

CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cross-Border Strategy brings together the Welsh Government, Midlands Connect, Shropshire Council and partners to investigate the potential to improve connections between Wales and Shropshire.

Following previous work investigating the potential for improvements to the A5, this study builds on the need for better connectivity between the two nations via Shropshire and Mid Wales.

Transport barriers limit connectivity and growth in the area, contributing to lengthy journey times, significant safety concerns for network users and a negative impact on the wellbeing of both urban and rural Cross-Border communities. Reducing congestion, journey times and time spent in slow or stop-start traffic will also reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. This supports the Welsh Government's Future Generations Act as well as the rising climate and decarbonisation agenda.

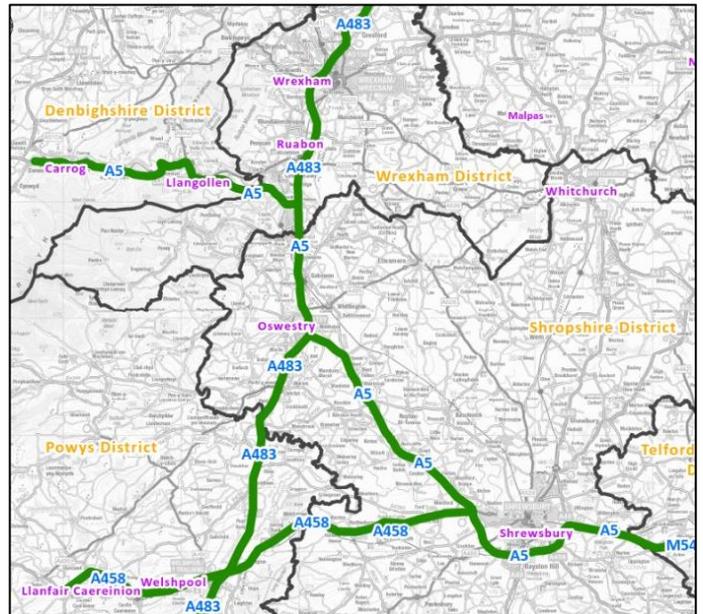
This Strategy concludes that there is significant opportunity to support inclusive, rebalanced economic growth in Mid Wales and Shropshire. 13 interventions across a range of modes target the Cross-Border area's transport challenges and opportunities. They consider a range of modes, support community safety and well-being as well as inclusive and rebalanced economic growth.

There are several strategic themes that highlight the need for investment in Mid Wales and Shropshire:

- **Improving safety** – Safety is a key concern in the Cross-Border area with more than 20 fatalities on the A458, A483 and A5 since 2014. Collisions also cause road closures and lengthy diversion routes, leading to journey time reliability issues as a result of poor network resilience.
- **Challenging the area's bespoke transport barriers** – Journey time and reliability on the highway network is exacerbated by long sections of hilly and winding single carriageway as a result of the steep topography of the area, and flooding events whereby roads and railway lines become inaccessible often resulting in extended journeys via diversion routes. High proportions of slow-moving heavy goods and agricultural vehicles, with limited overtaking opportunities, further contribute to these issues.
- **Supporting the Cross-Border economy** – The Strategy provides opportunity to help balance the economy and promote inclusive growth. In 2016 Shropshire, Wrexham and Powys contributed over £10 billion Gross Value Added (GVA), with the potential for the Cross-Border area to prosper and better connect economic areas going forward.
- **Supporting future growth** – Regeneration and growth areas in the Mid Wales, Shropshire and the wider Marches area need to be supported by a sustainable, efficient transport network to unlock their full potential and support cohesive communities. Integral to this is air quality management, future technology including digital connectivity and consideration of behaviour changes in society.
- **Improving transport and connectivity** – A sustainable, informed transport network in the Cross-Border study area is critical to providing strategic connections between England and Wales. Supporting improvements in both journey time and journey time reliability for all modes, including freight and public transport, is important to promote the area's different economies and the wellbeing of communities.

Cross-Border Interventions

An evidence based objective approach was undertaken to define the 13 interventions. Stakeholder engagement and quantitative data informed the sequencing methodology and confirmation of results. The study brings forward a number of existing schemes and interventions as well as generating new options for the strategic need





of the area. Whilst all 13 interventions are a priority and required to fulfil the overall objectives of the strategy, sequencing highlights 'quick wins' and interventions already at a more progressed stage of development.

Interventions Description

Mile End Roundabout Improvements (A5 / A483)

Options to upgrade existing roundabout have been considered and a dumbbell arrangement with a new, offline roundabout, realignment of existing A5 and link road to existing roundabout is the preferred option. A planning application is submitted. The project is currently at detailed design stage and Highways England are engaged.

A458 Buttington Cross to Wollaston Cross Corridor Improvements

To improve about 9km of road which is not up to standard.

A483 Junction 3 to Junction 6 (Wrexham)

The Welsh Government are working with the North and Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agent (NMWTRA) and Wrexham County Borough Council on a short-list of options to improve the A483 corridor between junctions 3 to 6.

Implement Highway Safety Schemes

*A review of detailed accident reports will be used to identify the causes behind the high number of incidents and specific solutions. Potential locations identified using the latest available accident data (2014-2018) such as **on the A483, including within Welshpool, the junction with the B4393 and B4396, the section of the A5 around the Queen's Head and to the north of the study area around the Five Crosses Roundabout, junctions of the A5/B5009, A5/B5605 and A5/B5070 and the section of the A5 between Llangollen and Berwyn.** These should be reviewed and include incidents such as on the A5 near West Felton in 2019.*

Sections of 2 on 1 roads

*Short sections of carriageway of at least 13.5 metres wide which allow overtaking in one direction for a stretch of at least 600 metres and up to 2,000 metres. To include locations on the A5 north of the **Wolfshead Roundabout (B4396)** such as around **West Felton** and the **Oswestry Bypass** and the **section of the A483 south of Mile End.***

A483 Pant to Llanymynech Bypass

Bypass of two villages on the A483 between Welshpool and Oswestry.

Increased bus routes / frequencies

Opportunity for specific sustainable transport links at targeted growth areas and strategic employment sites e.g. Welshpool to Newtown (improved bus 'shuttle' service), Current T12 service between Welshpool and Oswestry runs approximately twice a day, and X75 service between Welshpool and Shrewsbury runs approximately every two hours.

New rail stations

Located on existing lines: Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury (park and rail to the east of Shrewsbury). Shrewsbury to Chester (park and rail to the north of Shrewsbury). Whittington, Cefn Mawr, Rhosllannerchrugog, park and rail to Wrexham (J3). Cambrian Line / Welsh Marches Line (park and rail to the south of Shrewsbury).

Halton Roundabout (Junction of A5 and A483)

The North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent (NMWTRA) is progressing Stage 2 work. The location was identified in the Welsh Government's Congestion Pinch-Points Programme and options to upgrade existing roundabout are being considered, with preferred option still to be decided.

A5 / A483 Corridor Improvements

Dualling or partial dualling of the A5 / A483 between Shrewsbury and Ruabon; and improved junction capacity on the A5 Shrewsbury and Oswestry bypasses.

Advance electronic messaging signing

Using Trafficmaster data to identify unreliable sections such as the M54/ A5 Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury, key driver decision points on approaches to the Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Wrexham Ring Roads, around the A483 to approach to the junction with A539 and A5 section around Chirk, south of Llanymynech and the A539 at Ruabon and Llangollen.

Additional Passenger Rail Service per hour between Wrexham and Chester

Redoubling of the remaining single line section between Rossett and Wrexham, as well as general and layout changes at Wrexham General Railway Station.

On line enhancements to the trunk road network

Such as straightening, removing bends and widening of narrow sections at selected locations. Locations within the study area identified using Trafficmaster speed outputs include the section of the A5 between Llangollen and Glyndyfrdwy, narrow sections of the A458 between Welshpool / Buttington and Wollaston and the A5 between the Halton roundabout and Llangollen

Next Steps

To drive forward the Cross-Border Strategy, a set of study level and intervention level actions are provided. Some schemes already have support from partners and are looking to be progressed. As part of this action plan it is imperative that all stakeholders, including Highways England, Welsh Government, Growing Mid Wales Partnership and the DfT are engaged in this strategy, and that the necessary studies are undertaken to drive interventions forward. These actions will maintain momentum on the delivery of the Strategy and provide the next steps required.

Actions – Study Level

- Hold a Stakeholder workshop for a peer review to further validate and moderate the Strategy.
- Establish a Cross-Border Working Group who meet regularly and push forward the Strategy.
- Engage at a senior political level for progression of individual interventions.
- Undertake a full review potential funding sources to further inform the sequencing of interventions.
- Consideration of how the interventions will be ‘future ready’ and integral to supporting the UK requirement for net zero carbon emissions by 2050, including the role of future technologies in achieving this.
- Consideration of whether ‘future mobility’ could be applied to the study area to enhance and supplement the existing recommendations. Such an approach would focus in more detail on the people, places and activities in the area and focus on interventions that consider new modes, cleaner transport, automation, new business models and sharing, data and connectivity, and changing user attitudes and behaviours.

Actions – Intervention Level

- Progress the **Halton Roundabout** (Junction of A5 and A483) study through WelTAG stage 3
- Continue development of **Mile End Roundabout** improvements (A5 / A483) through detailed design
- Undertake safety audit(s) of identified locations for **highway safety schemes** to determine type of intervention required and associated costs
- Review suitable specific locations for **advance electronic messaging** signing and determine costs
- Engage with public transport providers to identify scope and opportunity for improved bus frequencies and services
- Progress the **A483 Pant to Llanymynech Bypass** through WelTAG staged development
- Take forward the **A483 Junction 3 to Junction 6** (Wrexham) to WebTAG business case development
- Take forward the **A5 / A483 Corridor Improvements** to WebTAG scheme development
- Engage with public transport providers to identify scope and opportunity for **additional passenger rail services between Wrexham and Chester**
- Undertake study to confirm optimum locations for **sections of 2 on 1 roads**
- Undertake study to confirm optimum locations of **on-line enhancements to the trunk road network**
- Develop the **A458 Buttington Cross to Wollaston Cross corridor improvements** forward through WelTAG process
- Undertake study to confirm optimum locations of **new rail stations** in the study area