

**WEST OF ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP**  
**24 October 2008**

**UPDATE ON PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY**

**Transport**

Progress since the last Board meeting on 19 September 2008 include:

***Rapid Transit***

Studies have been progressing towards the submission of a Major Scheme Bid to the Department for Transport for the first part of the Rapid Transit network, a 7 kilometre route from Ashton Vale to Temple Meads via Bristol City Centre. It will provide a high profile public transport corridor largely segregated from traffic ensuring a fast and reliable service.

A recent technology review concluded rubber-tired rapid transit on the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads route would meet Department for Transport appraisal criteria and could be delivered within the current Regional Funding Allocation programme. The report does not discount tram train or Ultra Light Rail technology for possible future routes. The technology review is on the West of England website ([www.westofengland.org](http://www.westofengland.org)).

Public consultation for the scheme will commence in late October 2008. The final bid will be reported to the Joint Transport Committee and submitted to the Department for Transport in January 2009. If the Department for Transport accept the bid by autumn 2009, the scheme could be operational by 2013.

***Weston Package***

North Somerset Council is currently consulting on the Weston Package major scheme bid. The Package aims to promote sustainable living and working in Weston-super-Mare and provide transport links to encourage employment development. It includes capacity improvements at Junction 21 on the M5, Worle Station enhancements, 'Gateway' improvements, new bus services and park and ride. The final bid will be reported to the Joint Transport Committee and submitted to the Department for Transport in January 2009. If the Department for Transport accept the bid by autumn 2009 construction could start in 2011/12 with completion by 2015.

***Rail***

As reported to the Partnership Board meeting on 19 September 2008 First Great Western is putting forward a business case to the Department for Transport for re-equipping the Cardiff to Portsmouth (via Bristol and Bath) service with a new fleet of 11 four-carriage trains. It was agreed that Councillor Helen Holland as Chair would send a letter on behalf of the Partnership supporting First Great Western's bid for new trains. A copy of the draft letter is attached as Appendix 1.

## ***Joint Transport Forum***

Over 100 stakeholders attended this annual event on 26 September at the @t Bristol centre. Delegates were provided with updates on the Bath Package, Weston Package, South Bristol Link, Rapid Transit, Greater Bristol Bus Network major schemes plus reports on the Joint Local Transport Plan Progress Review 2008, rail, Cycling City and Bath and North East Somerset Council's EC supported RENAISSANCE project. Two lively question and answer sessions covering a wide range of topics and the 'Just a Transport Minute' slot gave delegates the opportunity to have their say.

## **Culture, Leisure and Tourism Group**

### ***People, Places and Spaces***

The Group has been identified as the body to progress the implementation of *People, Places and Spaces*, the regional infrastructure strategy. The strategy identified the West of England as one of its 'Planning Areas for Culture'. It also identified 13 regional priorities, some existing projects and some aspirational, and the Group welcomed the inclusion of Colston Hall as one of the former. Aspirational projects include an international convention centre and a major stadium. If these projects are to be progressed the West of England could be a natural location. However, the main opportunity for the Group will be to agree its own list of sub-regional priorities and progress these. This links clearly to the work of the Planning, Housing and Communities Board and the Group will want to ensure that the development of cultural infrastructure continues to be included as the West of England Delivery Plan is revised and is more specific as priorities are identified.

### ***Hodge Review***

The Group has also been keeping in touch with the Hodge Review and noting with concern its likely impact. The regional cultural consortia, including Culture South West, will be wound up in March and there will be a reduction in the regional presence of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council. The four agencies (the Arts Council, Museums Libraries and Archives Council, English Heritage and Sport England) will be required to work together in partnership and will be held to account for this by ministers. The agencies' priorities will be regional strategies, Local Area Agreements, local government commitment to culture and sport, Place Shaping, and 2012 and the Cultural Olympiad. The Group has expressed disappointment that Culture South West is disappearing and recognises that the government's Culture and Sports Strategy places an increased emphasis on local authorities. However, tight funding for councils in relation to culture and sport lessens the influence that they can have, reinforcing the need for the four councils to work together, particularly since the government was looking increasingly to planning at sub-regional level.

## Draft letter to the Department for Transport







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# The West of England Partnership

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Lord Adonis  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DR

*Our Ref:* fgw new trains bid  
*Your Ref:*  
*Date:* 17 October 2008

Dear Minister

## Support for First Great Western's Business Case for New Trains

I am writing to you as the Chair of the West of England Partnership in support of First Great Western's business case for a new fleet of 11 four carriage trains for the Cardiff to Portsmouth via Bristol and Bath service. I also write on behalf of the Vice Chair of the Partnership, the four Executive Members for Transport from Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils and the West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee.

These new trains will add significant capacity, improve the quality and performance of services and be a major step towards delivering a 'Bristol Metro' style network of half hourly cross Bristol train services. Furthermore the new trains will allow existing Class 158 units to cascade down for use on other local services.

We were disappointed when the Department for Transport's Rolling Stock Plan was published in January 2008 to see that under Appendix B only 52 of the 1,300 new carriages to be built were allocated to the Great Western Mainline. Even more disappointing is the indication they would be for London Thames Valley services only.

Yet the West of England area has witnessed substantial growth in rail travel, doubling over the last ten years.

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The Office of Rail Regulation's 2006/07 figures indicate continued growth in rail use in our area as the following examples for stations along the Cardiff to Portsmouth route show:

Bristol Parkway 9.59%  
Patchway +25.05%  
Filton Abbey Wood +2.32%  
Lawrence Hill +22.39%  
Stapleton Road +13.16%  
Bristol Temple Meads +7.96%  
Keynsham +11.67%  
Oldfield Park +13.09%  
Bath Spa +8.70%

Existing services have suffered from short formed trains leading to overcrowding and even passengers left behind on stations.

Looking ahead there is more growth to come. The Secretary of State's proposed modifications for the draft revised Regional Spatial Strategy (July, 2008) increases the West of England Housing Market Area allocation from 110,200 new households in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy to 137,950. Job numbers have increased to 137,200. Key towns on the rail network will see substantial growth with 3,000 at Keynsham, 3,300 around Bristol Parkway and 8,000 at Bath. Meanwhile the Ministry of Defence is set to expand its site at Filton Abbey Wood from 8,000 to 10,000 jobs by 2012 further increasing future demand for rail services.

The draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy also includes policy RTS1 Corridor Management with London to South Wales via Bristol as a corridor of national importance with the need to target new infrastructure to unlock pinch points, increase capacity and services. A new fleet of trains for the Cardiff to Portsmouth route will be a major step towards this.

Based on current and future growth we believe there is a strong case for more trains in the West of England area. We are deeply concerned that without this new fleet of trains First Great Western will be left with insufficient rolling stock to meet demand.

We give our full support to First Great Western in their business case for new trains and we urge the Minister to accept their proposals.

We would also welcome the opportunity to come and visit you and your officers to discuss the bid and other West of England rail issues in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Helen Holland  
Chair of the West of England Partnership