

# The West of England Partnership

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## Board Meeting

16 April 2009  
Guildhall, Bath

### Present:

#### **Bath and North-East Somerset**

Cllr Adrian Inker  
Cllr Paul Crossley

#### **North Somerset Council**

Cllr Nigel Ashton  
Cllr Elfan Ap Rees

#### **Bristol City Council**

Cllr Barbara Janke  
Cllr Helen Holland

#### **South Gloucestershire Council**

Cllr John Calway  
Cllr Ruth Davis  
Cllr Roger Hutchinson

### **Social, Economic & Environmental Partners**

Steve Grainger, Avon Biodiversity Partnership  
John Savage, GWE Business West  
Sonia Mills, North Bristol NHS Trust

### **Observers**

Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West (GOSW)

### **In attendance**

John Everitt, Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Jan Ormondroyd, Bristol City Council  
Graham Turner, North Somerset Council  
David Turner, North Somerset Council  
Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council  
Peter Jackson, South Gloucestershire Council  
Chris Sane, South Gloucestershire Council  
Steve Harman, South Gloucestershire Council  
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership  
Sally Gregory, West of England Partnership

### **Other attendees**

Sarah Rhodes, Department of Energy and Climate Change  
Patrick Kearon, Bristol Port Company

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Nan Kirsan, North Somerset Council  
Cllr Francine Haerberling, Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Cllr Richard Eddy, Bristol City Council

Ian Ducat, SWTUC  
Rachel Robinson, ChangeUp Consortia  
David Clarke, Bristol University  
Georgina Clampitt-Dix, Wiltshire County Council  
Peter Brown/Stuart Todd, Regional Secretariat

## **2. PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

There were none.

## **3. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 12 MARCH**

**Resolved that:  
The minutes be noted.**

## **4. SEVERN TIDAL POWER PROJECT**

Sarah Rhodes gave a presentation (available at [www.westofengland.org/media/106890/severn%20tp%20160409.pdf](http://www.westofengland.org/media/106890/severn%20tp%20160409.pdf)) setting out the background to the Feasibility Study, the public consultation and stakeholder engagement and the programme of work over the next year.

Patrick Kearon told the meeting of the concerns of the Bristol Port Company in relation to any barrier downstream of the port and the effect it would have on jobs, which DTZ had estimated at a loss of 2,000 - 4,000, which the Port thought was an underestimate. At this stage they would need to do more work on the effects of an upstream barrage or any lagoons. The Port wanted to invest in new £600m facilities and add 1,500 jobs. He said that companies wanted to build power stations fuelled by renewables. There was concern about how long it might take to remove the uncertainty and Sarah Rhodes said that the government would try to narrow down the options the following year.

Sarah Rhodes confirmed that the dialogue would continue. Hilary Neal invited board members to join an advisory group for herself and Claire Gibson, who were members of a national board, and could take issues of concern there.

Cllr Barbara Janke asked for professional support in the form of written reports in order to help members assess, for example, the economic aspect of the options.

Cllr Paul Crossley thought a key determinate should be the strategic importance of the port and that the Cardiff to Weston barrage should be rejected now. He was concerned about environmental impacts and wanted to see an innovative solution.

Cllr Roger Hutchinson noted the announcement of the Oldbury Power Station as an option for the future and wondered if the sub-region's infrastructure could cope. Sarah Rhodes confirmed that there was a need to understand the impact and requirements on both infrastructure and services.

Sarah Rhodes confirmed that a combination of the proposals would be possible; although there could be only one barrage, a combination of lagoons and an upstream barrage would be possible. She said the money available to investigate the proposals was the amount needed to understand what would do the job. Some of the technologies were not considered because of the risks involved.

Cllr Elfan Ap Rees asked whether other options for energy generation, such as investment in solar energy and saving energy currently wasted, had been considered instead. Sarah Rhodes said that they had, and that both were needed because of a growing demand for energy.

Cllr Helen Holland noted that a road crossing from Cardiff to Weston would change the geography of the sub-region completely and asked if the impact of this had been considered. Sarah Rhodes said that they were not looking at a transport link at the moment, as the DfT didn't see a demand for it, although consideration was only being given to the period up to 2025. They were focusing on the benefits of the technology and trying to understand the energy market.

Considerable surprise was expressed that transport was only being considered up to 2025. The councils wanted to ensure that there was joined up thinking, so that account could be taken of any potential road in developments being planned.

**Resolved that:**

- **Terry Wagstaff to draft a response, which included the view that any final option should not damage the operation of the Port and expressed concern about the short timescales being considered in relation to transport**
- **Partners to feed in their detailed views on the papers circulated to Terry.**

**5. JOINT INVESTMENT PLANNING 'SINGLE CONVERSATION' WITH HCA, RDA AND OTHER REGIONAL AGENCIES**

Terry Wagstaff introduced the item saying that the process involved setting priorities for the sub-region, taking into account the Regional Spatial Strategy and the economy. It would need an interaction between officers and members and was a direct route for addressing infrastructure requirements.

Cllr Helen Holland drew attention to the role that the Joint Scrutiny Committee could play in the process. She thought it was important that there was cross-party as well as cross-boundary support for proposals. It was also noted that the SEEPs needed to be involved in the process.

Cllr Elfan Ap Rees was concerned that the single conversation would create extra work which would involve duplication; cross-boundary work already existed and he thought that things could be sorted at the local level. Terry Wagstaff emphasised that sub-regional work did not duplicate work done at

council level, but was there to support it. He said that the infrastructure study currently being carried out would not be ready until July, which prohibited the timetable being brought forward. The study would identify priorities across the sub-region, as required by the government, which had identified sub-regions as the best level to consider infrastructure investment. Hilary Neal supported this view and thought that there would be major gains for the sub-region if partners worked together, and a huge benefit missed if they did not.

John Everitt underlined the opportunity which the Single Conversation gave to progress delivery of the sub-regional vision. This did not preclude authorities from having direct conversations with the Homes and Communities Agency, but to go it alone would be hugely detrimental.

There needed to be clarity about what the Partnership wanted jointly and, having got sign up to the Regional Funding Advice priorities for the sub-region, the West of England should be in a strong position. It was very important that the Partnership stayed united so as to secure the necessary investment.

There was concern over the time that Joint Planning might take; however, the need for a proper process was recognised.

**Resolved that the Partnership:**

- i. **Welcomed the Homes and Communities Agency's role in helping to deliver the West of England vision;**
- ii. **Welcomed the process which would allow Partners to co-ordinate and align workstreams and resources of the Local Authorities, Regional Development Agency and Homes and Communities Agency to deliver the West of England vision;**
- iii. **Requested a further report at the next meeting of the Partnership Board outlining in more detail the role and purpose of the Partnership Board, the local authorities and the SEEPs in the process and the timetable for the single conversion.**

## **6. GREATER BRISTOL BUS NETWORK**

Chris Sane, Head of Transport at South Gloucestershire Council, introduced the report which was a review. He said it was a success story: they had done well to get the work going and had accelerated aspects where that had been possible. He also tabled an additional paper on the financial position (available at [www.westofengland.org/media/106947/gbbn%20finance.pdf](http://www.westofengland.org/media/106947/gbbn%20finance.pdf)). He said that the agreement with First Bus included guarantees and would come back with a response to the question of how much of the £20m First Bus had spent so far.

**Resolved that:  
The report be noted.**

## **7. MULTI-AREA AGREEMENT**

Terry Wagstaff reported that there would be a meeting with the government's Director Generals on 29 April. Key issues were:

1. **Employment and Skills:** The Department of Innovation, Skills and Universities was keen that West of England members and employers took responsibility for writing the sub-regional skills strategy which the Skills Agency would deliver.
2. **Worklessness:** This focused on the level of delegation and use of resources to tackle worklessness in a focused way in 11 specified wards in the sub-region (9 of which are in Bristol), which was likely to be more difficult to achieve. The Department of Work and Pensions was asking the sub-region to provide finance to support their work with families. There would be no resources for this until 2015.
3. **Higher level skills:** Due to the recession there was no money available for raising higher skills levels, eg through Train to Gain, so the targets in the MAA would need to be reduced.
4. **Major schemes:** The Department for Transport had been very positive and it seemed likely that the current ceiling for spend without a major schemes bid could be raised from £5m to £10m. However, this would require proper project management arrangements to be in place.

Cllr Barbara Janke asked about the potential for linking housing and employment targets by the inclusion of the next generation broadband in new developments to enable working from home. Terry Wagstaff thought that this could be possible through the Single Conversation, but he also thought that it was something the market might respond to.

Hilary Neal said that there was a stronger understanding in Whitehall about what the West of England wanted to achieve but the meeting on 29 April was critical. Despite strong confidence, the MAA was not yet agreed and there was a higher threshold than in the earlier rounds. The sub-region would have to work hard on its opportunities and challenges. Cllr John Calway asked her to take back the message of the sub-region's clear ambition.

### **Resolved:**

**That the verbal report be noted.**

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **a. Meeting with Ministers**

A meeting would take place with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, the Hon Paul Clark MP, on Friday 24 April. The Partnership was still in communication with Ben Bradshaw MP, Minister for the South West and had written to Lord Adonis, the Minister of State for Transport.

**b. City Region Pilot**

Cllr John Calway had written to all the MPs for sub-regional constituencies. Hilary Neal said that there had been a lot of good bids but only a small number would be successful.

**c. Dates for meetings**

Dates for all meetings during 2009/10 would be circulated with the Annual Business report to the next Board meeting.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

2pm on Thursday 25 June at BAWA, Filton

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