This Bulletin provides a quarterly summary of events and announcements of relevance to the local economy. For further statistical information: www.intelligencwest.org.uk

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The West of England Partnership consists of four unitary authorities - Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES), Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire - and a range of social, economic and environmental partners. This Bulletin is produced quarterly by the West of England Partnership.
1) Jobs

1.1) Job Gains

19/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Budget hotel chain Travelodge has announced it will create more than 40 new jobs when it opens two new hotels in the Bristol area later this year. The firm is due to open a hotel in Bristol city centre in September and a second hotel in Portishead later in the autumn.

21/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
A new hotel in Bristol city centre which will employ about 100 staff is expected to be open within a month. The Holiday Inn in Broad Street will be in Avon House North, which used to form part of the headquarters of Avon County Council. The rest of the building which overlooks the St James Barton roundabout has already been converted into flats.

25/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
A new language school which is opening for business at a prestigious office in the centre of Bristol will create 45 new jobs. EC English Language Centre has announced it has chosen Bristol to open its fourth school in the country and its tenth across the world.

26/01/11 Western Daily Press
Bath & North East Somerset Council last night made the shock announcement of a £200m capital spending spree over the next five years. It will provide thousands of new homes and jobs, invest in regeneration, improve schools and leisure centres and make much-needed infrastructure improvements.

02/02/11 BBC News
Low-fares airline Easyjet has announced 65 new jobs based at Bristol Airport.

10/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
About 20 new jobs have been created with the opening of a new Boots store in Bradley Stoke.

16/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
A new Tesco Express store in Victoria Street, Bristol has created 13 new jobs.

17/03/11 Bath Chronicle
An expanding Bath software house intends to create 35 new jobs by the end of the year. Altran Praxis, whose clients include National Air Traffic Services, is also strengthening its links with the University of Bath.

17/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
New company, E-nergy, is planning to open its headquarters in the former Clarke Willmott building in Bristol, creating 200 new jobs in the city.

1.2) Job Losses

03/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
Staff at the Bristol based headquarters of the Forestry Commission in England have been told their jobs could be at risk. About 100 people are employed at the offices at the Bristol Business Park in Coldharbour Lane.

04/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
Up to 300 council jobs will be lost in Bath and North East Somerset during the next four years to balance the civic budget.

21/02/11 Bath Chronicle
Bath-based accident claims handler Helphire yesterday revealed another 400 jobs losses as it reported a 37% plunge in half year profits. The group has now reduced its workforce by 51%. 
17/03/11 Bath Chronicle
The Ministry of Defence’s 72-year association with Bath is to end with the transfer of thousands of workers to offices in Bristol over the next two years. Workers whose jobs are already under threat in the Government’s strategic defence review will now have the added turmoil of an extra hour on their journeys at each end of the day.

31/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
More than 100 workers at a Bristol call centre are to lose their jobs. Yell is to close a call centre in the city and move work to India as part of a cost cutting exercise. A call centre in Newport is also closing.

2) Property & Development

2.1) Housing

05/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Bristol Civic Society is launching a major project debate next month about the future of the city centre, which could see up to 9,000 new homes built during the next 15 years.

05/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
House prices edged higher in 2010 but are still expected to drop in the first half of the new year according to the nation’s biggest lender, Nationwide. The average price of a home in December was 0.4% higher than a year ago at £162,763.

06/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Community funding and affordable homes in a major housing scheme for Lockleaze could be cut after the developer said it could not afford to provide them. Redrow has outline planning permission to build 324 homes on land at Wallscourt Farm, near the University of the West of England campus.

18/01/11 BBC News
Bath’s Western Riverside development has been given a £6m boost by the Homes and Community Agency (HCA). The 44-acre scheme has already gained £2m of investment from the agency for infrastructure work around the site.

21/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Persimmon Homes has announced it is drawing up plans for a major new housing estate on the outskirts of Bristol. It is planning to build about 1,000 homes on land it already owns on Fishpool Hill. The new estate would be built at the back of Brentry Primary School and would also need new access roads.

02/02/11 BBC News
Gloucestershire County Cricket Club has revised its plans to increase capacity at its ground in Bristol. Proposed accommodation for 350 students, part of the initial plans, is being replaced by 150 apartments.

10/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
A section of railway line could be moved to open up land in Filton for development. Campaigners fear hundreds of houses could be proposed for the 14 acres to the north-east of Conygre Grove and Canberra Grove.

24/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
Developers have organised two exhibitions to reveal further details about a major housing scheme in north Yate. Heron Land Developments wants to put 3,000 new homes on 257 acres of what is currently mainly farmland north of Brimsham Park.

07/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
Planning permission has been given for 34 homes on scrubland at Hanham. Developer Crest Nicholson put forward plans to build one, two, three and four-bed homes on land at the corner of Whittucks Road and Abbots Road.
08/03/11 BBC News
Plans for 80 new homes which would have been built on greenbelt land near Bristol have been rejected. Strategic Land Partnerships (SLP) wanted to build the homes at Hambrook Lane.

10/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
The former home of Bristol’s hospice is set to be demolished to make way for 14 new homes. A planning application has been submitted on behalf of the new owners Landvest, for the St Peter’s Hospice site in Knowle.

15/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
Shirehampton residents have been given a first glimpse of how several new homes that are planned for the village will look. The 24 two-bedroom apartments will be built on the former swimming pool in Park Road. The pool closed in 2005 and the land was sold to Persimmon Homes.

23/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
Properties which have lain empty for years could be bought by the council to help tackle Bristol’s housing shortage. Bristol City Council has said it could use its compulsory purchase powers to bring derelict properties back to life as homes.

24/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
First-time buyers in Bristol struggling to get on to the property market have been offered a glimmer of hope in the budget.

25/03/11 South West Business
Residents in Knowle West have made a plea for the threat of demolition to be lifted from their homes. About 750 householders, most of whom live at Inns Court, are living with the uncertainty that their homes might be bulldozed as part of a massive regeneration scheme for the area.

2.2) Commercial Development

31/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Bristol City Council has been promised £890,000 from the HCA to press ahead with the preliminary work towards a compulsory purchase order for Westmoreland House - a derelict office block in Stokes Croft which has stood empty for more than 40 years.

03/02/11 Western Morning News
Work to transform a former airbase in Weston-super-Mare has begun as part of a 20-year £400m regeneration scheme. Developer St Modwen has started the first phase of the work at the former RAF Locking site in the North Somerset resort.

07/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
A £33m financial package has been put together to pave the way for a major regeneration project in Keynsham’s town centre. The council-led scheme would see the civic buildings and shops on the corner of Temple Street and Bath Hill pulled down and redeveloped.

11/02/11 Somerset Guardian
Clifton based developer Deeley Freed has lodged a planning application with the city council to demolish the former magistrates court in Nelson Street. The eight-storey complex will be replaced by a Travelodge hotel as well as flats for 130 students.

02/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
The multi-million pound sale of publicly owned assets across the West will begin next month but it is unclear how much of the cash raised will stay in the region. The SWRDA must sell off almost 60 assets before it is axed in March next year. The list includes plots three and six at Temple Quay in Bristol along with phase three of the Bristol business centre and Bristol Science and Technology Park.
Demand for one of Bristol’s most prestigious developments shows no sign of waning. The developers of The Great Western Dockyard say they have been thrilled with the interest in the scheme.

The historic Cadbury factory in Keynsham has been put up for sale by its American owners. Kraft, which pledged to keep Somerdale open during its takeover of the chocolate maker, yesterday revealed details of the sell-off, which could net the company about £50m.

2.3) Office/Industrial market

Plans for a biofuel plant in Bristol have been given the go-ahead by the government. An application by W4B to build the power station at Avonmouth was refused by city councillors in February 2010 but Eric Pickles has approved it on appeal.

A £3m refurbishment on The Pithay office building in Bristol has been completed. It follows a year-long programme to refurbish common areas of the eight-storey building. The office block, in All Saints Street, has been painted, new lifts have been installed and vacant offices have been decorated and upgraded.

The BBC is looking to move out of its historic headquarters in Clifton as part of an ambitious plan to create a “media village” in Bristol. Talks have been taking place for months over the possible sale of the corporation’s offices and studios in Whiteladies Road. A shortlist of around 15 sites has already been drawn up.

The former Royal Sun Alliance building in the centre of Bristol which has been standing empty for more than 18 months has been bought by property developer Cubex.

European real estate fund manager Aerium has bought One Glass Wharf in Temple Quay Central, Bristol, from the administrator PricewaterhouseCoopers for £83m. The deal represents a net initial yield of 6.84%.

Two new tenants have moved into one of Bristol city centre’s landmark office buildings. Kings Orchard, which has a prime position overlooking Castle Park and the Floating Harbour, has been chosen by boutique investment house Arjent for its first Bristol office and by financial services company Arista Insurance.

Imperial Tobacco Group has been granted planning consent for a new 100,000 sq ft global head office in Bristol. The company said it was the biggest “occupier-led” office development the city has seen since the beginning of the downturn.

A property investment firm has snapped up an office building in the centre of Bristol for just £3m. Wainbridge bought the Froomsgate office building from the receivers after its former owners went into administration.
2.4) Retail

17/01/11 Property Week
Metric Property Investments has bought Channons Hill retail park in Bristol for £6.2m – a 9.3% yield. Channons Hill is let to Currys, Lidl and Focus for average rents of £9.80 per sq ft with an average unexpired lease term of 4.5 years. The park has consent for open A1 use.

24/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
A Bristol shopping centre is set to change its name back to the title most shoppers remember it by. The Mall Bristol will revert back to The Galleries.

26/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Britain’s largest independent bookshop Foyles is to open its first store outside London in 70 years. The retailer has signed a deal with Land Securities and Hammerson to take a 5,500 sq ft store at their Cabot Circus shopping centre in Bristol.

01/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
A second independent bookstore has announced it is planning to open a branch in Bristol. The Last Bookshop is to open in Park Street this week.

16/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
Bristol’s city centre has one of the UK’s highest numbers of empty shops, according to a new survey. According to the Local Data Company many High Streets will struggle to recover from the recession and Bristol is one of the hardest hit in the South West.

04/03/11 Weston Mercury
A BID to boost customers in Weston town centre’s shopping district has taken a step forward with the appointment of a project chairman. Tim Lamb, the McDonalds franchisee owner for the Weston, Worle and Portishead restaurants, has taken up the position on the Business Improvement District (BID) steering group.

31/03/2011 South West Business
The American owned electrical superstore Best Buy is planning to open its latest UK store in Cribbs Causeway, Bristol by the end of April.

3) Business news

24/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Bristol is one of the best placed cities in the country to bounce back from the recession, according to a leading think tank. Each year the Centre for Cities organisation publishes an economic league table ranking 63 major cities based on factors including unemployment, average wages and spending cuts.

27/01/11 Bath Chronicle
Plans to build a £600 million deep sea harbour at Avonmouth are already tempting companies to move into the area. The scheme will see one of the busiest container ship docks in Europe open in the West and is expected to lead to the creation of more than a thousand new jobs. According to property specialist Colliers, businesses are already flocking to relocate to the area and many more are heading this way. Tesco, the Co-operative and John Lewis have already opened distribution centres close by.

01/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
A rescue package is being put together to save struggling driving lesson firm BSM from collapse, it emerged yesterday. The firm, which has its headquarters in Aztec West, has been facing serious problems in recent weeks and according to reports was unable to pay its staff last month.
North Somerset-based Thatchers is a company which is very definitely on the move – there are not many firms in the current economic climate looking to increase their sales by as much as 25 per cent year on year.

Plans have been unveiled to build a coach park in front of Cabot Circus’s multi-storey car park. They have been submitted by the shopping centre’s developer Bristol Alliance as part of an application to win planning permission.

Estate agent and chartered surveyor Madison Oakley is opening a new office in George Street, Bath.

Leonard Curtis, one of the UK’s leading corporate recovery, insolvency and restructuring specialists is opening a new office in Queen Square, Bristol.

FRP Advisory, a firm which specialises in dealing with struggling firms has announced it is to expand its operation in Bristol and the South West.

Property specialist Strategic Team Group has expanded into the South West by opening a new office at Caswell Park in Clapton in Gordano.

The future of around 80 pubs in the Bristol area has been thrown into doubt as a result of a trade slump.

The National Composites Centre, which is based at the Science Park in South Gloucestershire, has been named as the first partner in a UK-wide network of elite technology and innovation centres by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg.

Up to 6,000 tons of green waste could be turned into compost if a plan for a new processing centre near Yate is approved. A Chipping Sodbury-based company wants to use land behind Mays Hill Industrial Estate for the operation

4) Tourism & Leisure

Chapter Hotels, a Far-East firm owned by the Swire Group, is planning to invest millions of pounds in Clifton’s Avon Gorge Hotel with the aim of resurrecting the past glories and grandeur of what was once a city institution.

Plans for a 107-bedroom hotel and restaurant have been drawn up for the site of a row of shops in Bath. Leisure giant Whitbread and its development partners want to spend £10 million knocking down the shops at the corner of James Street West and Kingsmead North and building a Premier Inn.

The Nightingale Group, the last remaining bidder for the redevelopment of the derelict Tropicana site on Weston-super-Mare’s seafront, has withdrawn from the project. Weston-super-Mare MP John Penrose says the building should either be “built up or knocked down”.

Restaurant group Giraffe is to open in Bath’s SouthGate shopping development next month.

5) Aerospace

18/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Airbus has sealed another massive order – a £3bn deal to deliver 60 A320 airliners to Virgin America.

26/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
There was yet more good news for aviation firm Airbus yesterday with the announcement of another major order. The latest deal is for 12 planes valued at around £1.5bn with leasing firm GE Capital Aviation Services.

02/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
A world-beating research centre which will place Bristol right at the vanguard of the aviation industry is starting to take shape. The £25m National Composite Centre, which is being built at Emersons Green, is due to open by the summer.

01/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
A decade-long battle for a multi-billion pound American defence contract has ended in defeat for Airbus. The £21.6bn contract would have guaranteed work for around 400 staff at the Filton factory for at least 10 years.

25/03/11 Gazette
Aerospace giant Airbus is to make a £70 million investment in South Gloucestershire, protecting at least 2,500 jobs. The company today announced it intends to create an engineering and technology park in Filton.

6) Airport

21/01/11 Bristol Evening Post
Budget airline easyJet has warned it will be forced to make cuts in services later this year as a result of the soaring cost of aviation fuel. The airline, which has its biggest regional base at Bristol Airport, also lost £24 million because of the snow and ice in December and an air traffic control strike across Europe last summer and autumn.

10/02/11 Bristol Evening Post
A 20 metre high wind turbine has now been successfully installed at Bristol Airport which has been harvesting wind energy on site since early January. The vertical axis turbine is part of a pilot project known as ‘The Quiet Revolution qr5’ and is located on the approach road to the terminal building.

12/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
Bristol International Airport is to rename itself . . . Bristol Airport. The new name and a new logo will be officially unveiled to staff at an event this morning as part of a rebranding exercise. The move comes as the airport awaits a decision next month on its £150 million expansion plans.

29/03/11 Bristol Evening Post
Bristol’s air link with America has been reinstated with a new service from the city’s airport via Dublin. Passengers can once again fly across the Atlantic from Lulsgate with a service that links to flights to New York, Boston, Chicago and Florida.