



News Release

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For immediate use

Growth Track 360 makes case to Parliamentary Committee for improved railways to attract tourism as local MPs back direct HS2 trains for Chester and North Wales

The House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee has published written evidence from business and local authority leaders in the Growth Track partnership explaining how public transport is a key aspect of the visitor economy and how a step change is required in quality, capacity, speed and resilience.

Submitted following a call for evidence for the Committee's inquiry into Wales as a global tourist destination, Growth Track 360's paper says that North Wales and Cheshire (in particular, the City of Chester) have the potential to become 'must see' destinations for a greater number of visitors from within the UK and especially from overseas.

To increase the attractiveness of the cross-border region whilst reducing congestion, a package of improvements to public transport infrastructure and services is required including – in the longer term – electrification of the Chester and North Wales Main Line providing access for HS2 trains from London Euston calling at Old Oak Common (for London Heathrow Airport), Birmingham and Manchester Airports.

Publication of Growth Track 360's evidence comes in the same week that the House of Commons approved a Second Reading for the High-Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill which will, when enacted, authorise construction of the next stage of HS2.

In the debate on Monday, 20 June, local MPs Christian Matheson (Labour, City of Chester) and Dr James Davies (Conservative, Vale of Clwyd) both made the case for electrification of the existing railway between Crewe, Chester and North Wales. Dr Davies referred in the House of Commons to the "amazing graphical interpretation" of how an HS2 train might look passing Conwy Castle commissioned by Growth Track 360 from Chester-based Ukrainian artist Nataliia Marchuk.

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

"Once design and environmental impact issues are resolved, HS2 will provide the full sustainable solution to greatly increased tourism into Cheshire and North Wales from UK and overseas visitors. We value the support from MPs of all parties for Growth Track 360's vision of high-speed rail connectivity to our cross-border region."

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

“HS2 is classified as an ‘England and Wales’ project which means that Wales does not currently receive the same Barnett Formula consequential payments as Scotland despite not a single train on the proposed route being planned to travel west of Crewe. Electrification of the North Wales Main Line is feasible, affordable and will be transformational for all of North Wales and Cheshire.”

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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. A high-resolution version of Nataliia Marchuk’s artwork may be viewed here: <https://coGITAMUS.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/GT360-NWML-HS2-Artwork.jpg>.
4. The Second Reading debate on the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill may be viewed here: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-20/debates/7CA166FD-A084-4C45-900A-5663CE469D8B/HighSpeedRail\(Crewe-Manchester\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-20/debates/7CA166FD-A084-4C45-900A-5663CE469D8B/HighSpeedRail(Crewe-Manchester)Bill).
5. Growth Track 360’s written evidence to the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee’s inquiry into Wales as a global tourist destination may be viewed here: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/109226/pdf/>.

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