



Regional Committee – 8th Meeting

Minutes of Meeting

2pm, Thursday 25th September

Building 20, Global Centre of Rail Excellence Site

Attendees:

- **Kirsty Williams – Chair of GCRE Community Committee**
- **Simon Jones - Chief Executive, GCRE Ltd**
- **Craig Whitney – Business Development Officer, GCRE Ltd**
- **Andrew Johnson – Head of Strategic Communications, GCRE Ltd**
- **CLlr Steve Hunt – Leader, Neath Port Talbot Council**
- **CLlr David Thomas – Leader’s representative, Powys County Council**
- **Diane Reynolds - Director of Economy & Community Services, Powys County Council**

Item 1: Welcome and Minutes

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. This was the eighth GCRE Regional Committee meeting. Apologies had been received from Catrin Lloyd, Debra Williams, Jeremy Miles MS, James Evans MS, Carolyn Harris MP and David Chadwick MP.

- 1.2 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without amendment. The Chair indicated that the minutes of the committee would be published on the GCRE website as set out in the Terms of Reference.

Items 2 & 3 – the GCRE oral update and a paper on work to secure an energy partner were taken together

- 2.1 GCRE Chief Executive Simon Jones gave an oral update to members on work to secure private investment for the project. In particular, Simon discussed the work being undertaken alongside Welsh Government to address the feedback of investors interested in the project, but who have not yet committed. Those options included exploring ways to further de-risk the capital construction of the project and underpin the early years revenue risk of the facility.
- 2.2 In addition to this, one of the key elements of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence development, from the start, has been to consider how the renewable energy generation opportunities at the 700-hectare site can be harnessed to support the project's wider industrial, community and environmental ambitions. In particular, to see how the energy potential can be used to catalyse a more impactful economic cluster in the area, through construction of the railway.
- 2.3 Simon outlined the opportunity to develop renewable energy and data centre assets on the site. The size, scale and geography on the site made it a strong candidate for the development of such infrastructure. The plan was for GCRE to secure a development partner to take forward the opportunity on the site. The work would be taken forward in parallel with the rail project.
- 2.4 Simon said that the EDCP will help GCRE achieve a number of its policy ambitions, including securing a low-carbon energy solution that can power the GCRE site and harnessing the opportunity for market development of an AI/Cloud data centre and commercial on-site renewable energy assets.
- 2.5 Simon gave members an update on the planning approach for the new site. A new planning proposal would need to be submitted, with options explored of using the new Significant Infrastructure Project (SIP) consenting regime under the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024. Simon gave an overview of this option.
- 2.6 Cllrs Hunt and Thomas asked questions about the revised planning process and in particular the opportunities to positively lean into the new application to help update

local communities about the GCRE project. Simon outlined that the process would allow ways to show how the design of the loops had changed in response to feedback from the community roadshows held around the site. Andrew Johnson said that GCRE would work with locally elected representatives to ensure all questions about the process would be answered.

- 2.7 Cllr Hunt fed back on the latest developments with the Tata Transition and highlighted the importance of aligning the opportunities of developing the new electric arc furnace in Port Talbot with the GCRE rail project.
- 2.8 Cllrs Hunt and Thomas said that the community benefits of the wider GCRE project were important to communicate. The benefits needed to be tangible and clearly articulated. Simon said that social value would be a key criteria embedded into the new planning process.
- 2.9 Simon outlined how the project and its timeline was interacting with the end of the current Senedd term. He indicated that as much preparatory work was being done ahead of May 2026 to ensure the project was in the most attractive position possible for the next Welsh Government to consider supporting in the next Senedd term.
- 2.10 Members discussed the need to continue to build support for the GCRE project as a development that was in the strategic regional interest of the economy, communities and environment of South West Wales. Simon noted the upcoming visit in October of members of the Powys Cabinet to the GCRE site.
- 2.11 Members noted the oral update and the energy update paper.

Item 4: Any Other Business

- 3.1 Members did not raise any further items.
- 3.2 The Chair indicated that the next meeting of the group would be on 12th December 2025.
- 3.3 The Chair brought the meeting to a close.