



PRESS NOTICE:

The Mersey Dee Alliance (MDA) publishes a £220m Cross Border Recovery Deal aligned with Chancellor Rishi Sunak’s vision for a levelled up, higher-wage, higher-skill, higher-productivity economy and commences negotiations with the Welsh and UK Governments to fund the Deal.

The Mersey Dee Alliance, representing the interests of the unique, cross border, functional economy in Flintshire and Wrexham in North Wales and Cheshire West and Chester and the Wirral in the North West of England today followed up its initial proposals for £400m Fiscal Stimulus Package to counter the severe negative economic impact of Covid 19 with a prioritised Cross Border Recovery Deal to put the MDA on the path of long-term recovery from Covid-19 and net zero industrial production.

Councillor Mark Pritchard Chair of the Mersey Dee Alliance said,

“The MDA economy has been hit hard by Covid 19. Our GVA contracted by 15%, equivalent to £3.5bn of the pre-pandemic, £22bn value of the economy. Thousands of jobs were lost in aerospace, other manufacturing sectors and retail.

The MDA Cross Border Recovery Deal is Phase 1 of the proposed £400+ Fiscal Stimulus Package that we published in March 2021. Investment is needed now to recover from the negative economic impacts of Covid 19 and lay the foundations for future, sustainable growth driven by the world’s first net zero, industrial cluster in partnership with HyNet and businesses.

The Cross Border Recovery Deal will address longer term structural challenges caused by complexity for businesses and planners in the public sector because of the administrative border which imposes two sets of policy frameworks on the region’s economy. The negative effects of this administrative complexity can be seen in an over-reliance on the car because in the past it has been difficult to plan transport on a holistic, cross border basis that aligns with economic needs.”

The MDA has worked in close partnership with neighbouring economic partnerships (the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership and Liverpool City Region) to produce its proposals. None of these bodies can fully meet the needs of the cross border, functional economy as they are constrained from spending money outside of their own administrative boundaries. There is a growing consensus that the Mersey Dee Cross Border Economy needs a Local Growth Partnership of its own. The MDA Deal will enable the development of partnership that will be dedicated to promoting the economic wellbeing of the cross-border economy and its communities.”

Councillor Stuart Whittingham, Vice Chair of the MDA said

“The MDA Cross Border Recovery Deal seeks £220m to invest in Low Carbon, Place, Transport and Supporting Business, Digital and Skills Programmes. We estimate that the investment will return over £500m in financial benefits.

Our Place Programme of town centre investment is critical to the Deal. The Mersey Dee area is characterised by many small-town centres which have a higher vacancy rate than average in the UK. Our proposals will create a fund to repurpose empty buildings and revitalise our town centres as hubs small businesses communities.

Our town centres are critical to a sustainable and vibrant quality of life “offer” that will retain residents and investors as well as attracting new ones.”

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of Flintshire County Council said

“The Deal will build on Flintshire’s recent Levelling Up Fund Bid to improve the Wrexham to Bidston “Borderlands” Railway Line by bringing forward transport proposals that will: -

- Plan for an integrated, cross border active travel network that will enable the MDA to bid successfully to government funds in England and Wales for capital monies to build cycleways and walkways.
- Fund the purchase of card reader machines for cross border bus travel
- Model the planning of transport on a cross border basis

The Deal will make alternatives to the car more competitive increasing access to employment, improving health and reducing carbon emissions.

The MDA will work in partnership with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to ensure the delivery of the proposed Deeside Hydrogen Hub, which will provide hydrogen fuel for vehicles providing public services, like dustcarts.

Councillor Louise Gittins, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council said,

“The MDA area needs action to reduce carbon emissions as an industrial economy, with five times the UK average of carbon emissions per head. The MDA Deal will contribute to saving the planet by reducing carbon emissions and preparing for net zero. We will: -

- Build on the HyNet Track 1 Cluster by bringing forward a proposal for a hydrogen equipment testing facility at Thornton Science Park in partnership with HyNet and Chester University.
- Help businesses move into the supply chains for green energy production including hydrogen, CCUS, Offshore wind and nuclear based on improving “green skills” through our training proposals.

The MDA Cross Border Recovery Deal is the product of multi-agency, cross border, cross party collaboration. We look forward to the government recognising the strength of our partnership. The contribution of Business Leaders has been particularly powerful with contributions from anchor companies like Airbus and representative bodies like the North Wales and Mersey Dee Business Council. Business Leaders led the development of our proposals to support businesses to improve their productivity and reduce their carbon footprint.

Ashley Rogers, Commercial Director of the North Wales and Mersey Dee Business Council said,

“A key element of the Deal is the proposed Business Challenge Fund (BCF) developed by the private sector across the MDA area. The £60m fund is targeted to support businesses, large and small, to deliver growth and productivity, whilst accelerating the journey to Net Zero carbon for the economy.

The Fund will offer grants to help bring to market new products and services resulting from research and development in key sectors, support for firms to reduce the carbon footprint of their premises and provide “net zero” loans for SMEs to immediately invest in their businesses.

The BCF could save more than 120,000 tonnes of Co2 emissions, generate £30m of new private sector investment, improve over 400 business premises and safeguard or create over 2700 jobs.

“If we are really going to Build Back Better, and support our economy, so badly hit by the pandemic, then we need immediate and targeted support to do so. Sustainable growth, productivity and Net Zero must be our mantra.

The Business Challenge fund is a grass roots proposal developed by business and an essential element of the MDA ask of government. It is designed specifically for the cross-border Mersey Dee area to boost growth, increase productivity and add much needed momentum for our journey to Net Zero.”

Dr. James Davies MP (Vale of Clwyd), Chair of the Mersey Dee and North Wales All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) said,

“I am pleased to support the MDA Cross Border Recovery Deal. As well as safeguarding jobs and enabling sustainable growth in the future, it will strengthen the Union and is a crucial opportunity to ‘Level Up’ the UK.

The MDA has commenced negotiations with the UK and Welsh Governments on how to fund and deliver the Deal. I will be working with colleagues in the Mersey Dee North Wales APPG to help with negotiations and ensure that a deal is concluded between the MDA and governments.”

Justin Madders MP (Ellesmere Port), Vice Chair of the Mersey Dee and North Wales All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) said,

I welcome the development of the Cross Border Recovery Deal by the Mersey Dee Alliance. It offers Governments a great opportunity to step up and recognise the distinct needs of the unique, cross-border nature of the MDA economy. The local economy and the UK will benefit from supporting the MDA as a local growth partnership.

The cross-party Mersey Dee and North Wales APPG will continue to work together to help the MDA through its negotiations with the UK and Welsh Governments.”

Ends

Notes for Editors

DOWNLOAD: (Ctrl Click) [Mersey Dee Alliance – Connecting people](#)

Introducing the Mersey Dee Alliance

The Mersey Dee Alliance is partnership of local authorities in Northeast Wales and the Northwest of England supported by Universities, FE Colleges and Transport Bodies: -

England	Wales
Cheshire West and Chester Council Wirral Council	Flintshire County Council Wrexham County Borough Council
University of Chester	Wrexham Glyndwr University Coleg Cambria
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	Transport for Wales Welsh Government

The MDA has a close working relationship with the Cheshire and Warrington LEP and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. We enjoy cross-party support from the Mersey Dee and North Wales APPG chaired by Dr. James Davies MP. Other Officers include: - David Jones MP, Justin Madders MP and Lord Barry Jones. Lord Barry Jones is the Honorary President of the MDA

The Purpose of the MDA

The purpose of the MDA is to represent the interests of the cross border, integrated functional economy which operates on both sides of the border in the MDA area. The workforce and supply chains of major employers in the area are taken from both sides of the border. Therefore, there are unintended consequences from the administrative boundary splitting the economic area: -

- Disjointed economic and transport planning
- Different policy frameworks for supporting business and enterprise, innovation, education and training

The MDA Matters

The MDA area overlaps with three local growth/city region areas (Liverpool City Region, Cheshire and Warrington LEP and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board). However, these bodies welcome the work of the MDA which adds value to their work by representing the interests of an integrated cross border economy with real economic clout of UK wide significance with: -

- 1m population, £22bn GVA, substantial cross border commuting and a high proportion of people living and working in the cross-border area
- A Manufacturing Powerhouse with GVA and employment from manufacturing far higher than the national average (Around 16% of the workforce (65,100 people) are employed in manufacturing / engineering, compared to the UK average of 9%.)
- A Strong and diverse economy contributing to Wales and England's GVA

Currently none of the economic partnerships with which we overlap can spend money outside of their administrative boundaries. The MDA seeks the status of a Local Growth Partnership able to make investments as a delivery body on a cross border basis and thereby better able to meet the needs of the cross border functional economy. The MDA believes that this innovation will strengthen the union and aligns with the Levelling Up agenda.

The integrated economy demands integrated transport and economic development planning and investment by national and local governments.

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