

**West of England Partnership
Joint Scrutiny Committee
10 October 2008**

Regional Funding Advice – Regional Funding Allocation for Transport Major Schemes

Purpose of report

1. To outline Government guidance and programme for an extension to the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) for the South West, and to seek Scrutiny's views.

Background

2. In April 2008 a peer review was undertaken of the major schemes (those costing more than £5m) currently prioritised within the South West RFA for the period to 2015/16. Although the West of England authorities were able to evidence good progress in bringing forward the eight identified schemes (Greater Bristol Bus Network, Bath Package, Rapid Transit network, Weston Package, South Bristol Link and Callington Road Link) broadly in line with their identified development programme, a clear message from the review was that overall the RFA is oversubscribed particularly in the later years of the funding period.
3. In July 2008 Government issued Regional Funding Advice which provides indicative Regional Funding Allocations for transport, housing and regeneration, and economic development. This offers regions the opportunity to provide advice to Government on their investment priorities. In terms of transport, the Advice identifies an additional £327m for transport major schemes over the period 2016/17 to 2018/19.
4. The South West Region are taking the opportunity provided by the extension to RFA programme (termed RFA2) to review the existing prioritised schemes alongside any new schemes which have emerged since the original formulation of the RFA in 2006, such as those addressing the outcomes of the proposed changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy. Without this broader review and some reconsideration of priorities clearly there will be very limited, if any, headroom for new schemes.

Scope and Programme

5. The Government have asked regions to identify a programme of transport schemes which can include local authority, Highway Agency and rail schemes as part of their response to the Regional Funding Advice. Key criteria upon which the Regions have been asked to prioritise schemes include contribution to Government Public Service

Agreements, delivering the Regional Spatial and Regional Economic Strategy priorities, and supporting the growth agenda. Other considerations include stakeholder support, deliverability, value for money and contribution to combating climate change.

6. The deadline for the South West Region's response to Government is the end of February 2009. Given that track record on delivery is one of the criteria upon which the Region are being asked to assess the merits of schemes, it would clearly strengthen the sub-region's position in seeking retention of existing schemes and the inclusion of new ones if clear progress could be evidenced in the intervening period. The achievement in advance of this deadline of key milestones in the scheme development process such as submission of bids for Weston Package and Rapid Transit Ashton Vale to Temple Meads via Bristol city centre, would send a positive message regarding the area's commitment and ability to bringing forward these schemes as programmed.
7. Clearly the West of England will be making the strongest possible case to the Region for the need for significant transport infrastructure investment to meet the area's transport challenges. It is understood that this process will commence with first discussions on RFA2 at the Regional Transport Board meeting on 27 November 2008 in Taunton.

Recommendation

8. That the members note the report.