

**Joint meeting - West of England Combined
Authority Committee and West of England Joint
Committee**

21 September 2021

Public questions and replies

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EXTRAORDINARY JOINT MEETING – WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE & WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE

21 SEPTEMBER 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REPLIES

The following questions were submitted by the deadline (full details of questions are set out in the following pages):

- Q 1 Nigel Shipley - Item 7 - Motion on Bristol airport expansion
- Q 2 Tarisha Finnegan-Clarke - Item 7 - Motion on Bristol airport expansion
- Q 3 Mary Collett - Item 7 - Motion on Bristol airport expansion
- Q 4 Jackie Head - Item 7 - Motion on Bristol airport expansion
- Q 5 Richard Baxter - Item 7 - Motion on Bristol airport expansion
- Q 6 David Redgewell - Item 8 - Principles for a refreshed climate emergency ambition
- Q 7 Councillor Martin Fodor (Bristol) - Item 8 - Principles for a refreshed climate emergency ambition & Item 9 - Green Recovery Fund
- Q 8 Dave Tudgey - Item 8 - Principles for a refreshed climate emergency ambition & Item 9 - Green Recovery Fund
- Q 9 Councillor Ani Stafford-Townsend (Bristol) - Green Recovery Fund

QUESTION 1

Question from: Nigel Shipley

Subject: Motion on Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Question 1. If the economic benefits of expanding the airport are trivial, what is the justification to expand it?

Last July, the New Economics Foundation reported significant inaccuracies in Bristol Airport's economic benefit arguments for expansion. They reported how the airport cherry-picked the methods they use in their analysis to create a "*grossly overstated*" expansion argument. The NEF report says that by overstating passenger demand the claimed economic benefits to the region are inflated by almost 50% for the West of England region and 70% for the wider south-west region and Wales. For their estimate of the boost to tourism, the airport uses national data on spend per tourist rather than regional benchmarks, which NEF say could mean an "*overestimation of the benefits by more than a third*".

If the economic benefits of expanding the airport are trivial what is the justification to expand it?

REPLY:

The Motion recommends that the Committee oppose the current plans for expansion of Bristol airport.

Question 2. If not now, when?

All three local authorities have declared a climate emergency and have published plans to reduce our carbon emissions, but we have not seen actions leading to significant reductions.

The IPCC tells us that - *The evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse gas emissions are choking our planet & placing billions of people in danger. Global heating is affecting every region on Earth, with many of the changes becoming irreversible. We must act decisively now to avert a climate catastrophe.*

You now have the opportunity to lend your voice to preventing an additional million tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. If you fail to do so, when the crisis is fully upon us, you will look back and see that you were on the wrong side of history.

If now is not the time to take decisive action to address the climate crisis, when will be the right time?

REPLY:

The papers proposed for agreement at the 21 September meeting agree the need for urgent action to address the climate crisis. They recommend an approach to significantly increase the pace of activity within the region, including creating a £20m Green Recovery Fund.

QUESTION 2

Question from: Tarisha Finnegan-Clarke

Subject: Motion on Bristol airport expansion

Question:

The local councillors in Bristol & BANES (through Council motions) & North Somerset (through the planning & regulatory committee) have had an opportunity to discuss & vote on whether to support Bristol Airport expansion. The majority of them have voted to oppose the expansion plans.

The Leader of South Gloucestershire, Cllr Toby Savage has said that he supports Bristol Airport expansion. Why have the South Gloucestershire Councillors not been given the opportunity to vote on the subject?

REPLY:

The issue you raise in relation to South Gloucestershire Council is not a matter that the Combined Authority can comment on directly. You may wish to submit this question separately to South Gloucestershire Council.

QUESTION 3

Question from: Mary Collett

Subject: Motion on Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Please find my question for the Joint WECA Extraordinary meeting Tuesday 21st Sept 2021:

The facts are as follows:

In November 2018, Bristol City Council became the first UK council to declare a climate emergency, committing to carbon neutrality by 2030.

North Somerset declared a climate emergency in February 2019.

In March 2019 Bath & North East Somerset Council declared a Climate Emergency.

South Gloucestershire Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019.

WECA also declared a climate emergency in July 2019, and in doing so stressed the importance of their strong commitment to clean and inclusive economic growth.

Each council acknowledges their responsibility for reaching net zero or carbon neutrality by 2030 and has committed themselves to huge reductions in CO2 levels within the next decade.

North Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, and B&NES have all debated the matter of Bristol Airport's Expansion plans in council and stated their opposition to the expansion, knowing that the increase of around 1 MILLION tons of pollution that Bristol Airport's expansion would create each year will make it almost impossible to reach net zero by 2030.

My question is: Why have South Gloucester Council not debated the issue of Bristol Airport's expansion plans at Council so that the council can give a definitive answer as to whether they oppose the expansion plans or not?

Surely this is a pressing issue and it is difficult to see how Cllr Savage can give a definitive view on the matter without council-wide backing unless this is his own personal view?

REPLY:

The issue you raise in relation to South Gloucestershire Council is not a matter that the Combined Authority can comment on directly. You may wish to submit this question separately to South Gloucestershire Council.

QUESTION 4

Question from: Jackie Head

Subject: Motion on Bristol airport expansion

Question:

1. Does the committee recognise that

a) Scope 1,2 & 3 emissions from Bristol Airport amount to 945.014 kilotonnes of carbon (according to their online carbon road map

<https://www.bristolairport.co.uk/about-us/environment/carbon-roadmap>)

b) the scope 1 & 2 emissions of the airport are less than 1% of total emissions associated with the airport (6.414 kilotonnes: 0.67% according to their figures)

c) the airport will only meet its 'carbon neutral' target in terms of scope 1& 2 emissions and only by significant use of offsetting

d) describing themselves as a 'carbon neutral airport' when over 99% of the emissions (938.6 kilotonnes) associated with business are not, is therefore misleading and they should be asked to desist from this false advertising

e) technological solutions to stop using kerosene fuel alluded to by Bristol Airport cannot be delivered until after 2030 and might not be delivered at all at a commercially viable scale?

This being so, does the committee recognise that Bristol Airport and the aviation it facilitates will continue to be a major consumer of the regional carbon budget **anyway** and should not be encouraged to expand but rather be asked to **limit flights** (even within its present 10 million passengers per year limit, in order to reduce the damage done?)

REPLY:

The motion opposes the current plans for expansion of the airport. The Combined Authority supports all local businesses to consider how they may be able to reduce their carbon emissions.

2. Does the committee recognise that an expanded airport is not necessary now (given that it had not reached the existing 10 million passenger cap in 2019) and that a combination of COVID and the climate emergency has changed people's habits and attitudes towards flying and will not be likely to be necessary for the foreseeable future? In the light of this will the committee recommend that the Airport only seeks further expansion at such time that it can be carbon neutral in its scope 1,2 & 3 emissions?

REPLY:

The motion opposes the current plans for expansion of the airport. Any future plans should be considered in the context of our commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030.

QUESTION 5

Question from: Richard Baxter

Subject: Motion on Bristol airport expansion

Question:

The motion you are considering has crucial implications for the region in addressing carbon emissions for the local authorities that are constituent parts of WECA as well as North Somerset Council. It is hoped that the outcome of this meeting will result in an alignment of opposition to Bristol Airport's expansion plans as already expressed by parish, town, district and city councils throughout the area.

The science and policy is strongly emphasising that airport expansion across the UK needs to be addressed and halted. So my question is what are your plans to get other Metro Mayors and central government to follow the lead that WECA hopes to make on airport expansion across the UK?

REPLY:

The motion recommends that the Joint Committee oppose the existing plans for the expansion of Bristol Airport. We already have more ambitious targets for reaching carbon neutrality than government. As regional leaders, we work in close partnership with other Metro Mayors to actively lobby government to take action to reduce emissions.

We are unable to comment on planning issues or applications relating to other Metro Mayors or Combined Authority Areas.

QUESTION 6

Question from: David Redgewell

Subject: Item 8 - Principles for a refreshed climate emergency ambition

Question:

1. What target has West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset council set for removing Diesel buses from the network as part of any advance quality partnership as part of the bus service improvement plan overseen by the Metro Mayor and North Somerset council (with plans to replace them with electric and gas buses or the use of Hydrogen power buses the use of green bus stops and Bus and coach station)

REPLY:

The joint Bus Service Improvement Plan will include plans to transition to zero-emission buses, as required by the National Bus Strategy. The targets are under active discussion between officers of the Combined Authority, North Somerset Council and local bus operators, and have not been confirmed yet.

2. What targets have been set to decarbonise the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset Railway network?

(Background information sent by questioner: By Electrification of the Great western railway main line from Chippenham to Bristol Temple meads and through to Bristol parkway and Patchway. And onward to Weston super mare and Taunton. The metrowest service to Bristol Temple meads to Pill and Portishead. With a new station at Ashton gate. The Bristol Temple Meads to Henbury line. With new stations at Ashley Down, Horfield, Filton North for the Arena and Henbury for Cribbs Causeway and the Henbury loop. The Line between Bristol Temple Meads, Ashley Down, Horfield, Filton Abbeywood, Bristol parkway station, Yate, Charfield, Stonehouse, Bristol road, Gloucester central and Cheltenham spa. Bristol Temple Meads to Bath spa and Westbury, Warminster or Frome. With stops St Anne's, Keynsham, Saltford new station, Oldfield Park, Bath spa, Freshford, Avoncliffe, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge Westbury. The work on this route need to allow for Regional and inter city Express. With extra tracks. So services are maintained to from Bristol Temple meads station to Bath spa and London Waterloo. Bristol Temple meads and Bath spa to Portsmouth harbour. Bristol Temple meads, Bath spa to Westbury, Frome, Yeovil and Weymouth. The looking at Operating bi mode Electric trains and hydrogen trains. The electrification of Freight lines to the port of Bristol Henbury loop line and Bristol to Portishead line and the Westerleigh and Tytherington railway line. What work is being undertaken on this decarbonisation Railways with Network rail western route first Great western railway South western railway Cross country trains, and Department for transport. And the western gateway transport board and south west transport board).

REPLY:

As part of their Traction Decarbonisation Plan, July 2020, Network Rail will be leading on the electrification of the West of England rail network. The plan includes Bristol Temple Meads to Bristol Parkway, Bath, Chippenham, Westbury and Weston-Super-Mare as part of the Core Electrification network.

The Severn Beach Line is included in the plan for either battery traction or possible electrification. Nationally, Network Rail's programme is to complete the Plan by 2050. More detail is awaited on the programme for the West of England rail network.

Network Rail's proposals are a key part of the Department for Transport's Decarbonising Transport Plan, July 2021.

QUESTION 7

Question from: Councillor Martin Fodor

Subject: Item 8 - Principles for a refreshed climate emergency ambition & Item 9 – Green Recovery Fund

Question:

I welcome the decision to rethink your climate emergency ambition in your action plan.

The report to your special meeting reiterates your 5 principles and calls for

‘Increased ambition’ and ‘further and faster’ action.

It says ‘hard decisions’ have to be made. I’m hoping this means the contradictions in your existing documents like the JSTP4 can be resolved.

Q1. While ensuring your commitment to a ‘just transition’ for those affected what are the top carbon sources that will be tackled and what hard choices will be made to redirect the support from WECA for local businesses and projects most suited to the green recovery?

REPLY:

The revised Strategy and Action plan, in line with the refreshed ambition, will aim to take action on the highest sources of emissions in areas where we can have most impact as a Combined Authority. This includes: buildings retrofit, decarbonising transport, increasing green infrastructure, working with businesses to reduce their emissions and working to increase the amount of renewable and community energy within the region.

We acknowledge that taking action to cut emissions and protect and enhance the environment will require taking hard decisions that will change the way we live and work in the region. These decisions will be determined as part of the development of the revised Strategy and Action Plan, which we will work on with the new Climate Board to deliver.

Q2. When will there be an actual Strategy and Action Plan to examine what is being planned and funded in the region from the Green Recovery Fund to tackle the emergency and to allow sight of which of the contradictions in current documents are being replaced with more consistent actions?

REPLY:

Pending the appointment of the new Climate Board, the aim is to deliver a revised Strategy and Action Plan in Spring 2022.

The new Board will be tasked with developing the revised action plan in line with the refreshed ambition, working in consultation with key stakeholders including the region's unitary authorities.

All future projects funded through the new £20m Green Recovery Fund will align with the themes of the existing climate emergency action plan. They will be subject to full business case appraisal in line with our standard investment decision making processes which will be developed in consultation with the Climate Board and unitary authorities.

QUESTION 8

Question from: Dave Tudgey

Subject: Item 8 - Principles for a refreshed climate emergency ambition & Item 9 - Green Recovery Fund

Question:

Our question is with regards to agenda point 8. PRINCIPLES FOR A REFRESHED CLIMATE EMERGENCY AMBITION Page 7-16 & 9. GREEN RECOVERY FUND Page 17

Does the committee agree that community energy is critically important for a sustainable energy transition? How can ensure that we have policies in place to grow and support our community energy sector to deliver a smart, local (community) energy system?

REPLY:

In order to meet our regional ambition to reach net zero carbon by 2030, the region will need to take a range of actions and inspire others including local businesses and government to do the same. Generating renewable energy, including through community energy schemes, is a part of this.

We will continue to work closely with the South West Energy Hub and Low Carbon Challenge Fund to deliver renewable energy programmes, supporting the community energy sector and lobbying government to provide the resources for change within the region's energy sector.

QUESTION 9

Question from: Councillor Ani Stafford-Townsend

Subject: Green Recovery Fund

Question:

1. In order to make a real green recovery, sustainable and active travel must be improved and encouraged within Bristol. What improvements to the transport and active travel infrastructure will be made to enable visitors to the central areas of Bristol to use non private vehicles, and what will be the method of raising public awareness of these options?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority supports a range of sustainable, active travel methods across the region, including:

- **The Future Transport Zone Programme – trialling innovative new solutions and services, powered by digital technologies, to improve access to sustainable transport options, including launching the e-scooter scheme.**
- **Investing in improving cycling and walking, including £10m for new infrastructure.**
- **Coordinating Active Travel Fund bids, which to date have seen the region awarded £3.8m for active travel improvements, such as the Old City pedestrianisation.**
- **Continuing to seek and lobby government for further investment.**

These are promoted across the region through a variety of methods including the recent Joy of the Journey campaign which supported people to safely return to public transport during the pandemic.

2. New Green Jobs are welcomed and applauded, however we also have many viable small and medium green, sustainable, community focused businesses within Bristol that are already in existence and in need of support. What will WECA be doing to support the Green Jobs that are already in existence?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority has a range of support in place to help existing businesses to decarbonise and grow the number of green jobs within the region. These include:

- **Green Business Grants – providing free carbon surveys and decarbonisation reports to Small and Medium Enterprises and grant funding opportunities for businesses to improve the efficiency of their buildings or business operations**
- **Workforce for the Future - a skills analysis and development programme for Small and Medium Enterprises designed to help them identify**

current and future skills needs and create action plans businesses can deliver with a strong, resilient and adaptable workforce.

- **Business Innovation Fund - The Business Innovation Fund supports businesses from a wide range of sectors to help develop innovative projects and products that not only fulfil market demand, but also deliver industrial growth.**
- **Undertaking Retrofit and Green Skills market analysis completed to better understand the pathway to net zero and associated skills and jobs requirements.**

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