

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 24th September 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Environment

SUBJECT: Implications of the Atlantic Gateway in Halton

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report aims to summarise the “Atlantic Gateway Spatio Economic Framework Options Paper”, published by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) in terms of its implications for Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) The implications of the implementation of the “Atlantic Gateway” Options in Halton are noted and its potential impacts on policy development are discussed; and**
- (2) The Council respond to the Options proposed within the “Atlantic Gateway Spatio Economic Framework Options Paper” in the manner outlined within this paper.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The “Atlantic Gateway Spatio Economic Framework Options Paper” (the Options Paper) was prepared by the consultants Ekosgen on behalf of the NWDA, and was published in August 2009 for a period of stakeholder consultation. The Options Paper seeks the views of partners on the options for interventions associated with the implementation of “Atlantic Gateway”, across a series of themes. The Options Paper is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

What is “Atlantic Gateway”?

3.2 The Atlantic Gateway is the spatial area anchored by the cities of Liverpool and Manchester and the corridor between them, including Warrington, Halton and parts of Cheshire. The Atlantic Gateway concept seeks to join together the disparate elements of this large sub-region, linking initiatives and interventions, including physical sites and infrastructure, and also social, environmental and most significantly economic policy approaches.

- 3.3 The Options Paper is primarily based upon themes of intervention, creating a high level economic and spatial framework. This methodology looks to establish what the Atlantic Gateway should aim to become rather than assessing the potential contribution of individual development sites in the first instance. However, the Atlantic Gateway is influenced by Peel Holdings' "Ocean Gateway" investment strategy, which was based on the development of Peel's portfolio of sites in the North West, and shares some of the same themes, aims and goals.
- 3.4 In policy terms, the Atlantic Gateway seeks to build upon the government initiatives to focus economic development on strong regions and sub-regions, and seeks to overcome potential problems with city region insularity by ensuring that both Manchester and Liverpool look outwards as well as inwards. This means that there is an opportunity for Halton, over and above its role in the Liverpool City Region, to play an important part in this larger sub-regional area.

What is the Options Paper seeking to achieve?

- 3.5 The Options Paper builds upon a series of Foundation Reports assessing the Atlantic Gateway in a number of ways, including: economic assets, physical assets, sustainable resources, connectivity, housing, landscape, deprivation, and future trends and international experience.
- 3.6 The Options Paper sets out a number of areas in which it is anticipated that organising, planning, advocacy and prioritisation at the spatial level of the Atlantic Gateway has some merit. The paper also recognises that in some areas, a more localised, informal approach to capitalising on opportunities may be more appropriate. The key areas identified are:
- accelerating innovation;
 - key sector / cluster focus;
 - digital infrastructure;
 - external connections;
 - sustainable transport;
 - energy generation and a low carbon economy;
 - adapting the landscape;
 - Manchester / Liverpool marketing offer;
 - addressing deprivation; and
 - approaches to housing.
- 3.7 The Options Paper focuses on a number of underlying principles guiding the Atlantic Gateway. These include: sustainable development; existing city region plans and other proposals; limitations on the areas in which Atlantic Gateway will intervene; priority of ensuring that the Atlantic Gateway is the most important economic growth zone in the UK after Thames Gateway; a focus on adapting the landscape to focus

productivity; governance which is light of touch and fit for purpose; delivery and implementation arrangements that reflect available capacity.

- 3.8 The Options Paper states that it is not the intention for the Atlantic Gateway to subsume current arrangements or to take over the role of the city regions and sub-regional partnerships; rather, there will be a focus on key areas of added value.

What Options are presented in the Paper?

- 3.9 The Options Paper presents the key areas outlined above in terms of the pertinent issues, why the key area presents an opportunity for the Atlantic Gateway, and the potential options for dealing with the key area within the Atlantic Gateway remit. In most cases, there are around three options presented, based on varying levels of intervention, ranging from no or little intervention (i.e. leaving existing mechanisms to deal with issues), to a high level or radical invention (i.e. substantial change in approach implemented across Atlantic Gateway area).
- 3.10 A summary of the issues and options presented for each of the key areas, along with suggestions of potential implications for Halton, is attached to this report at Appendix 2.

Spatial Implications

- 3.11 As stated above, the Atlantic Gateway covers the cities of Manchester and Liverpool, and the belt in between these two cities. While Halton is part of the Liverpool City Region, its position towards the eastern periphery of the city region means that it is located in a fairly central position in the Atlantic Gateway area. Halton also has excellent links to the main west to east transport arteries in the Gateway area, including the M62 and M56, Liverpool to Manchester railway line and the Manchester Ship Canal.
- 3.12 The Options Paper does include a map of “candidate” development sites which could be included as part of the Atlantic Gateway in later stages of its development. These are the Peel Holdings “Ocean Gateway” sites, with the addition of further sites promoted by other private landowners and developers, alongside Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Strategic Sites, Economic Regional Development Fund (ERDF) strategic sites, Government Office for the North West (GONW) “Call for Sites”, nominations by individual Local Authorities and those identified in the “Adapting the Landscape” NWDA study. In Halton, sites identified include: Ditton (3MG); Daresbury; Ineos Chlor; Runcorn Waterfront; and Mersey Gateway Port. This map can be viewed on page 37 of the Options Paper, attached at Appendix 1.

How could Atlantic Gateway Impact on Halton?

- 3.13 Being in a central position within the Atlantic Gateway Area, the implementation of the options proposed within the Options Paper will have an impact upon Halton. Depending on the degree, type and level of intervention which form the preferred options, these impacts will range from relatively minor to potentially extremely large. Summaries of the potential impacts on Halton of the Options proposed are contained within the table attached at Appendix 2. The most significant of these impacts are summarised below, with consideration being given to the opportunities afforded by the Atlantic Gateway for Halton, as well as the areas of the Options Paper which could be altered or improved to better reflect Halton's needs and aspirations.

Opportunities for Halton

- 3.14 **An Integrated Approach:** In general terms, the proposals of the Options Paper with regard to linking together policy approaches, focussing on key sectors and bringing together the sub-regional approaches to infrastructure provision, would be positive for Halton. This would help to cement the Borough's role within the Atlantic Gateway area in terms of connectivity, economies of scale and joint working. In addition, there could be an important role for the Borough's major employment sites to play in a wider, integrated Atlantic Gateway area, including Daresbury, Runcorn Docklands, Mersey Gateway Port, 3MG and Ineos, alongside the Borough's important cross-Gateway physical infrastructure, including road, rail and waterway links, hence cementing physical as well as policy integration across the area. Overall, there is a significant opportunity for meaningful and effective agglomeration to be achieved across the Atlantic Gateway area.
- 3.15 **Innovation:** Focussing on innovation as a central tenet of Atlantic Gateway policy is positive for Halton. Linking with cutting-edge and innovative Atlantic Gateway initiatives, such as those associated with key sectors, has the potential to deliver benefits for those living and working in Halton, as well as businesses and agencies based in the Borough. A particular opportunity would be associated with the established Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus and its planned expansion.
- 3.16 **Digital Infrastructure:** The option which proposes to focus the provision of new next-generation digital infrastructure in the Atlantic Gateway area would deliver significant benefits for those living and working in Halton. There would be opportunities for Halton to be part of major sub-regional infrastructure delivery, increasing the competitiveness of the Borough for ICT and information-led business investment.
- 3.17 **Logistics and Connectivity:** Due to its position towards the Atlantic Gateway area, there will be opportunity to capitalise on Halton's locational advantages in terms of transportation infrastructure. This includes the motorway network (M62 and M56), rail network (West

Coast Main Line and other regional routes), waterway network (Manchester Ship Canal, its ports in Halton, and other waterways) and air transport links (via Liverpool John Lennon Airport). This also includes the important role that the Mersey Gateway Bridge will play in supporting sub-regional road accessibility. This physical connectivity will also be important for emphasising the important role of Halton's freight and logistics infrastructure within the wider Atlantic Gateway Area.

Areas for Increased Emphasis or Change

- 3.18 **City Centre Focus:** There is a possibility that Atlantic Gateway interventions could be overly focussed on city and major town centres, including Liverpool, Manchester and Warrington, leading to Halton potentially being on the periphery of the intervention areas.
- 3.19 **Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus:** Key sector focuses include “digital and creative”, “life sciences / health”, “advanced materials”, “new and renewable energy”, “transport and logistics”, but do not include a specific category which would cater for the expansion of the Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus. It would therefore be of greater benefit to include another key sector within the Atlantic Gateway intervention, based on “science and innovation”, which would account for this internationally significant asset.
- 3.20 **“Leveraging Legacy Investment”:** Suggestions that the “re-use of redundant big pharma or chemical industry labs to grow a biotech cluster” (Options Paper page 9), be pursued. Although investment in Halton would be welcome, the use of the Heath for these purposes would not necessarily be compatible with the site owners own intentions.
- 3.21 **Lack of Policy Focus:** Having many key areas within the scope of the Atlantic Gateway intervention could lead to there being a diluted policy focus on the key areas for improvement. It would be more beneficial for Halton if the key areas were narrowed down to those in which the Atlantic Gateway could have the most meaningful impact, for example on priorities such as economic development policy, shared infrastructure provision, and interventions centred on physical and digital connectivity.
- 3.22 **Deprivation and Housing Issues:** It could be interpreted that due to the great range of policy areas included within the Options Paper, important issues like deprivation and housing growth have not been given sufficient consideration, particularly considering their relative importance for Halton. In addition, proposals for accelerating housing growth on greenfield and even Green Belt sites, if employed, either in Halton or elsewhere, could detract from the Borough's focus on regeneration and brownfield development.

- 3.23 ***Lack of Clarity on Resource Issues:*** The Options Paper is not clear about what resources would be provided as part of the Atlantic Gateway initiative. For example, it is not clear whether the interventions would be coordinated at the city-region level, by the city region cabinet, or at the local authority level. In addition, it is not clear whether the NWDA, or another organisation, will be providing full time staff or consultants to oversee policy development. This matter will require clarification in subsequent Atlantic Gateway policy development.

Responding to the Options Paper

- 3.24 As the Options Paper is a stakeholder consultation document, there is scope for Halton's wishes and preferred options to be shared with the NWDA and taken into consideration in the drafting of further Atlantic Gateway policy. It is therefore recommended that a formal response be made to the Options Paper consultation on behalf of the Council. In submitting this response, it will be important to consider the response submitted by The Mersey Partnership (TMP), in order to ensure that a consistent approach is adopted across the Liverpool City Region. The TMP response is appended to this report at Appendix 3. There will be scope to add more Halton-specific comments in the Council's own response.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Depending on how the approaches presented in the Options Paper progress, Atlantic Gateway could be a significant policy influence for the Council in various areas. This includes how the Council interacts with regional and sub-regional policy, particularly that at the level of the Liverpool City Region. If some of the more radical options proposed in the Options Paper are adopted by a wide range of partners within the Atlantic Gateway, this could lead to pressure to adapt or change regional policy to better reflect Atlantic Gateway priorities. It should be borne in mind that the Atlantic Gateway initiative will need extensive political agreement to take forwards some of these radical interventions, and that some are so radical that they are unlikely to be popular with local and regional authorities.
- 4.2 Within the Council, a range of policy functions could be affected, to varying degrees, by the potential measures outlined in the Options Paper. For example, planning policy could be affected and there could be scope for the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) to consider implications of the Atlantic Gateway on forthcoming Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. Similarly, transport policy, at the Council and the Merseyside level, could be affected by proposals to link sustainable transport functions across the Atlantic Gateway area. In addition, there could be scope for the Council's economic development policies and regeneration initiatives to have regard to Atlantic Gateway objectives,

particularly where these are focussed on sites which have been identified as “key sites” or as potential parts of key sectors or clusters within Atlantic Gateway documentation.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

5.1 A Healthy Halton

The “Adapting the Landscape” key area proposes to support and expand the Green Infrastructure network across the Atlantic Gateway area. Depending on the option chosen and hence the degree of intervention proposed, and along with support at the local level, there are potential positive impacts on the quality and quantity of Green Infrastructure in Halton, which will impact on the provision of healthy environments and healthy lifestyle options. Similarly, a focus on sustainable transport across the Atlantic Gateway, including sub-regional connectivity, will support the use of healthy modes, including walking and cycling. Another Atlantic Gateway key area is “Addressing Deprivation”. Again, depending on the level of intervention chosen, opportunities to address the causes of deprivation, including poor health, could be capitalised upon in Halton as part of the wider Atlantic Gateway area.

5.2 Halton’s Urban Renewal

Urban regeneration and renewal is central in a number of the Atlantic Gateway key areas and hence, the proposals included in the initiative could impact upon renewal in Halton. This includes the proposed “economies of scale” resulting from the potential joining together of regeneration programmes, funding applications and delivery mechanisms across a wider sub-regional area. The Atlantic Gateway options also include plans to support housing-led regeneration across the area, although there are some options proposed to re-focus housing delivery on green field areas, which could undermine Halton’s focus on brownfield land development.

5.3 Children and Young People in Halton

The Atlantic Gateway proposals do not impact on children and young people in any direct way, although there will be implications for children and young people if some of the options are chosen, including through addressing deprivation and diversifying employment opportunities, which could impact upon the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in Halton.

5.4 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

This Council priority is central within the Atlantic Gateway proposals, mainly due to their general focus on economic growth and development across the Atlantic Gateway area. Key areas identified include key sector and cluster focus on particular industries and areas of research, external connections to national and global economic markets, internal connectivity for commuting, and marketing of the wider sub-regional

area for investment purposes. Again depending on the options chosen, the Atlantic Gateway initiative could offer support for major employers in Halton, such as 3MG, Ineos and Daresbury SIC, helping them to integrate with and draw benefits from the Atlantic Gateway. Creating a knowledge-based cluster in Halton, linked to a wider sub-regional collection of businesses, could support learning and skill-development in the Borough. It should be noted that proposals include support for existing economic development strategies.

5.5 A Safer Halton

Safety concerns do not feature centrally within the Atlantic Gateway options, although safety is mentioned in relation to sustainable transport.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 The Atlantic Gateway document is an Options paper, and so development of Atlantic Gateway policy is still at an early stage. It is difficult to determine, without Preferred Options having been published, the degree of intervention, which will be involved in the delivery of Atlantic Gateway proposals. Many of the options proposed, if implemented, will deliver significant benefits in Halton; however, some of the proposals outlined in the Options Paper, would, if adopted, across the Atlantic Gateway, cause problems for the effective implementation of existing policy. It is therefore of importance that the Council effectively engage with the Atlantic Gateway proposals, to ensure that their implementation in Halton reaps wholly positive results for the Borough.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The Options Paper does not directly address equality and diversity issues in Halton or across the wider Atlantic Gateway area; however, some of the proposals contained within the document could have secondary impacts for equality and quality of life for residents in Halton, including through increasing employment levels and addressing deprivation problems.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Atlantic Gateway Spatio Economic Framework Options Paper (NWDA, 2009)	Planning and Policy Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea	Tim Gibbs / Rachel Apter
Atlantic Gateway Spatio Economic Framework Foundation Reports (NWDA, 2009)	Planning and Policy Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea	Rachel Apter
Ocean Gateway Brochure (Peel Holdings, 2008)	Planning and Policy Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea	Rachel Apter

Name of Board: Executive Board

Date of Meeting: 25th September 2009

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