

Report of Chief Executive

Update on Partnership progress

1. The report provides an update on highlights of Partnership activity since the spring. An up-to-date diary of Partnership Joint Committee, Board and Group meetings and copies of papers for each meeting can be found on the Partnership website (www.westofengland.org).

Transport

2. This section includes progress and issues related to the development of the Joint Local Transport Plan 3 and the current programme of transport major schemes in development.

Major Schemes

3. Whilst the level of investment for new major transport infrastructure projects in the sub-region (at over £450m in the next 10 years equating to 31% of the Regional total) is to be welcomed, it is clear that to bring forward this programme to implementation will require very significant commitment and resources from the authorities.
4. In recent months progress has been made in working with the Department for Transport (DfT) to seek to find ways to enable schemes to be brought forward more quickly and at a lower cost. These include the investigation of means to accelerate scheme implementation, phasing of schemes where planned developer contributions have not been forthcoming (see Weston Package below), the use of the North Fringe to Hengrove Package as a pilot for a more collaborative approach to scheme development, and changes to the way in which major scheme costs are treated to lessen the burden and reduce risk for the authorities. These initiatives accord with and are supported by the sub-region's emerging asks of Government through the Multi-Area Agreement.

Joint Local Transport Plan 3

5. The replacement Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP3) will be in two parts with a Strategy taking the long term policy view to 2026, to coincide with the draft Regional Spatial Strategy, and a Delivery Plan setting out implementation proposals over the shorter term.
6. The JLTP3 will be based around the five key goals from the Department for Transport's "Delivering a Sustainable Transport Strategy" (DaSTS) of:
 - Reduce carbon emissions
 - Support economic growth
 - Promote equality of opportunity

- Contribute to better safety, security and health
- Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment.

7. Both the Strategy and Delivery Plan will be supported by supplementary documents covering walking, parking, public transport, road safety, cycling, traffic management and freight, smarter choices and rural transport.
8. Consultation will be a key part of the process. Innovative ways to broaden the consultation base are being drawn up as part of a draft engagement plan. In line with the DfT guidance the aim is to produce a clear, concise and accessible Strategy, Delivery Plan and Supplementary Documents.
9. A Project Board and Project Team have been set up to lead on producing the JLTP3. The Joint Transport Executive Committee (JTEC) will input into the JLTP3 at every stage providing direction, advice and decisions on the content and structure of the emerging Plan. Joint Scrutiny will provide the necessary scrutinizing role.
10. The JLTP3 must be produced no later than 31 March 2011. The Local Transport Act 2008 retains the statutory requirement to produce and review Local Transport Plans.

Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN)

11. Progress on delivering the £70m package of investment in improving bus services on 10 key corridors is progressing well (with delivery of bus priority measures, improved bus shelters, real time information). All the grant funded GBBN tasks are programmed to be completed by June 2011. An update report on progress will be taken to JTEC on 1 October 2009.

Bath Transportation Package

12. The four planning applications for the Bath Transportation Package (Lansdown Park & Ride expansion, Odd Down Park & Ride expansion, A4 Eastern Bath Park & Ride, Newbridge Park & Ride Expansion and Bus Rapid Transit) have been approved by the Council's Development Control Committee. However, the applications for Newbridge Park and Ride/BRT and the A4 Eastern Park and Ride are subject to further consideration by the Secretary of State.
13. In addition to the four planning applications, the Bath Transportation Package includes some important additional projects referred to as the non-planning elements. These include: city centre access changes; bus rapid transit bus stops; variable message signs; new bus lanes and public realm improvements. A public consultation on the non-planning elements of the scheme is being held until 14 September 2009. Work is progressing on the bid to DfT for Conditional Approval later this year.

Rapid Transit Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre

14. A Programme Entry bid for Rapid Transit Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre for £43m was submitted to the DfT on 30 March 2009. On 21 April 2009 acknowledgement was received that the bid was compliant with DfT requirements

and would be examined in detail. Regular meetings with DfT are being held and the review and appraisal of the submission by DfT officers is progressing well with a view to obtaining Programme Entry in early autumn 2009.

15. The next stage of the process, Conditional Approval, requires the Authorities to apply for the required powers and consents to build and operate the Rapid Transit Scheme. Legal advice to date suggests that the most appropriate route for this is through an application for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO). Submission of the TWAO to the Secretary of State for Transport is programmed for the end of 2009. Subject to DfT approval the scheme could be operational by late 2013.

Weston Package Phase 1

16. A Programme Entry bid for Weston Package (WP1) was submitted to the DfT on 20 April 2009. Subsequently on 8 May 2009 acknowledgement was received that the bid was compliant with DfT requirements. Questions have been received from DfT and are being answered. It is hoped that Programme Entry will be granted autumn 2009.
17. The submitted bid is seeking Programme Entry for the scheme components contained in the 'Low Cost Option', namely:
 - M5 Junction 21 Improvements
 - Gateway Area Improvements on the A370
 - Worle Station Improvements - Queen's Way Bus Link & Elmham Way Bus Priority.
18. This equates to some £12m of additional public sector capital investment to deliver a £14m package of improvements to transport infrastructure in the Weston area.
19. The remaining components in the 'Preferred Scheme', namely the Airfield Bridge Link (ABL) and the Cross Airfield Link (CAL) are reliant on developer contributions, which are delayed due to the impact of the recession. In terms of the preferred scheme and bringing forward the ABL and CAL, dialogue with the developers has resumed. When the necessary third party funding is identified/secured, a timescale will be set out to progress the ABL and the CAL through Conditional and Full Approval.

South Bristol Link Phases 1 and 2

20. The initial appraisal of project options has been completed, and the Option Appraisal Report was published on the web at the beginning of March 2009. This report includes analysis of the five road and rapid transit options that were short-listed from a previous long list of options.
21. Public and stakeholder consultation continued until the end of March 2009 and the Options Consultation report was published at the end of June. In total over 500 responses to the consultation questionnaire were received. 244 of these included unique answers; the remainder included standard answers to key questions. In addition 32 detailed written responses were submitted by businesses, parish councils, local interest groups, members of the public and others. 89% of responses support something being done to improve linkages in the southwest

Bristol area. Some 37% of respondents seem to support the idea of a combined rapid transit and road project. This appears to be more popular with respondents than road alone, rapid transit alone or doing nothing.

22. The current programme shows Major Scheme Bid submission in March 2010, some six months later than originally planned. The delay has arisen mainly because of the nature of time-consuming transport modelling that is needed to support the appraisal work. This updating of the transport model will provide the basis for detailed project appraisal, including assessment of economic and environmental aspects leading to the agreement of a form of a scheme to be taken forward for further assessment. At present it is unlikely that any project could be started before 2013 and this would be subject to planning consent. A report on the next stages will be taken to the JTEC on 1 October 2009.

North Fringe to Hengrove Package

23. The North Fringe to Hengrove Package is a scheme which encompasses a number of elements or projects which sit within the overall programme, namely:
 - Hengrove Rapid Transit and Bristol City Centre,
 - M32 Park & Ride, and
 - North & East Fringe Rapid Transit and Stoke Gifford Link.
24. Work has commenced on the Package with the aim of submitting a Programme Entry bid to DfT in April 2010 for £168m. Whilst this is a challenging timescale, in line with the emerging West of England Multi-Area Agreement, this scheme will act as a pilot for a more collaborative approach with DfT to schemes development. It is hoped this will involve a better and earlier understanding by DfT of the nature of the scheme and way in which the business case will be developed, particularly those elements relating to the value for money case and the schemes overall costs and benefits. It is hoped that this approach will significantly reduce scheme development timescales and cost.
25. To this end a meeting was held with DfT on 25 June 2009, which touched upon issues such as transport modelling and appraisal, bus policy, procurement, Programme and Project Management and evaluation. It is expected that this will be the first of a regular sequence of meetings with DfT which will take place throughout the development phase. In parallel meetings and workshops that cover Risk and Procurement Strategy have been arranged.
26. Information on scheme options is already available on the West of England Partnership web site (www.westofengland.org). The package will place a key emphasis on stakeholder engagement, with consultation scheduled for December 2009.

Portishead Rail Corridor

27. North Somerset Council commissioned Network Rail in February to undertake an engineering study on re-opening the line for passenger train services using the industry standard project management framework known as Guide to Railway Investment Projects (GRIP). The study has involved an iterative process of modelling train paths using Railsys software which provides a validated working

timetable and an output specification in terms of the infrastructure required to deliver the timetable within a punctuality and reliability envelope known as the public performance measure.

28. Network Rail will report their findings with outline costings for each level of service option through a GRIP 2 report. Following the completion of the GRIP 2 report in autumn 2009, the next major work stream is to update and validate the transport sub-model for the Portishead corridor and also apply a rail industry demand forecasting model. These models will quantify the levels of passenger demand for each of the options set out in the GRIP 2 report. This will then feed into economic efficiency calculations to produce a range of benefit to cost ratios (BCRs). The DfT normally require a BCR of 2 or over for a rail project.
29. Following this work a decision will be needed on the selection of single project option. This single option will then be taken forward in a GRIP 3 study which includes a greater level of assessment in terms of infrastructure and costs. The GRIP 3 study together with the passenger demand modelling will then form the basis on which to develop a major scheme business case. The project programme identifies that the earliest a major scheme business case could be submitted to the Department for Transport is early 2011.

Transport Innovation Fund

30. Technical work on the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) is progressing with DfT. Following the successful RFA2 award, the work is bringing forward schemes to replace those previously proposed but now funded through RFA2. There is the opportunity to broaden the focus of the complementary measures to better reflect the wider TIF objectives, national emerging DaSTS guidance, and to promote innovation. Alternative proposals will include proposals to support RFA2 schemes that would otherwise only be actioned towards the end of the RFA2 planning period.

Spatial Planning

31. ***Joint Waste Core Strategy:*** Work has been progressing towards the adoption of the Joint Waste Core Strategy, which will set out the sub-regional spatial planning policy for the provision of facilities to treat municipal, industrial and commercial waste. Consultation on a Preferred Options draft was undertaken earlier this year and a draft Submission Document has been prepared. A full report on the consultation and the draft Submission Document is elsewhere on the agenda.
32. ***Strategic Housing Market Assessment:*** A West of England Housing Market Assessment has been prepared by a consultant on behalf of the West of England Strategic Housing Market Partnership¹. The Assessment provides technical advice about the characteristics of the housing market, levels of housing need and housing affordability. It will inform Core Strategy preparation, unitary authority housing strategies and sub-regional strategy for investment in affordable and supported housing.

¹ The West of England Strategic Housing Market Partnership comprises Government Office for the South West, South West Regional Development Agency, the Housebuilders Federation, private landlords and housing and planning officers of the West of England local authorities, Mendip District Council and Wiltshire County Council.

33. **Sub-Regional Infrastructure requirements:** Consultants Roger Tym & Partners, were appointed to undertake an assessment of the infrastructure requirements of the key development locations identified across the sub-region. The assessment focuses on strategic infrastructure, delivery issues and the implications for meeting development targets. A draft report has been received; officers of the Partnership and the unitary authorities are reviewing the key assumptions. The outcomes of the assessment will be used to inform Core Strategy work and the preparation of the Joint Delivery and Investment Plan through the 'Single Conversation' with the Homes and Communities Agency. A further report on the Single Conversation is elsewhere on the agenda.
34. **Employment land requirements:** Work is continuing towards an assessment of sub-regional employment land requirements. The assessment will show how job growth and employment land targets for the West of England could be met. It will consider the role of the urban extensions in addressing any shortfalls in the supply of business sites. The outcomes will inform Core Strategy preparation, the Single Conversation and the resulting Joint Delivery and Investment Plan.

Inward Investment

35. The team is in the process of producing a mid-year report to update partners on current inward investment activities. The initial indication is that the number of new enquiries during the first half of 2009 is lower compared to the same period for 2008 but comparable to 2007 figures. On the up side, the decline in enquiries seen at the end of 2008 slowed down during the first months of 2009 and the number of new enquiries received has been steady during the year with a slight increase since July.
36. Informal conversations with local commercial property agents and other inward investment teams in the South West indicate that pattern seen by the Invest West team is consistent with general market trends. Data also show that the main source of new enquiries remain the Invest West website and online commercial property search. Previously registered clients are also continuing to use the service and going back to the website to source information on available commercial space.
37. We have been particularly busy updating the Invest West property database. The number of available properties listed on the database has increased massively during 2009. Although this is most likely an effect of the current economic crisis and companies moving out of expensive premises, local commercial agents have also started marketing their properties more actively and are now keener to use free marketing tools such as the Invest West website.
38. Available office, industrial and retail premises are updated on a quarterly basis. A listing of serviced premises and managed workspaces located in the West of England is also available; however, due to the flexible contracts available in these premises and the quick turnaround of companies, contact to check availability of these premises is less frequent. The last comprehensive update of the serviced office listing was done in 2006 and a full update of these properties was started recently.

39. Marketing activities for 2009 have focussed on key international inward investment publications, specific local events and publications. The team is also looking to develop a property-focussed newsletter to keep in touch with potential investors and to use as a quick follow up tool.

MAA

40. The MAA signing ceremony with Government Ministers takes place on 9 September. A report will be provided at the meeting.

West of England Conference

41. The Conference will take place at @t Bristol on Friday 27 November.

Website

42. Since its launch in August 2008, the new-look West of England website has attracted a total of 24,441 unique visitors; regularly attracting over 1,500 unique visitors a month. During the month of August 2009 the website attracted a total of 1,700 unique visitors, this compares to 1,056 in August 2008, an increase of 61%. The most frequently viewed content continues to be our transport pages.
43. We are building on the introduction of the Travel+ branding for all West of England partnership transport and establishing a Travel+ website portal. In time we hope this will become the first point of call for all transport related queries in the sub-region in order to emphasise the importance of partnership working on all travel and transport projects. To avoid duplication, most information will be provided through links off to other websites.
44. Through the 'Research & Statistics' sub-section, the Partnership website enables access to the West of England Local Intelligence Network which provides a full range of data and reports on:
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| - Census | - Housing |
| - Culture, Leisure & Tourism | - Population |
| - Economy | - Planning & Monitoring |
| - Education & Skills | - Society |
| - Environment | |
- In addition to this there is a data atlas which enables interactive mapping.

Partnership Office

45. The Board may be pleased to hear that we have now appointed a Partnership Secretary, who will be joining us at the end of September and will provide the secretariat for the Board and the Partnership's other Boards and Joint Committees.

Recommendation

That Board members give their views and note the report.

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