Congleton. The number of jobs within Cheshire & Warrington has supported high levels of economic activity within the labour market. Activity levels are comfortably above the North West and Great Britain averages, except in Ellesmere Port & Neston where there is a particular issue with economic activity amongst 16-24 year olds.

POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Cheshire & Warrington has risen by 8% since 1981 compared with 1.4% growth in the North West and 6.7% in Great Britain. There was growth in all districts except Ellesmere Port & Neston. Migration flows into Cheshire & Warrington have increased over recent years with particular districts attracting considerable flows from both within the UK and internationally. Crewe & Nantwich has been the most notable destination for both migrants from within the UK and migrants from overseas.

Of notable concern is the declining proportion of the Cheshire & Warrington working age population and in particular, the notably low (and declining) proportion of the population aged 20-39 – there has been a 12% reduction in this age group since 1995.

Overall, over 70% of workers both live and work within the sub-region. It is worth noting that there is a net inflow of workers (5,900) – primarily from the Manchester and Liverpool City Regions. The pattern varies considerably between districts, however, with Congleton and Vale Royal exhibiting net outflows of over 10,000 movements and Chester and Warrington exhibiting net inflows of over 10,000 movements. The Census 2001 showed an overall outflow of managerial and professional workers and an inflow of less skilled workers (especially to Ellesmere Port).

It is unclear what impact the forecast decline in the working-age population will have on economic growth. It seems likely that there would be an increase in commuting from neighbouring areas. The Cheshire & Warrington economy is expected to benefit from strong GVA growth in manufacturing, as well as services, but productivity growth in manufacturing is likely to result in a continued reduction of employment levels in manufacturing, albeit less severe than in the 1980s or 1990s.

Cheshire & Warrington has a highly qualified working age population. Figures show that this area out-performs all the other North West sub-regions and the national comparator. Of concern, however, are Chester and Crewe & Nantwich where the proportion with NVQ4+ dropped during the period.

In addition to overall qualification levels, Cheshire & Warrington contains some of the best schools and colleges; the best performing districts nationally in terms of GCSE attainment and a low proportion of 16-19 year olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Whilst absolute levels of deprivation in Cheshire & Warrington are low, there are a number of 'pockets' of deprivation, mostly at sub-ward level. 3.5% of the sub-region's sub-ward areas are amongst England's most deprived 10%. Unemployment is generally low in Cheshire & Warrington and is below the Great Britain figure in all districts, but the sub-region does have a number of local area concentrations of high incapacity benefit (IB) claimants.

SECTORS

The sub-region has a considerable specialism in a number of manufacturing sectors – pharmaceuticals, fuels, water supply, and motor vehicles – all key sectors for the sub-regional and regional economy, with pharmaceuticals in particular having witnessed considerable growth since 2000. However, more recently there have been job losses in this sector and the sub-region is particularly vulnerable to any decline or restructuring of these large employers.

Pharmaceuticals accounts for just over 6% of employment in Cheshire & Warrington. GVA growth is expected to be strong in the long term, but not as fast as in the North West or UK as a whole, and employment is expected to fall at a faster rate than in the North West and UK. The importance of pharmaceuticals to the sub-regional economy is such that the outturn for this industry could be a deciding factor in whether the Cheshire & Warrington economy does actually outperform the North West or not in the long term

The long-term prospects for banking & finance, computing services and professional services in Cheshire & Warrington are all dependent to some extent on the success of the Omega site in Warrington. In the medium to long term, the site is expected to increase the attractiveness of the sub-region to firms within these industries. Prospects for retailing, the largest industry in Cheshire & Warrington in terms of employment, are for growth slightly slower than the North West as a whole in the long term, as relatively strong growth is expected in the larger shopping areas of Liverpool and Manchester.

Workplace earnings have remained close to the national average. However, there is some evidence of earnings in Chester and Vale Royal lagging significantly behind UK growth since 2002. Residence based earnings (i.e. the money earned by people living in Cheshire & Warrington) present a different picture, with far higher rates. The widening difference between workplace and residence based earnings in Cheshire in particular reflects the presence of high-earners who work outside the area but who choose to live in the county.

At a headline level, the sub-region continues to demonstrate very high levels of research and development (R&D) expenditure compared to the North West and Great Britain. However, this is heavily skewed by the presence of AstraZeneca; if that firm's R&D were to be excluded, the average R&D spend per adult would be below that for the North West and the UK.

ENTERPRISE

Cheshire & Warrington is an enterprising place – VAT registration rates are above the Great Britain and North West figures. Indeed, growth in registrations between 2000 and 2005 was above the Great Britain rate in all districts except Vale Royal. This has led to a considerable net increase in the number of businesses within the economy (nearly 20% since 1994), while business survival rates are also good.

However recent research commissioned by NWDA from Enterprise Consulting, suggests that relatively high start-up rates and SME density in Cheshire & Warrington masks a lack of enterprising spirit among the majority of the population – the sub-region has a more negative attitude to risk-taking than the region as a whole. It is believed that this is a result of three characteristics of the sub-regional economy: perceived job security and 'comfort zones' among those in well paid jobs with major employers; a lack of spin-outs and local supply chains developed by these large employers; and a consequent lack of SME role models in areas which have traditionally depended on a small number of large companies (especially in Ellesmere Port). The lack of a major research-based University in Cheshire and Warrington or of investment in incubator facilities close to those Universities is also a major factor which cannot be overlooked.

2. Barriers and Opportunities

BARRIERS & CHALLENGES

Cheshire & Warrington's strengths make it among the country's most attractive places in which to live, work, visit and invest. But this success and the legacy of past concentrations in chemicals and other heavy industries create a number of barriers to future economic growth:

- ***Housing affordability***: planning constraint and extensive Green Belt boundaries result in the NW Region's highest house prices, and a lack of affordable housing for workers at all levels. Recent high levels of inward migration, especially from Eastern Europe, which are concentrated in parts of the sub-region, are adding to demand.

- Local labour supply is also constrained by a ***'demographic time bomb'***, with the key 20-39 year old cohort in decline, at a rate faster than the regional and national trends.

- ***Previously developed land***: The legacy of 'dirty industries' has left Cheshire and Warrington with proportionately the Region's largest stock of previously developed and often contaminated land. This leads to high costs of bringing this land into reuse and to unattractive environments especially in parts of Ellesmere Port and Vale Royal.

- ***Employment land supply and availability***: although in headline terms Cheshire & Warrington has sufficient employment land for the foreseeable future (and is well equipped with regionally significant sites), in reality much of this is unavailable and unmarketable. Action is needed to identify and bring to fruition a co-ordinated suite of sub-regionally important sites.

- Partly as a result of land supply and ***planning policy***, there is an increasing mismatch in mid-Cheshire between the number and quality of jobs created and the skills and aspirations of local residents, leading to increased out-commuting.

- '***Internal' transport and connectivity:*** while the sub-region has good external links, through motorways, railways and airports, connectivity within the sub-region is poor, making it difficult to link people and jobs. Accessibility is a particularly key issue in Warrington.

- Although Cheshire & Warrington has a diversified economy, parts of the sub-region are heavily dependent on sectors in which ***global restructuring*** threatens future growth and stability, including banking, pharmaceuticals, automotive and chemicals. There is a continuing need to diversify into other high value sectors.

- ***The pattern of deprivation***, concentrated at sub-ward level across the sub-region, has led to a low level of special external funding to address worklessness issues and to encourage and support business starts in deprived areas.

- ***Quality of Life*** and Quality of Place are relatively strong in Cheshire & Warrington, but much further improvement and investment is needed:

- ***Chester*** benefits greatly from being identified as a regional 'attack brand', yet it still compares unfavourably with competitors such as York in the breadth of visitor attractions, and the quality of visitor management, which results in a relatively low number of overnight stays and lower spend per visitor. Chester's attractiveness to visitors is mirrored by its attractiveness to investors in the broader economy

- Both ***Warrington and Crewe*** are recognized in the Regional Economic Strategy as key drivers of the economy, yet they will need substantial public and private sector investment to achieve their potential.

OPPORTUNITIES

The sub-region has three towns and cities which are recognized as important drivers of private-sector led economic growth – Chester, Warrington and Crewe. All three, and the areas around them, are forecast to generate thousands of new jobs over the next decade, through the opportunities presented by the regional employment sites at Omega in Warrington and Basford in Crewe and the further development of Chester as a visitor destination and investment locus.

The massive private sector investment in these three centres – estimated at nearly £3 billion over the next decade – presents major opportunities to engage people not currently in work and to substantially boost the Region's GVA. To achieve this in a sustainable way, much needs to be done to improve connectivity by public and private transport. As the major developments at the edges of Warrington and Crewe come on stream, careful planning is needed to ensure cohesion, maintain and improve quality of place and image – to create new visions for these towns and to establish their place in the Region.

In mid-Cheshire there are major opportunities, through the Weaver Valley programme, to capitalize on mine stabilization through the Northwich Vision, and to exploit more fully the string of market towns (key service centres), to create an economy which delivers more local jobs to local people.

In North East Cheshire there is a need and an opportunity to diversify the economy. In addition to these place-based opportunities, a number of generic multi-area and sub-regional challenges and opportunities include:

- Strengthening Cheshire & Warrington's position in ***value added service sectors.***

- Mitigating the impact of, and realising the opportunities from, ***demographic change***, e.g. declining working age population, especially 20 - 39 year olds.

- Proactively working with businesses to ensure that ***high value manufacturing*** companies do not contract further or relocate elsewhere.

- Addressing the shortage of appropriate and ***affordable housing.***

- Maintaining a high ***quality of life*** and sense of place, to maintain the sub-region's attractiveness as a place to live, work, study and visit – and recognising culture as a key driver for the economy.

- Creating ***local employment opportunities*** for outward commuters, especially in Vale Royal and Congleton.

- Exploiting and bringing forward ***previously developed land.***

- Addressing ***flat income growth*** in Chester and Vale Royal.

- Responding to ***pockets of severe deprivation.***

- Harnessing the benefits of ***inward migration.***

- Exploiting Cheshire & Warrington's ***rail connectivity*** – (e.g. 1 hr 30 min journey times Crewe-London).

3. Economic Development Priorities

Cheshire & Warrington's economic strategy and action plan has a strong spatial focus, because the sub-region's existing and potential success is so closely linked to the quality of our places. Particular priorities for the next three years, based on our economic research are:

DEESIDE HUB

Continued physical regeneration of Ellesmere Port and improving the town's image
The continued economic success of Chester, limited land availability in the city itself, and continuing deprivation in parts of Ellesmere Port, provide an opportunity and a challenge to maximize private sector investment in Ellesmere Port. At the same time Ellesmere Port remains reliant on a small number of large companies in chemicals and automotive, and needs to continue diversification into other sectors. Poor image and previously developed land issues are major barriers, and require continuing intervention by the public sector.

Chester visitor economy, public realm and image
Chester, as a tourism attack brand, underperforms its potential in the quality and range of the visitor experience and visitor spend. Major initiatives in the city centre and at the zoo are needed to address these issues and capitalize on over £1 billion of private sector investment in the city. Past successes here, as in places like York, Bath, Norwich, Oxford and Cambridge, demonstrate that the quality of place which attracts visitors also attracts broader commercial investment and drives overall economic success. There is also the opportunity provided by a significant increase in the number of direct trains between Chester and London from November 2008.

Addressing flat income growth and sector risks in Chester
Although Chester continues to perform strongly, income growth is now flat, reflecting successful growth in visitor economy and lower value services and lower growth in higher wealth producing occupations. At the same time the city has become highly reliant on banking and financial services, which have been highly successful over the past decade but which have a less certain outlook. Actions need to be developed to plan for and address these issues and to develop added value service sectors.

CREWE GATEWAY

Maximising the Basford opportunity
New higher speed rail services (with a 1hr 30min journey time between London and Crewe from Autumn 2008) and the possible relocation of Crewe station to the Basford site, makes this regional strategic site even more important. It is a priority to reassess the commercial potential of the site and if appropriate to develop new strategies for its delivery. It will also be important to provide as much economic evidence as possible to influence Network Rail's decisions on Crewe Station.

Town centre and image

Major private investment in Crewe town centre presents the opportunity to produce a step-change in the image of the town through attention to the public realm. Although great strides have been made in transforming the appearance and image of the town as an investment location, further work is needed.

Master planning and connectivity

Crewe's rapid growth and the massive new potential in the University Quadrant supported by a very significant investment by MMU Cheshire, as well as the need to better link employment opportunities to deprived areas concentrated in the West End, make it a key priority to address connectivity issues and to create a new vision and master plan for the town.

WARRINGTON CROSSROADS

Master planning

Warrington's economic growth has been concentrated on a few areas of the town, leading to a lack of focus or strong sense of place. Some parts of the town still require physical regeneration and to be brought back into economic use. An overall framework is being developed which assesses the economic impact of current and future developments, to confirm an overall vision for the way forward and to define and prioritise programmes and projects. Critical to taking this forward are a series of inter-connected master plans for the key zones around the town.

Connectivity

A combination of the geographical spread of its major employment sites at the perimeter of the town, and a road network constrained by river and Ship Canal, means that Warrington has particular connectivity problems. There are key priorities for road infrastructure to support employment sites and for 'soft' measures on public transport and travel plans, as well as measures to support access to job opportunities from deprived areas.

WEAVER VALLEY

Regional park, image and visitor economy

Mid-Cheshire is the least well-performing part of the sub-region. It shares the socio-demographic strengths of the rest of Cheshire & Warrington, with a generally well educated population and a high proportion of managers and professionals, but has not as successfully as other parts, replaced its declining 'old' industries with high value knowledge economy jobs. The strategy to address a revival is, as elsewhere in the sub-region, to capitalise on environmental strengths and quality of life. This is crystallised in the development of the Weaver Valley which includes the Regional Park, a sub-regional signature project for the visitor economy, and by a programme to improve the physical characteristics and perceived negative image of the area.

Economic regeneration

Transformation of the economy of mid-Cheshire will be focused on Northwich, through the Northwich Vision, and on the smaller service centres running through the centre of Cheshire in particular. Strategy development will focus on a number of the sub-region's key economic priorities including attraction of value added service sectors and mitigating the risks of contraction in high value manufacturing; addressing the shortage of appropriate and affordable housing; creating local employment opportunities for outward commuters; exploiting and bringing forward previously developed land; addressing flat income growth and responding to pockets of severe deprivation in Winsford and parts of Northwich.

Connectivity

Connectivity across mid-Cheshire is generally poor, and work on this is included in the Weaver Valley Regional Park development programme. In Middlewich, a priority is to build an eastern bypass both to address congestion issues but also to open up employment opportunities in and around this strategically situated small town.

NORTH EAST CHESHIRE GROWTH ENGINE

Diversifying the economy and addressing sectoral risks

The Macclesfield area is closely integrated with the Manchester City-Region, with strong travel-to-work linkages. This part of the sub-region generates very strong levels of GVA, and both workplace and residence-based income levels are high. Pharmaceuticals have been in the vanguard of this success but forecasts for this sector are less promising. There is a need to diversify the economy into other high value service sectors through the creation of new employment sites and a series of enterprise measures.

Visitor economy/science

North East Cheshire is the location of one of the Region's most iconic facilities - the Jodrell Bank radio telescope. Manchester University and partners in Cheshire & Warrington are keen to exploit this asset by developing a new, exciting science-based visitor centre, closely linked to proposed developments at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

SUB- REGIONAL ISSUES

Employment land and sites

A recurring theme in spatial priorities is to ensure that there is a supply of employment sites and premises to meet projected high demand. These will enable ongoing diversification into high value sectors, and provide employment opportunities for those not currently engaged in the labour market. This requires both an objective 'mapping and gapping' exercise to establish the true sub-regional stock of sites, and a programme of bringing forward sub-regionally important sites. This includes the upgrading of existing sites through Green Business Park initiatives.

Environment and the natural economy

A cross-cutting theme of sub-regional priorities is environmental quality and the need for adaptation and mitigation of the impacts of climate change. Priorities include environmental improvements including the flagship Weaver Valley Regional Park, ecological networks, green infrastructure across the sub-region, better understanding of what key players in the sub-region are doing to address climate change, development of a sub-regional strategy and implementation programme. There are also opportunities for local employers to develop new products and services, including at the emerging Energy Innovation Centre near Chester. Coordinated action is also needed to reduce commuting, especially by car.

Heritage, culture, the visitor economy and Year of Gardens 08

The quality of Cheshire & Warrington's natural and built environment makes the sub-region a leading visitor destination, but there is much untapped potential. Protecting and enhancing heritage assets in Chester and across the sub-region and improving the environment around them is a priority, as is developing other under-exploited visitor attractions including Weaver Valley, market towns, and Jodrell Bank. Cultural and creative activities are recognised as key drivers of the economy, but require greater focus – to be delivered through the Cultivate programme. Through Cultivate, and working closely with Culture NW, Cheshire & Warrington will be contributing to the 2012 Cultural Olympiad, as well as ensuring that maximum potential is derived from the Olympic Games. Cheshire & Warrington has one of the country's largest concentrations of gardens open to the public and garden centres. To raise awareness, the Cheshire Year of Gardens 08 is a significant development opportunity.

Affordable housing and transport

20,000 new jobs are forecast to be created in Cheshire & Warrington over the next five years. If the potential of the sub-region is to be achieved and sustained, it must be supported by housing and transport infrastructures which are fit for purpose. Proposals in the Sub-National Review for an Integrated Regional Strategy, which links the economy more closely to planning policy, will be mirrored in the sub-region.

ENTERPRISE GENERATOR

Developing enterprise

Although the sub-region performs relatively well in business start-up rates and business stock, the headline figures mask an underlying lack of enterprise culture, as measured in recent regional research. There is a particular issue in deprived areas.

It is a priority to achieve stronger co-ordination and impact of enterprise activities in schools, colleges and universities, and to ensure that effective enterprise outreach and support activities are delivered among deprived groups and communities.

ICT, home and flexible working

Cheshire & Warrington has the highest penetration of telephone broadband connectivity in the North West, but much remains to be done to support SMEs in increasing the productivity benefits that ICT can bring. To address issues of an ageing population, high levels of commuting, and barriers to work such as disability and care, it is a priority to increase levels of flexible and home-based working.

CWEA are working with NWDA - through the Public Sector Steering Group – to develop and refine an ambitious strategy to deliver up to £3.7BN of GVA growth in the NW over the next 5 – 7 years. Based on the size of the economy and the track record of businesses in the sub-region as early adopters of ICT improvements, this could deliver at least £0.5BN of growth for Cheshire and Warrington. Experience from other sub-regions in the NW and beyond suggests that an ICT Champion, supported by a private sector-led Digital Development Agency (DDA) can be extremely effective in raising awareness, coordinating public sector intervention / investment and in energising the supply-side of the sector to develop innovative solutions. Once the High Impact ICT Strategy has been agreed (anticipated by December 2007), CWEA will work with NWDA to develop a framework for a Cheshire and Warrington DDA, under the auspices of CWEA; this will include definition of a delivery and resource plan for the period to 2011.

Science and technology

Many of the sub-region's most successful businesses, notably in the pharmaceuticals, chemicals, nuclear, telecommunications and digital sectors, are built on world class science and technology. It is a priority to nurture and grow this success, to exploit the assets of nearby Daresbury and the major Universities, and to address skills and recruitment issues. In a global economy there is worrying intelligence that major employers' future research investment is migrating to Asia and America where the quality and quantity of science graduates is now outstripping Europe. It is a priority therefore to work with partners to raise the profile among young people of the attractiveness of science as a career option.

PEOPLE & JOBS

Skills, connectivity and engagement

It is important that higher level workplace skills are effectively supported through National and Regional programmes such as Train to Gain. The recently created Cheshire and Warrington Employment & Skills Board will be a key forum in which to gauge the success of matching skills supply and demand. There is a particular sub-regional focus on drawing workless people into the labour market, through a closely co-ordinated package of skills (with a focus on Skills Centres and other ways of making skills more accessible), and on measures to engage employers and support people in their transition to sustainable employment. Emerging priorities are to harness the economic contribution of inward migrants and the use changing demographics to the sub-region's advantage, for example providing more employment opportunities for older workers to compensate for declining numbers of young adults.

4. Progress to Date

Good progress is being made on the priorities identified in the 2006 -10 Action Plan.

Cheshire & Warrington is benefiting from an unprecedented level of private sector investment in its town and city centres. The Golden Square in Warrington is now complete and attention is turning to further regeneration of adjacent sites. Omega is coming on stream within the next period. Significant investment on the massive Northgate development – flagship of the Chester Renaissance – and in the area around Chester Station, as well as Visit Chester and Cheshire's successful campaign of profile-raising has made a major contribution to economic growth. Ellesmere Port centre has benefited from a substantial refurbishment, and work is due to start shortly in Crewe and Northwich Town Centres.

DEESIDE HUB

Initiatives in Ellesmere Port & Neston have been delivered and the BESS programme is now nearing completion, with the Workwise programme recognised nationally for its good practice. In Chester, CWEA and NWDA commissioned a major piece of work to assess the economic impact of the Renaissance/Culture Park programme and to develop a prioritised delivery plan. Capital works have commenced at a number of key sites including the Station area. Master planning for the Super Zoo project will commence shortly – approval of this project took much longer than anticipated.

CREWE GATEWAY

Work is progressing well on Town Centre Regeneration. Considerable progress has been made with detailed feasibility and planning work for the Station, but Network Rail's investigations into a possible re-location of the station, whilst welcomed by all partners, has meant that work relating to the development of the station in its existing location has been put on hold... Crewe's rapid economic growth is continuing.

WARRINGTON CROSSROADS

The Borough Council and its partners have made considerable progress in developing a new economic and regeneration vision for the town. The Omega development phases 1-2 has now passed its final planning hurdle and work is expected to commence on site in early 2008, creating up to 10,000 jobs over the next ten years. First stage feasibility work has been completed on the Bank Quay and Chapelford stations which are crucial to improving connectivity to the site. In the town centre the new bus station and transport interchange has been completed alongside the substantial private investment in Golden Square.

WEAVER VALLEY

The Regional Park development team is in place, and is developing a comprehensive implementation plan which will be completed in Autumn 2008. Substantial progress has been made in delivering the Weaver Way. The project in total will improve 119 kilometres of existing Rights of Way within the Weaver Valley Regional Park from Frodsham in the north to Audlem in the south over the next five years. A revised transport strategy for Northwich Vision is nearing completion, and work on the major Barons Quay development is due to start in 2008. Planning is well advanced for Middlewich Eastern Bypass, and again work is expected to start in 2008.

NORTH EAST CHESHIRE GROWTH ENGINE

Macclesfield Learning Zone is now completed. The Zone is a collaborative partnership between local schools and Macclesfield College to transform education and training in Macclesfield and the surrounding area. At the heart of the Learning Zone is a new, state-of-the-art learning campus providing modern, world class education and training facilities for the whole community.

ENTERPRISE & PEOPLE

The new regional arrangements for Business Link and start-up support have left some large gaps in one-to-one business support in the sub-region. Following a successful pilot in Winsford, a sub-regional programme of Enterprise Coaching to support and encourage business starts in deprived areas, is being implemented over the next three years.

Development of a more robust enterprise culture is also being developed through extended programmes for young people, led by Connexions. The successful Maximising Opportunities programme in Warrington, which links job opportunities at major new developments, with people from deprived areas, is being extended sub-regionally over the next two years, whilst skills for workless people and upskilling low skilled workers is being supported by the roll-out of Skills Centres linked to new developments.

5. Regional, Sub-Regional, Local and City Region Strategies

Investing in Success and this Action Plan are closely integrated with a range of policies and strategies at a number of spatial levels:

- At a local level with Community Plans and district-level economic development plans (for example in Congleton and Vale Royal).
- At local and County level with Local Area Agreements and with spatial planning frameworks. In the case of LAAs, this and future Action Plans it is anticipated that they will become the same document as the Fourth Block delivery plans.
- At regional level with the RES, RSS, RHS and transport planning.
- At national level with the Sub-National Review, Lyons and Leitch reviews and Business Support Simplification.
- At a cross-border level with Manchester and Liverpool City Regions, the Mersey-Dee Alliance and Shropshire and North Staffordshire partnerships.

All of Cheshire & Warrington with the exception of Crewe & Nantwich is shown in indicative maps as key components of both the Liverpool or Manchester City Regions.

CWEA and partners have collaborated closely with the City Region partnerships, providing data, information and economic forecasts about the economy of Cheshire & Warrington, and contributing significantly to the City Region Development Plans and Action Plans.

This Investing in Success Action Plan has fully taken into account the key strategies and proposals for the two city regions and demonstrates how Cheshire & Warrington will contribute to city region growth. Particular examples are:

- The BESS scheme in the Deeside Hub, which links job opportunities with deprived areas elsewhere in Liverpool City Region.
- Cheshire Year of Gardens 2008, which links through a concordat with Liverpool Capital of Culture.
- Developments in Chester Culture Park and Super Zoo, which contribute to the overall Liverpool City Region visitor offer.
- The Weaver Valley's links with the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park especially at the Mouth of the Weaver.
- Crewe Gateway's role as a regional gateway and its particular links with Manchester and its benefits to Manchester Airport.
- Warrington's proposed Chapelford rail interchange linking job opportunities with people from Manchester and Liverpool city regions.
- Macclesfield's Learning Zone including a European Centre for Aerospace Training (ECAT), supporting Manchester Airport.

- The Jodrell Bank Visitor Centre programme which is supported by the Manchester SRAP and has strong links to proposed developments at the Manchester Museum of Science & Industry.

Partners in Cheshire & Warrington are also working with colleagues in Manchester to investigate the need for an International School in the city region, on planning and transport issues including Strategic Park & Ride, the Manchester TIF proposals, and to support approval of the SEMMMS road schemes in South Manchester/North Cheshire.

6. Projects Proposed

DEESIDE HUB

The Action Plan includes continued work on the EDZ in Ellesmere Port, including a new Gateways project, the first stages of implementation of the Chester Renaissance Culture Park programme, as well as master planning for Chester Super Zoo. Details are shown in Annex1; proposed NWDA funding is summarised as follows:

Investment Summary Deeside Hub (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	7.157m	1.100m	0	8.257m
NWDA (New)	0.755m	8.325m	11.425m	20.505m
Total	**7.912m**	**9.425m**	**11.425m**	**28.762m**

Other non-direct private investment: £800m

CREWE GATEWAY

The Action Plan includes further development work on the Rail Gateway, Crewe Green Link Road and the Town Centre, as well as master planning the future of the town, particularly in the light of potential station relocation.

Investment Summary Crewe Gateway (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	8.405m	4.000m	0	12.405m
NWDA (New)	1.100m	0.500m	0.300m	1.900m
Total	**9.505m**	**4.500m**	**0.300m**	**14.305m**

Indirect investments: £380m

WARRINGTON CROSSROADS

The Warrington package includes development of a new economic development framework and master planning a range of development zones in and around the town. It is also includes a range of transport initiatives to ensure connectivity with major new employment sites.

Investment Summary Warrington Crossroads (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	0.018m	0	0	0.018m
NWDA (New)	4.720m	2.615m	8.410m	15.745m
Total	**4.738m**	**2.615m**	**8.410m**	**15.763m**

Indirect investments: Omega £1,000m; Town Centre £338m; Other identified commercial investments £175m.

WEAVER VALLEY

The Action Plan includes development work on the Weaver Valley Regional Park, Lion Salt Works and Northwich Vision.

Investment Summary Weaver Valley (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	0.998m	0	0	0.998m
NWDA (New)	1.406m	4.308m	5.061m	10.775m
Total	**2.404m**	**4.308m**	**5.061m**	**11.773m**

NORTH EAST CHESHIRE GROWTH ENGINE

New into the Action Plan this year is master planning work to establish the feasibility of a major new Visitor Centre at Jodrell Bank.

Investment Summary North East Cheshire Growth Engine (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	0	0	0	0
NWDA (New)	0.160m	0.120m	0	0.280m
Total	**0.160m**	**0.120m**	**0**	**0.280m**

ENTERPRISE GENERATOR - PEOPLE AND JOBS

The Action Plan includes a programme of action developing enterprise in education, in deprived areas and among under-represented groups, in rural areas, as well as specific projects addressing ICT and digital media, culture and creative industries, tourism and food & drink. The People & Jobs package extends existing localised good practice in linking people with jobs into a sub-regional programme.

Investment Summary Enterprise Generator (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	0.805m	0.985m	0	1.790m
NWDA (New)	2.166m	1.665m	1.090m	4.921m
Total	**2.971m**	**2.650m**	**1.090m**	**6.711m**

Investment Summary People & Jobs (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	2.399m	2.090m	0	4.489m
NWDA (New)	2.545m	2.303m	1.753m	6.601m
Total	**4.944m**	**4.393m**	**1.753m**	**11.090m**

SUB- REGIONAL PROJECTS: EMPLOYMENT LAND & THE ENVIRONMENT

The Action Plan includes a range of sub-regional projects including Cheshire Year of Gardens 08, sub-regional employment sites and inward investment support, key service centres, and environmental programmes including climate change, green infrastructure and the REVIVE programme and ICT exploitation.

Investment Summary Sub-Regional Projects (£)				
	08/09	**09/10**	**10/11**	**Total**
NWDA (SIP)	5.818m	2.339m	2.235m	10.392m
NWDA (New)	3.980m	5.082m	4.967m	14.029m
Total	**9.798m**	**7.421m**	**7.202m**	**24.421m**

TOTAL INVESTMENT

Title	NWDA Indicative Funding already in SIP (£m)	NWDA Funding sought 2008-11 (£m)	NWDA Total Funding sought 2008-11 (£m)
Deeside Hub	08.257m	20.505m	28.762m
Crewe Gateway	12.405m	01.900m	14.305m
Warrington Crossroads	00.018m	15.745m	15.763m
Weaver Valley	00.998m	10.775m	11.773m
North East Cheshire	00.000m	00.280m	00.280m
Enterprise Generator	01.790m	04.921m	06.711m
People & Jobs	04.489m	06.601m	11.090m
Sub-Regional	10.392m	14.029m	24.421m
Total	**38.349m**	**74.756m**	**113.105m**

Detailed spreadsheets showing individual component projects within these packages are shown in Appendix 1.

7. Key Outputs, Outcomes & Impacts

Partner organisations in Cheshire & Warrington have agreed a series of sub-regional targets, largely based on the regional targets within the RES. These are shown as Appendix 2.

8. CWEA Capacity to Deliver the Investing in Success Action Plan

GOVERNANCE

Company Status
Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance (CWEA) is limited by Guarantee and has effective systems and procedures which have been audited.

Role of the Board
Providing overall leadership, by setting direction, strategic aims and major policies, appointing and supervising executive management, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations and accountability to members and stakeholders. They are also ultimately responsible for the performance of the company.

Membership & Structure
There are 22 members, representing eight local authorities – all of whom are represented elected members - key public agencies and eight from the private sector. CWEA is proactive in co-opting private sector representatives from the sub-region's major employers onto the Board.

Sub-Committees
- Finance and Audit
- Remuneration & Appointments.

Stakeholder Forum

The Stakeholder Forum was established in 2006 to enhance the relationship between CWEA, its Board of Directors and the wider group of partners / stakeholders in the sub-region. The Stakeholder Forum enables CWEA to consult with this stakeholder group on key strategic issues and priorities. It also demonstrates a commitment to partnership working across the sub-region with groups not directly linked to the Board.

DELIVERY

CWEA

Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between CWEA, its partners and NWDA, CWEA is the nominated Sub-Regional Partnership for Cheshire and Warrington.

CWEA is the primary point of contact for the NWDA and other regional partners in the development of sub-regional policy initiatives, making the case for strategic change and action. This is done by promoting partnership coherence at sub-regional level, bringing together major players in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to deliver *Investing in Success* – the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Strategy and Action Plan.

Where appropriate, CWEA adopts a strategic leadership role, influencing the agenda, shaping perceptions and advocating strategic solutions for the sub-region. In addition, it provides strategic leadership on the development of key national/regional policy initiatives within the sub-region, ensuring that such initiatives are integrated with the wider sub-regional policy frameworks. This is supported by evidence; economic data and independent forecasts of economic performance.

The wider Sub-Regional Partnership (SRP) comprises local authorities, the LSC, Business Link, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, the Chambers of Commerce and Enterprise Agencies, Cheshire & Warrington Tourism Board, Cheshire Rural Enterprise, FE Colleges, the Universities of Chester and MMU, developers and other key private sector employers. All were closely involved in developing *Investing in Success* and have significantly contributed to this refreshed Action Plan.

Through the Business Ambassador Group – comprising the senior business leaders in the sub-region – CWEA ensures that the business voice is clearly articulated in all our strategies.

Working Groups

CWEA works closely with partners and stakeholders to procure solutions and manage an investment decision-making process for project proposals, gaining agreement in line with local and regional strategic priorities. Key working groups include the Employment and Skills Board; Strategy Development Group; Investor Development Working Group; Climate Change Action Group and the Marketing Group.

Monitoring

CWEA will assume responsibility for developing and overseeing the implementation of the strategic vision for Cheshire and Warrington, ensuring this is updated on an annual basis in consultation with major stakeholders. As well as ensuring the sub-region can proactively respond to current and upcoming challenges by the availability of accurate, timely, and informative intelligence and foresight.

The Director of Strategy & Intelligence and Programme Manager, through The Strategic Development Group - a decision making body made up of members from partner organisations - will monitor projects against milestones and key performance indicators. This group will also ensure that evaluation is undertaken to monitor impact against strategic priorities in order to influence changes as appropriate.

9. Evaluation & Performance Management

CWEA will assume responsibility for developing and overseeing the implementation of the strategic vision for Cheshire and Warrington. This will be updated on an annual basis in consultation with major stakeholders. In addition, it will provide the sub-region with the ability to proactively respond to current and upcoming challenges by the availability of accurate, timely, and informative intelligence and foresight.

10. Sustainable Development – Positive & Negative Impact

The Action Plan and each of its main programmes will, by the end of October 2007, be assessed using the NWRA Sustainability Appraisal toolkit to determine the extent to which the Plan addresses key sustainability issues.

The main themes and programmes within the Plan place a strong emphasis on sustainable economic development and regeneration and on addressing environmental impacts, and on mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The Action Plan includes the appointment of a Climate Change Programme Manager and development of a sub-regional Climate Change Strategy.

It also includes key themes of reducing commuting by car through generating more local jobs for local people and by improving access to key employment sites by public transport.

CWEA through its Climate Change Programme Manager will work with sub-regional partners such as local authorities, ENWORKS, Groundwork and other environmental support organisations to encourage the adoption of resource efficiency action plans by partners, members and business beneficiaries. It will also encourage those organisations with projects likely to have a negative impact to implement actions to limit the level of negativity in their implementation.

CWEA will also seek to add value to the action plan, and enhance the sustainability of its projects through supporting links and partnerships with other projects that seek to improve the quality of life and sustainability of Cheshire & Warrington.

Sustainable Consumption and Production

Although the Action Plan is strongly directed towards economic growth and increased employment rates, it also includes a substantial range of measures to reduce congestion, exploit the use of digital technology and to improve energy efficiency. A key part of the role of the Climate Change Programme Manager will be to work with businesses and the community to champion sustainable consumption and production. There is also strong support for environmental technologies, including a new Energy Innovation Centre.

Climate Change and Energy

The Climate Change Programme Manager will be tasked, with sub-regional partners, to 'map and gap' current activities on mitigation and adaptation and to develop and deliver a sub-regional strategy and delivery programme. The Action Plan also includes the development of 'green business parks' as part of a key employment site programme, building on past successes for example in Crewe and Winsford.

Natural Resource Protection and Environmental Enhancement

Cheshire & Warrington's existing programmes and Action Plan proposals include a wide range of environmental protection and enhancement programmes including Econet, Weaver Valley Regional Park, the Newlands and Revive programmes, green infrastructure, the Northwest Coastal Trail and Chester Renaissance. The quality of life, quality of place and visitor economy are all key drivers of sub-regional economic success, the environment is at the heart of the Action Plan.

Sustainable Communities

Key measures in the Action Plan include better linkages between people from disadvantaged communities and new employment opportunities, reductions in commuting and the generation of more jobs for local people, especially in mid-Cheshire, and affordable housing. Despite the sub-region's overall economic success, pockets of severe deprivation remain; this Action Plan and the Local Area Agreements for Cheshire and Warrington have a strong emphasis on better co-ordination and new ways of working to address these problems and spread success.

11. Key Risks

The major projects and packages included in this Action Plan have been developed through extensive consultation with organisations identified as Leads, and qualified through a series of peer review challenges to establish deliverability, strategic fit, impact and value for money.

The majority of Project Leads are local authorities and other publicly funded agencies which have a successful track record of delivery. Through a prioritisation and commissioning approach, CWEA will pre-assess delivery risks, before submitting project to a full NWDA appraisal process.

The CWEA, at Board and Operational level, will review project progress and sub regional investment priorities on a regular basis.

The following risks have been identified as having a potential impact on successful delivery of the Action Plan:

- Priorities and related actions change due to external influences
- Local Government Review in Cheshire results in reduced delivery capacity and/or delays in spending commitments
- Funding does not materialise, is delayed, or is less than the projected amounts.
- Projected outcomes are not achieved

The risk ratings, impacts and mitigation measures are as follows:

1. Priorities change

- Risk rating: Low

The priorities and actions in this Plan are soundly based on economic analysis and current national, regional and sub-regional strategic context. Any changes will be driven by economic research and analysis.

2. Local Government Review

- Risk rating: Medium

There is a high likelihood of changes in local government structure in Cheshire being announced by the end of 2007, and implemented in April 2009. Programmes and projects for which Cheshire local authorities are the lead or accountable body have in most cases already been committed or contracted. There is already some disruption to capacity as a result of local government restructuring, but these have been, and will continue to be mitigated by improving capacity in CWEA and other organizations.

3. Funding shortfalls

- Risk rating: High

Failure to invest in Action Plan priorities would severely reduce projected economic outcomes.

Sub-regional partners have submitted expressions of interest, specifying funding levels, sources and whether these are committed. Before any detailed proposal is made a more comprehensive appraisal of viability will be carried out. If any funding is lost, NWDA will be informed.

4. Projected outcomes not achieved

- Risk rating: Medium

Activities will be monitored to ensure that delivery is on track. There will be regular contact with deliverers to discuss and minimise problems, and if necessary to discuss re-profiling and re-planning. CWEA will work closely with NWDA to monitor performance and outcomes.

12. Contacts

This document has been produced by the Cheshire & Warrington Economic Alliance (CWEA) and its partners. For further information contact:

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