Archwilio Cymru
Audit Wales

Regional Transport Planning

North Wales Corporate Joint Committee

November 2026

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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

1 We reviewed whether the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) has arrangements in place to support its regional transport planning responsibilities. This included how it makes decisions, oversees the use of resources, prioritises spending to achieve value for money, and monitors performance.

Why this is important

2 Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) have a responsibility under the Corporate Joint Committees (Transport Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2021 to prepare a regional transport plan to encourage “safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within its area”.

3 Regional transport planning is key to delivering the following benefits:

- **Economic**: improves connectivity between key centres, ports, towns, and cities boosting mobility, productivity, and regional growth.
- **Social**: enhances access to jobs, education, healthcare, and services, particularly for rural or disadvantaged communities helping to reduce inequalities.
- **Environmental**: promotes sustainable travel (public transport, walking, and cycling), to reduce congestion, emissions, and pollution.

What we have found

4 The CJC is continuing to develop its transport planning arrangements, taking a pragmatic approach to managing funding and resource constraints. While progress is being made, current projects focus on individual local authority priorities and performance reporting focuses on activities. Focusing on regional outcomes when making decisions helps achieve long term value for money.

What we recommend

5 We have made two recommendations to the Corporate Joint Committee. The recommendations are about:

- Making performance management stronger to support oversight, decision making and value for money assessments; and
- Improving risk management by identifying risks, effective controls and clear escalation procedures.

Our findings

6 Our review has identified consistent themes of early-stage development and evolving arrangements as the CJC transitions from planning to implementation.

Strategic Objectives

The CJC's Regional Transport Plan (RTP) provides clear strategic objectives and a governance framework, but these are not yet operating as intended.

7 The RTP provides a clear strategic framework aligned with Llwybr Newydd[1], supported by defined governance structures and strong partnership working. Current arrangements are pragmatic and relationship-led, with governance processes being adapted to support delivery.

8 These arrangements whilst functioning, are influenced by two transitional factors which impact clarity and accountability. These include:

- year one funding which is allocated by local authorities;
- the prioritisation of locally driven schemes rather than regional programmes.

1 The Welsh National Transport Strategy 2021

9 Strong collaborative working has enabled the CJC to sustain delivery and momentum in year one. Although some key regional interventions such as rail and trunk road programmes sit outside the CJC's direct control, delivery across the wider programme is largely dependent on informal coordination. Without a fully developed regional prioritisation framework, there is a risk that local priorities and external delivery decisions may dilute the Plan's strategic regional focus.

10 As funding moves beyond year one and larger, more complex schemes come forward, current arrangements create a future risk that competing local and regional priorities may become more difficult to balance. Without a more robust and consistently applied prioritisation framework, the CJC may:

- reduce transparency in decision-making;
- struggle to demonstrate regional value and strategic alignment;
- delay or deliver higher impact regional schemes inefficiently.

Skills and Capacity

11 The CJC demonstrates a clear and evolving understanding of the skills, capacity and resources required to deliver its regional transport planning functions.

12 It identified gaps in programme management, technical expertise and delivery capability during the early development of the Plan and responded pragmatically by:

- securing specialist external support;
- strengthening internal leadership through secondments;
- leveraging capacity from local authority partners.

13 Members have increased their understanding of regional transport responsibilities with further guidance provided at local authority Governance and Audit Committee meetings.

14 These actions have supported initial progress and improved coordination. However, the CJC is still developing a sustainable long-term resourcing model. Funding uncertainty and recruitment challenges continue to limit the pace at which it can fully build capability.

Governance and Oversight

15 The CJC is in the process of developing more effective and mature oversight and governance arrangements. Key Sub-Committees such as the Governance and Audit and Strategic Transport are recently established and do not hold frequent meetings.

16 Roles and responsibilities for the CJC, sub-committees, local authorities and partners are clearly set out across the Constitution, terms of reference and committee papers.

17 The CJC continues to refine its governance arrangements by updating terms of reference and quorum requirements to improve effectiveness and enable decision making. The Governance and Audit Committee Subcommittee revised its terms of reference to remove the need for elected member representation from each constituent council to achieve quorum. While this change ensures decision-making can happen, it risks lowering the level of oversight if meetings are not well attended.

18 The Constitution and terms of reference assign the CJC Board and its subcommittees clear responsibilities for decision making and RTP performance oversight. The CJC Board sets strategic direction and makes decisions, while the Subcommittee coordinates delivery, scrutinises performance, and reports on progress. This provides a clear separation of decision-making and oversight.

19 The CJC Board receives twice yearly progress updates from the Strategic Transport Sub-Committee. However, there are gaps in downward feedback from the CJC Board and limited insight sharing between sub-committees which limits:

- alignment and clarity on priorities;

- agile decision making;
- oversight and accountability;
- collaboration and knowledge-sharing

Decision Making

20 The CJC faces challenges in achieving an effective balance between agility and transparency in its decision-making process. The CJC relies on informal discussions to accelerate decision making, but this reduces transparency. At the same time, the absence of delegated authority improves transparency but slows decision-making. As programmes grow, implementing a clear decision-making framework will help the CJC balance these competing priorities more effectively.

Funding and Resources

Short term resources enable delivery now, but this is not sustainable and weakens long term planning and value for money

21 Financial resources are being deployed pragmatically and efficiently in the short term. However, the longer-term funding model, strategic prioritisation, and assurance arrangements for regional transport planning remain underdeveloped.

22 There is a clear move toward more regional control and strategic allocation, but in practice:

- Local authorities retain responsibility for funding allocation in year one and scheme delivery;
- the CJC's internal capability is still being built;
- the funding model is not yet fully stable;
- the evidence base for value for money, outcomes, and benefits realisation is limited.

23 As a result, regional transport planning faces capacity, affordability, and resilience challenges, that may limit effective and sustainable delivery.

24 Opportunities exist to strengthen value-for-money (VfM) assessments within decision making, while recognising wider social value objectives. The Monitoring and Evaluation Report refers to the VfM Framework; however, assessments are largely retrospective and driven by Welsh Government funding requirements. This approach:

- limits the ability to assess and compare schemes before approval;
- reduces assurance that funding allocation decisions improve value;
- weakens consistent, programme-wide performance management.

Performance Management

Monitoring and evaluation procedures require strengthening to demonstrate outcomes.

25 The CJC has established a delivery plan that meets statutory guidance but remains at an early stage of maturity. The delivery plan is not yet fully embedded as a regionally led framework. Early priorities largely reflect existing local schemes rather than a fully developed regional approach.

26 The plan is being implemented through a transitional funding model where local authorities retain responsibility for delivery and allocation of funding. This limits the CJC's ability to exercise full control and oversight and to demonstrate that individual projects are working together effectively to deliver regional benefits.

27 Performance reporting remains underdeveloped and does not yet provide a strong basis for performance management or decision making. Reporting is largely descriptive and process-driven, with limited use of KPIs or outcome measures to show the plan is delivering benefits.

28 Progress reports from the Strategic Transport Sub-Committee include:

- consultant activity;
- scheme numbers,
- financial data;
- funding allocations, and milestones.

29 The CJC largely uses monitoring information to meet Welsh Government reporting requirements rather than to challenge performance. It applies inconsistent approaches to collecting and reviewing data and does not yet use performance information to inform decisions or drive improvement.

30 The CJC is developing a monitoring and evaluation framework, but it is not using it. The CJC's Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, does not consistently state the starting values against which it measures progress. This makes it harder to show impact and leads to more descriptive than analytical evaluations. Although it has received tools and guidance to track benefits, it has not used them during initial delivery. As a result, it risks being unable to clearly demonstrate progress or value for money or use this information to support improvement.

Risk Management

31 Risk management arrangements remain informal and evolving. There is no formal transport risk register which places a reliance on officer discussion and judgement. While funding, delivery, and capacity risks have been identified they are not yet supported by controls, mitigations or clear escalation procedures. These weaknesses in oversight and consistency, reduce confidence in both performance monitoring and informed decision-making.

Performance Oversight & Scrutiny

32 The CJC has established formal governance arrangements, including the CJC Board and sub-committees to provide oversight and scrutiny of performance.

33 Given the programme's early stage of development, the Strategic Transport Subcommittee has used its three progress reports to the CJC to report mainly on activities and compliance updates rather than outcomes. Reporting has focused on what has been done, what has been spent and scheme selection. As the RTP advances in delivery, reporting should place greater emphasis on outcomes and impact so the CJC can understand whether it is achieving its objectives and demonstrate the benefits it is delivering.

34 Reduced reporting provides limited visibility of performance against regional strategic aims. The Strategic Transport Subcommittee has reduced progress reporting to the CJC Board from quarterly (as set out in the RTP and supporting documents) to half-yearly to ease reporting capacity pressures. This decision limits the CJC's ability to manage risks and scrutinise performance in a timely manner. This risk was not considered in the decision to amend the sub committee's terms of reference to enable reduced reporting.

Recommendations

35 The CJC is in a transitional phase from planning to implementation. Our review has identified a number of areas for improvement. The recommendations aim to help the CJC strengthen its arrangements to support delivery of its regional transport plan.

R1 In order to ensure effective oversight of delivery and performance the CJC should:

1.1 Introduce a clear set of key performance indicators, outcome measures and benefits realisation metrics aligned to strategic objectives **(paragraph 27).**

1.2 Fully implement the monitoring and evaluation framework, including use of existing tools to track benefits and demonstrate value for money **(paragraphs 24 & 30).**

1.3 Use performance data proactively and consistently to challenge delivery, drive improvement, and inform strategic decisions. **(paragraph 29).**

1.4 Embed regular performance review procedures with clear escalation routes for underperformance. **(paragraphs 33 & 34).**

R2 In order to strengthen risk management and oversight the CJC should:

2.1 Develop and maintain a formal transport risk register that captures all key risks and assigns ownership and accountability for managing and monitoring **(paragraph 31).**

2.2 Identify appropriate controls and mitigating actions **(paragraph 31).**

2.3 Establish defined risk escalation procedures, including thresholds and reporting routes **(paragraph 31).**

2.4 Ensure risk information is used to support consistent performance monitoring and inform decision-making **(paragraph 34)**

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

We looked at whether the Corporate Joint Committee has arrangements in place to support its regional transport planning duties and deliver value for money.

We did not assess individual transport projects or operational service delivery. We did not carry out detailed financial audit work during the review. We did our fieldwork during June 2026.

Audit questions and criteria

Questions

Our audit explored the following questions:

- Has the CJC clearly explained its legal duties, goals, and main priorities for regional transport planning?
- Has the CJC put in place adequate resources to support regional transport activity?
- Has the CJC developed appropriate processes to manage delivery, track progress, and evaluate whether its objectives are being met?

Criteria

We used the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Government, and the Corporate Joint Committees (Transport Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2021 to inform our audit criteria.

Methods

We reviewed documents, interviewed officers and members, and analysed data.

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