

Report of Chief Executive

Update on Partnership progress

1. This report provides an update on aspects of Partnership activity since the last Board meeting. 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. Progress since the last Board meeting on 24 October 2008 includes:

Rapid Transit

Public consultation on rapid transit proposals from Ashton Vale to Temple Meads via Bristol City Centre took place during October and November 2008. In addition to stakeholder and web based information, over 30,000 flyers were distributed to households along the route and exhibitions held at the Create Centre, Bristol Temple Meads and Long Ashton park and ride site and village hall, the Galleries and the Council House. Turnout and verbal responses from members of the public have generally been positive.

The final scheme will be reported to the Joint Transport Committee and a bid submitted to the Department for Transport in early 2009. Subject to Department for Transport approval the scheme could be operational by 2013.

Linking Hartcliffe with the Long Ashton Bypass

Consultation on different ways to link the Hartcliffe roundabout with the A370 Long Ashton bypass is taking place between October 2008 and January 2009. During November 2008 exhibitions were held at the Gatehouse Centre, Long Ashton park and ride, village hall and Community Centre, Ashton Vale community centre, Bishopsworth library, @Symes, the Create Centre and Sainsburys, Winterstoke Road.

The precise route of a link has yet to be decided. At present it is unlikely that any project could be started before 2013 and this would be subject to planning consent.

Progress Review 2008

The five year Joint Local Transport Plan was published in March 2006. How we have done over the first two years is reported in the Progress Review 2008. Of 21 targets in the Plan 18 are on track. The Review also looks ahead to opportunities and challenges that face us in the next three years. The draft Review was considered by Joint Scrutiny on 10 October 2008 and the Joint Transport Executive

Meeting on 20 October 2008. It will be submitted to the Department for Transport in December 2008.

Transport News

The latest issue of the West of England Partnership's Transport News was published in October 2008. It provides useful updates on all the major scheme bids and a special feature on the Joint Local Transport Plan Progress Review 2008.

Inward Investment

3. The team is in the process of producing an interim report covering the period January - October 2008. Indicative results are as follows:
 - 2008 started as a strong year for the service with 3 out of the first 4 months exceeding number of new queries received in 2007 and with many previous enquirers returning to the search the property database. However, due to recent economic uncertainties, numbers declined over the summer. Informal conversations with commercial property agents indicate that pattern seen by the Invest West team is consistent with general market trends.
 - The Invest West website has shown a steady increase in both hits and unique visitors. Unique visitors were up over 60% from 2007 figures. There was a particular spike in activity around the time of the opening of Cabot Circus. Excluding results relating to Cabot Circus, the most popular page after the home page was the commercial property register. A major overhaul of the Invest West website and client registration for the property database has improved operability and search engine optimisation.
 - Marketing activities for 2008 have focussed on key international inward investment publications, specific local events and publications and have also included a 2 page advertorial in a specific business relocation supplement of a major UK national newspaper.
 - Sector activities have included support for the Bristol Environmental Technologies and Services network and continuing to work with UKTI nationally and South West colleagues and SWRDA to promote the Financial Services sector in the West of England.
 - The team has led and been involved with a range of visits of international companies to the West of England. Sectors have varies and have included Financial Services, Manufacturing and Environmental Technologies. The team has worked closely with and built successful relationships with UA and regional partners, business networks, individual companies and commercial property agents to provide tailored and comprehensive support to potential investor companies.

Website

4. Between August and November the number of unique monthly visitors to the West of England website has increased from 1,056 to 2,683 (an increase of 99%) and

since last month (October), the number of unique monthly visitors to the site has increased by 65%. The most viewed content has been our transport home page.

5. Although the overall style of the website has not changed, there have been some developments. In September we amended the site to reflect the changes in meetings structure and since then all the Intelligence West information has been transferred to the main site (under 'Research & Statistics') and we no longer use the separate Intelligence West site. The Partnership website enables access to a full range of data and reports on:

- Census
- Culture, Leisure & Tourism
- Economy
- Education & Skills
- Environment
- Housing
- Population
- Planning & Monitoring
- Society

In addition to this there is a data atlas which will enable interactive maps.

Waste Planning

6. The Preferred Options Consultation on the Development Plan document will start on 15th January 2009 and run for 10 weeks until 12 March 2009. The public will be invited to give their views on the spatial strategy for where waste facilities could be located.
7. One of the key issues has been to try and show the difference between the Joint Waste Strategy (for Municipal Residual waste only) and the Development Plan document entitled the Joint Waste **Core** Strategy. The latter has within its sights ALL the waste produced within the West of England area – and this includes commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste.
8. Dates and venues for meetings are currently being researched and will be confirmed before the end of the year. The Partnership is being assisted by external consultants, Dialogue by Design, who will be arranging drop-in events in local venues, as well as implementing the consultation plan and analysis of response. The consultation documents consist of a full-length technical document and a short information leaflet. Both are in the final stages of preparation and will be printed before the end of the year, ready for distribution to start in the first weeks of January 2009. Draft documents have been available to view on the www.rubbishresource.co.uk website (with links from the main Partnership website).

Culture, Leisure & Tourism Group

9. At its November meeting, held in Colston Hall and followed by a tour of the new foyer, the Group heard about the Cultural Olympiad programme in the south west. The main opportunity for local input will be in the Quest Programme, which involves a number of 'journeys' through the landscape of the south west, one in each sub-region/county. This will focus particularly on young people and involve artists and local communities. There will be events over the next four years and the journeys will have several legs. It is still at the development stage and the authorities welcomed the opportunities this provided. WESPORT is co-ordinating 'Team West of England' activities.

10. In order to begin looking at how People, Places and Spaces – the south west cultural infrastructure strategy – can be implemented in the West of England, the Group considered other plans, in particular a critique which had been undertaken of the cultural aspects of the studies carried out by Roger Tym in 2006 and SQW in 2007. The Group is keen to ensure that culture is an integral part of the work planned to update these studies and that culture officers can feed into that work.

Recommendation

That Board members note the report.

Terry Wagstaff
Chief Executive
West of England Partnership

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