

West of England Partnership
14 January 2010

Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 03 December 2009

Page 3 – Transport Infrastructure: Weston Package

Response now received to letter to Secretary of State for Transport.
Original letter and reply now attached.

Page 4 – JLTP3

List of Transport Plan Commission members emailed to Board members, who will be advised of future meetings as they are planned.

Page 7 – 2009/10 Partnership Forward Plan

Statement on powers that could be exercised by Joint Transport Executive Committee.
In draft. Not yet confirmed with DfT. Yet to be discussed further with Joint Committee Members.



West of England Partnership

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
Somerset
COUNCIL

South Gloucestershire
Council

Paul Clark, MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Transport

Your Ref:
E mail: terry.wagstaff@westofengland.org
Date: 24 September 2009

Dear Minister,

Major Transport Schemes

I am writing to follow up a matter raised by Cllr Nigel Ashton, Leader of North Somerset Council when he met you with other South West Leaders.

You will recall Cllr Ashton asked if you were able to assist authorities by providing any flexibility and assistance with the requirements for local contributions to Major Transport Schemes. He asked because of the importance of the schemes to supporting the provision of essential infrastructure to accommodate high levels of growth.

It would be helpful to have your further advice.

Yours sincerely,

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16th December 2009

Major Transport Schemes

Thank you for your letter of 24th September addressed to Paul Clark. My apologies for the delay in response, this is the first time I have seen that piece of correspondence. As agreed, I will provide a response to the points raised and elaborate further on our discussion last week.

Over the past 12 months DfT has been examining a number of options to improve its internal and external processes to enhance major scheme delivery, reduce the administrative requirements of local authorities and create a stronger collaborative approach with scheme promoters. The culmination of that work was the conclusion that DfT needed to refresh its major scheme business case guidance and to concentrate on four immediate areas for improvement – the process by which preparatory costs are recovered, proportionate appraisal, the engagement process and option development.

I wrote to a number of scheme promoters in the autumn seeking views. Based on feedback it was evident that some of the issues being examined would not provide a straight forward solution. The biggest issue being that of the treatment of preparatory costs.

There are a number of options available and supporters of different solutions in the recovery of preparatory costs. Therefore the view was taken that costs in

their broadest sense i.e. preparatory, evaluation and scope of eligible costs need to be subject to a formal consultation and equality impact process. Depending on emerging priorities following the General Election, this consultation should take place next autumn. Please be assured this issue and how it plays back into the West of England MAA has not been lost.

The refreshed major scheme guidance when it is published in February/March next year will contain a number of modifications on the modelling front. Where schemes require less than £20m of DfT funds, a proportionate approach will be taken to modelling and appraisal. Also, there will be commitment to work earlier with the scheme promoter and provide better definition of the modelling requirements and the development of options. Combined, this change in approach should translate into shorter delivery timescales and associated costs.

A proportionate approach is also being adopted on procurement, project management and evaluation elements of the major scheme guidance using the same threshold.

In tandem with the above, a new engagement structure between DfT and the local authorities has been developed. This will reflect initiatives trialed with the West of England and the feedback from independent research. The model we propose using will 'front-end' the discussions with scheme promoters (at least 2 years in advance of the MSBC submission) and provide clear direction, a set of milestones and the development of a memorandum of understanding between DfT and the authority from the outset. Again, I am optimistic that this will translate into further time and cost savings. You have a copy of the proposed engagement model for comment.

The refresh of the major scheme guidance may not fully cover the range of flexibilities you are seeking. However two major areas – modelling and engagement – are due to be significantly modified. Further, there is a commitment to keep the guidance live with annual updates to reflect new ideas and research.

Of course I am more than happy to meet to discuss any of the above and hear further ideas to refine the major scheme process.

Julian Abel