The vision for the West of England in 2026 and delivery priorities

The West of England Partnership comprises the four unitary councils – Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council – and a range of social, economic and environmental partners, working together for the future well-being of the area. For further information, please visit www.westofengland.org
Overall vision
Our vision for how the area will be seen in 2026

In 2026 the area will have:

One of Europe’s fastest growing and most prosperous sub regions which has closed the gap between disadvantaged and other communities – driven by major developments in employment and government backed infrastructure improvements in South Bristol and North Somerset.

A buoyant economy competing internationally, based on investment by innovative, knowledge-based businesses and a high level of graduate and vocational skills.

A rising quality of life for all, achieved by the promotion of healthy lifestyles, access to better quality healthcare, an upturn in the supply of affordable housing of all types and the development of sustainable communities.

Easier local, national and international travel, thanks to transport solutions that link communities to employment opportunities and local services, control and reduce congestion and improve strategic connections by road, rail and through Bristol International Airport and seaport.

Cultural attractions that are the envy of competitor city regions across Europe, making the West of England the place of choice for talented, creative workers and affluent visitors.

Success secured in ways that are energy efficient, protect air quality, minimise and manage waste and protect and enhance the natural and built environment.

Built upon the benefits of its distinctive mix of urban and rural areas.

Real influence with regional and national government, by demonstrating vision and leadership and delivering these achievements.

Strategic capacity and leadership of the West of England
Our vision for how the area will be seen in 2026

1 The West of England is recognised nationally and internationally for the growth of its diverse, high performing economy and for its capacity to manage significant and sustained growth in employment, population and housing, whilst maintaining quality of life and delivering economic and social inclusion.

2 Confidence in the sub region and a cluster of high performing, diverse higher education institutions attracts high levels of public and private investment in infrastructure. This provides a strong platform from which to develop knowledge driven businesses with international reputations and to meet the challenges in innovation and skills development.

3 The West of England is the hub of the South West. Bristol as the regional capital and a core city successfully represents the interests of the region, drives its economy and provides international access through Bristol International Airport and the Seaport. The quality of its natural and built environment and its cultural and leisure attractions are of international importance and attract many visitors to the region.

4 The West of England Partnership shares a clear long term vision for the sub region supported by a delivery plan, and through its partner organisations meets the priority needs and aspirations of its distinctive cities, market and coastal towns and its rural areas.

5 The sustained leadership and achievements of the West of England Partnership secure real influence with regional and national government to the benefit of the sub region.

Delivery priorities

1 Harness the vision as a framework for co-ordinating strategic decision making

2 Complement the vision with appropriate sub-regional development delivery plans

3 Support the vision with a marketing and investment strategy for the sub region which maximises government, other public and private investment.
Quality of Life

Our vision for how the area will be seen in 2026

1. The West of England is committed to a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. Decisions that have long term implications reflect a balance between social, economic and environmental considerations.

2. The gap between disadvantaged and other communities has closed to below the national average for city regions. Inclusive and cohesive communities are the norm; diversity is valued and celebrated.

3. All communities value education and lifelong learning. Educational attainment in schools, colleges and universities is consistently above the national average for city regions and the gap in attainment between disadvantaged and other communities has closed.

4. Following healthy lifestyles is the norm. The incidence of health inequality and avoidable deaths has substantially reduced and communities are well served by local health centres and hospitals.

5. Significant and sustained economic growth is matched by a wide range of places to live that are accessible and provide quality affordable housing including both intermediate markets and social housing.

6. Sustainable communities are being developed by linking existing and new, higher density residential areas to investment in transport, employment and economic growth. Safe higher density development with quality design and public space are the norm, with good access to public and other services producing local centres and neighbourhoods that work; some investment is in sustainable extensions to urban areas.

7. Cultural, sporting and leisure attractions are appropriate to an international destination. These and local community facilities add to the quality of life and health of local people.

8. The environmental awareness of its communities, investment and planning policy have preserved and enhanced the heritage of a diverse natural and built environment to the benefit of residents and visitors.

9. A carbon neutral sub regional economy has reduced household, transport and commercial energy consumption, increased renewable energy generation and adapted to climate change and rising sea levels. The sub region is resource efficient with waste production minimised and waste managed using sustainable approaches. The diversity of wildlife has been retained, enhanced and restored.

Delivery priorities

1. Ensure educational attainment is consistently above the average for city regions and gaps in attainment levels have closed by: increasing achievement levels and entry to higher education; bringing people back into education; and meeting the skills agenda of existing and emerging sectors.

2. Invest £500 million in new hospitals in South Bristol and North Bristol/South Gloucestershire and in substantial parts of the Bristol Royal Infirmary to transform the quality of health care. Couple this with action to reduce the incidence of health inequality and avoidable deaths through the promotion of healthy lifestyles and improved access to local health care.

3. Secure urgent support from government and the public and private sectors to accelerate investment and the delivery of sufficient homes of the right type, including an adequate proportion of affordable homes, in quality neighbourhoods that work.

4. Promote and secure quality of place and environment in neighbourhoods and safer and sustainable communities.

5. Put in place the cultural infrastructure and activities to make the West of England a place of choice.

Connectivity and Accessibility

Our vision for how the area will be seen in 2026

1. Information and communications technology (ICT) contributes to sustainable communities and has reduced the need for travel and improved the quality of life.

2. Access to jobs, learning, local healthcare services, leisure and local services in urban and rural areas has much improved and has contributed to greater economic and social inclusion and more sustainable communities.

3. A marked increase in cycling and walking, and public transport investment and connectivity in urban and rural areas, is contributing to easy, safe and low cost travel and has assisted in the regeneration of disadvantaged communities.

4. Strategic transport corridors and networks have improved movement between main towns and cities, Bristol International Airport, the Seaport and other strategic sites, encouraging business investment and employment opportunities and supporting regeneration.

5. Investment attracted by national and international road, rail, air and sea links has increased the competitiveness and growth of the West of England and South West economies.

6. Success in developing innovative, integrated and joined up solutions to connectivity and accessibility is attracting additional investment in transport and business.

Delivery priorities

1. Reduce the need to travel, promote cycling and walking and the use of public transport through short term measures including bus corridors, park and ride schemes and real time information systems and through longer term measures including innovative schemes such as alternative rapid transit and ways to discourage car use.

2. Secure a strategic road network which:
   - improves access to, and movement in and around south Bristol;
   - provides efficient links between Bristol International Airport and Bath, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare;
   - improves connectivity to the motorway network in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire;
   - reduces road congestion and local traffic on the motorway network;
   - and as a result increases business investment, economic growth and productivity, accelerates regeneration and improves the local environment.

3. Secure an increase in rail capacity to strengthen public transport by:
   - improving rail access to Weston-super-Mare to support the regeneration of the town and the development of employment land at RAF Locking;
   - ensuring a passenger rail link between Portishead and Bristol and improving services to suburban stations;
   - securing a local link between Avonmouth and Portbury to support the expansion of the Port and to reduce local traffic on the motorway.

4. Reduce the need to travel through a range of measures and policies including promoting and enabling: business and household access to imaginative information and communication technologies; remote/home working; more school buses; better access to local healthcare services; closer living to work and services.

5. Secure government support for the joint local transport plan for the West of England to deliver improved performance against the shared priorities of: congestion, accessibility, road safety and air quality.

6. Secure investment and leadership for longer term transport priorities that reinforce the sub region’s spatial planning strategy and improve national and international links, building on the recommendations of the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study. Access government, EU and other investment programmes including the South West Sustainable Communities Plan, SWRDA and the Strategic Rail Authority.
The economy

Our vision for how the area will be seen in 2026

1. The West of England has anticipated, encouraged and shaped high levels of growth in employment, population and housing through its competitive, knowledge driven businesses and successful investment by government in physical and social infrastructure in accordance with the Sustainable Communities Plan for the South West.

2. The sub region enjoys a robust and diverse economy driven by knowledge, innovation, enterprise and excellence and positive support for key sectors, namely:
   - advanced engineering, including aerospace and defence
   - ICT, creative and media
   - financial and business services
   - tourism, including retail
   - environmental technology
   - construction.

3. Achieving excellence in innovation through learning and research in our world class universities, business enterprise, collective action and investment in innovation and knowledge based businesses.

4. South Bristol and Weston-super-Mare are benefiting from increased business investment, economic growth, accelerated regeneration and an improved local environment, following government investment in a strategic road network. This has strengthened links between Bath, South Bristol, Bristol International Airport and Weston, and with motorways in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

5. The benefits from the growth and development of Bristol International Airport, the Port and other strategic sites have been maximised.

6. The large proportion of graduate level skills in the workforce has been complemented by a substantial increase in basic and vocational skills to produce a skilled, adaptable and well-motivated workforce. This has raised business confidence, investment and productivity.

7. Strong links developed between communities, educational establishments and employers have reinforced the importance of education and skills to job opportunities and reward, and enlarged the capacity to identify and address the skills gap.

8. Economic growth has enabled the sub region to increase economic and social inclusion through better long term employment opportunities.

9. A better distribution of economic opportunity across the sub region has been achieved through investment in transport links and infrastructure and co-ordinated spatial planning strategies for employment, housing and transport.

Delivery priorities

1. Understand, strengthen and promote key business sectors in the sub region.

2. Provide the circumstances that support the growth and development of key sectors:
   - Act to improve basic education and vocational skills, to sustain graduate level skills and to attract and retain a flexible and adaptable workforce.
   - Accelerate innovation through increased collective action and investment by companies, universities and business support agencies, including the active promotion of the Science Park.
   - Ensure the spatial plan provides adequate employment land sustained by proper investment in transport, housing and quality of life.
   - Successfully develop existing and additional strategic employment sites in the sub region.
   - Sustain the success of businesses in the ‘North Fringe’ of Bristol by the M4 and M5 motorways but avoid accelerating development until investment is made in improved transport solutions.
   - Conclude with government a sustainable Communities Plan for the South West; one that secures timely government investment in current and future physical and social infrastructure to support the spatial strategy for the sub region and significant economic growth.

3. Market the West of England to grow and attract investment and encourage visitors.

4. Secure the economic regeneration of disadvantaged communities, particularly in South Bristol and Weston-super-Mare.