

JOINT MEETING – WECA COMMITTEE & WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE

29 JANUARY 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REPLIES

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

- Q1. Question from: Mary Collett - Bristol airport expansion**
- Q2. Question from: James Collett - Bristol airport expansion**
- Q3. Question from: Jude Connor - Bristol airport expansion**
- Q4. Question from: Laurence and Joanne Copleston - Bristol airport expansion**
- Q5. Question from: Matt Gitsham - Bristol airport expansion**
- Q6. Question from: Bob Bater - Bristol airport expansion**
- Q7. Question from: Rosemary Collins - Bristol airport expansion**
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- Q11. Question from: David Redgewell - WECA & North Somerset**
- Q12. Question from David Redgewell - Portway station**
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- Q15. Question from: Haydn Gill – Road building (with reference to the Investment Fund report)**
- Q16. Question from: Haydn Gill – Funding of cycling and walking schemes (with reference to the Investment Fund report)**
- Q17. Question from: Amy Fletcher – Bristol airport expansion**
- Q18. Question from: Kevin Flanagan – Bristol airport expansion**
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- Q20. Question from: Ruth Jones – Bristol airport expansion**
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- Q23. Question from: James Ward – Bristol airport expansion**
- Q24. Question from: Cllr Jerome Thomas – Unspent WECA money**
- Q25. Question from: Sarah Cemlyn – Bristol airport expansion**
- Q26. Question from: Kim Hicks – Spatial Development Strategy**
- Q27. Question from: Sally Lawson – Bristol airport expansion**

Q28. Question from: Johnny Devas – Bristol airport expansion

Q29. Question from: Ben Moss – Bristol airport expansion

Q30. Question from: Sarah Poppy Jackson – Bristol airport expansion

Q31. Question from: Duncan Still – Bristol airport expansion

Q32. Question from: Cllr Martin Fodor – E-scooter trial in the West of England

Q33. Question from: Nicola Bindon – Bristol airport expansion

QUESTION 1

Question from: Mary Collett

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Over the next decade we will need HUGE reductions in carbon emissions, including reductions in the carbon emissions created by transport - particularly those from cars and airplanes.

WECA has previously supported the expansion of Bristol Airport, which if approved would add a further one million tonnes of CO2 to the atmosphere per year through increased flights and extra car journeys.

All three of WECA's constituent councils have declared a climate emergency.

Two of the three WECA constituent councils (Bristol and BANES) have now declared their opposition to Bristol Airport's Expansion plans

Will WECA now publicly state that it no longer supports airport expansion and commit to submitting a letter of objection to the appeal process?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

It is important to recognise that Aviation policy in the UK is a responsibility retained by central government, and therefore policy measures to reduce carbon emissions from aviation are directed by central government policy and any planning applications including an aviation element will need to be developed and assessed against extant national aviation policy.

More widely, the Combined Authority has recognised the critical need to address the impact of climate change and formally declared a Climate Emergency in July last year. We are committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and consideration of climate change impacts are being embedded into every aspect of the Combined Authority's work and activities. Through our Local Industrial Strategy and Regional Recovery Plan we are actively supporting investment in the de-carbonisation of aviation with our world leading firms in the region, with the ambition of being the vanguard of the development of the technology necessary for net zero aviation, which will help accelerate a reduction in carbon emissions regionally, nationally and internationally.

A Climate Emergency Action plan has been approved and is now being implemented. Progress reports are required to be considered by the committee, and by the WECA Overview and Scrutiny committee every 6 months.

Subsequent to the North Somerset Council decision on the Airport's planning application, Bristol Airport has submitted an appeal. This appeal will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate.

QUESTION 2

Question from: James Collett

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

WECA has declared a climate emergency in line with a large and increasing proportion of the UK's local authorities and over 100 countries worldwide. The government's CCC (Climate Change Committee) has recently (in its 6th Carbon Budget) has called for reduced aircraft emissions and controls of nationwide airport expansions.

Under WECA's recent Climate Emergency Action Plan, the Mayor calls for West of England action to reach net zero by 2030. If the airport is allowed to expand as it has requested causing local CO₂e emissions to increase by over 1 million tonnes annually, it will make this target, and especially Bristol's 2030 Net Zero target almost impossible if the increase in aircraft emissions are included (which the CCC has recommended).

Two out of the three local authorities which make up the WECA area have clearly stated their objections to an expansion of the airport.

Will WECA respect this democratic majority and write to the planning inspectorate (hearing the airport's current appeal) to decisively object to Bristol airport's expansion plan?

REPLY:

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QUESTION 3

Question from: Jude Connor

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

In light of the motion passed by our democratically elected local authority in Bristol on 8 December 2020, could WECA please confirm that it will now remove its support for the plans to expand Bristol Airport, to reflect the clearly expressed will of the people of Bristol?

Apart from being the expressed will of the people, your decision to withdraw your support for these plans will also bring you into line with your strategy statement:

We're committed to making the West of England a better place to grow up and to live, a place where everyone can benefit from the wider success of the region.

We're investing in people and places – in jobs, skills, transport, homes, and digital connections – to create communities where people want to live, work and visit.

Central to everything we do is our ambition to address climate change, secure good jobs and ensure decent homes for all.

Any expansion of the airport will clearly go against this strategy, and condemn our children and grandchildren to increased air and noise pollution.

Furthermore, the Pandemic has demonstrated to us all that we can holiday, and do business, without the need to fly. It has demonstrated the pleasure and health benefits of decreased air and road traffic.

REPLY:

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QUESTION 4

Question from: Laurence and Joanne Copleston

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Will the West of England Combined Authority formally object to the unnecessary Bristol Airport Expansion and write to the National Planning Inspectorate to confirm this objection?

Reason: the airport expansion is not required (the existing capacity is already large enough to allow for growth and job opportunities); it goes against all of our local authorities' commitments to acknowledge a climate emergency; there will be HUGE environmental impacts (carbon emissions, air quality, noise, landscape and visual); ever increasing urbanisation / urban sprawl of a rural landscape within Green Belt land; huge public opposition; huge local authority and parish council objection/ opposition!

The only people to benefit from the expansion will be the Ontario Pension Fund that owns Bristol airport. I wonder why they are pushing for this expansion with no thought for local opinion? Ok it's profits!

Please formally object to the Airport Expansion and acknowledge the nearly 10,000 people that took the time to object on the original Planning Application.

REPLY:

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QUESTION 5

Question from: Matt Gitsham

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Please explain WECA's position on the possible Bristol airport expansion given both Bristol CC and BANES do not support expansion. How would expansion be in line with climate emergencies declared and government legal responsibility to be zero carbon by 2050? When will Tim Bowles write to the planning inspectorate making clear WECA's objection to BAP expansion?

REPLY:

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QUESTION 6

Question from: Bob Bater

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Tim Bowles, Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) recently stated he was in favour of allowing North Somerset to take part in the forthcoming WECA mayoral elections. This would be welcomed by many in North Somerset. I am sure, however, that he is aware that an overwhelming majority (84%) of respondents to North Somerset Council's consultation on the expansion of Bristol Airport registered strong objections.

Now that Bristol City Council have also objected to the expansion proposals, will Mayor Bowles now acknowledge this groundswell of opinion and submit a letter to the appeal process indicating his objection to the plans?

REPLY:

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QUESTION 7

Question from: Rosemary Collins

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Given that WECA issued a climate emergency declaration on 22 July 2019, will you now take action on climate change by joining Bristol City Council in stating your opposition to Bristol Airport's proposed expansion plans? The expansion would lead to increases of 59% in greenhouse gas emissions and 16% in vehicle emissions compared to 2017 levels, making it impossible to reach any of the West of England's emissions targets. Furthermore, there is no economic case for this, given that the aviation industry is facing years of decreasing demand due to increased environmental concerns and the covid-19 pandemic. I urge you to display the historic leadership on climate we need by voicing your opposition to the airport expansion.

REPLY:

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QUESTION 8

Question from: Helen Struthers

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

The UK government is currently engaged in post Covid planning and preparations for COP26. They are currently considering how they can align future economic policies and decisions with the UK's climate and environmental goals. Please would the Mayor of WECA now take a similar lead by withdrawing WECA support for the proposed expansion of Bristol airport, especially now that two of WECA's constituent authorities have now stated their opposition?

REPLY:

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QUESTION 9

Question from: Jackie Head

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

As an overarching Authority where 75% of your make up is now from authorities formally objecting to the expansion of Bristol Airport (Bristol & B&NES) will you now vote under emergency powers, to send a WECA objection to the expansion to the appeal consultation?

REPLY:

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QUESTION 10

Question from: Viv Perry

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

In view of the Climate Emergency declared by WECA in July 2019, and the fact that two of its three constituent authorities, a majority, now oppose the Bristol Airport Expansion plans, will WECA now state its opposition to those plans too, and instead focus on supporting green and sustainable developments in the region it represents, building on the area's reputation for green initiatives and innovations?

REPLY:

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QUESTION 11

Question from David Redgewell

Subject: WECA & North Somerset

Does WECA mayoral combined authority agree with the legal officer at the city and county of Bristol at the Growth and Regeneration committee that North Somerset council could join the WECA mayoral combined authority without a mayoral election if a Governance review is carried out? (A order is placed in the House of Commons and House of Lords. That full public consultation is carried out in South Gloucestershire council area, Bath and North East Somerset council area, the city and county of Bristol council area and North Somerset council area. And a devolution deal which could include precept powers for public transport services, is negotiated with central government local government minister and Thornbury and Yate MP).

REPLY:

The advice given by Bristol City Council's legal officer is included as a factual, legal briefing note in the published agenda papers of the 6 January 2021 meeting of Bristol's Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission.

As can be seen from the letters from Government to the Combined Authority in relation to expanding WECA, i.e. to include North Somerset, there is an expectation that this would take effect from the start of the Mayoral term of office.

QUESTION 12

Question from: David Redgewell

Subject: Portway station

With the Department for Transport concerns about public transport network schemes starting in this financial year, WECA mayoral combined authority could lose the finance.

So could WECA mayoral transport authority advise us of the start date of work and opening date of Portway parkway station and interchange? (with work starting with Network rail western routes and First group Great Western railway)

REPLY:

Detailed design for the project is currently underway and progressing well, with construction due to start on site in March. The station is due to open in December 2021. The station is being funded jointly by WECA, the Department for Transport's New Stations Fund and Bristol City Council. In August 2020, WECA secured £13.7m from the government's Getting Building Fund, aimed at capital projects to accelerate national recovery. Part of this new funding has been allocated to the Portway P&R Station project to ensure that it remains fully funded.

QUESTION 13

Question from: Gordon Richardson

Subject: Portway station

Will the new station at Portway parkway be open with full disabled access in time for the new MetroWest service in December 2021? (Seven Beach, St Andrew's Road, Avonmouth Dock, Portway Parkway, Shirehampton, Sea Mills, Clifton Down, Redland, Montpelier, Stapleton Road, Lawrence Hill, Bristol Temple Meads, Keynsham, Oldfield Park, Bath Spa, Freshford, Avoncliff, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury - New MetroWest service).

REPLY:

Portway Station will be fully compliant with Equality Act 2010 requirements and with the *Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations: a code of practice* by the Department for Transport. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the project and designs approved by Network Rail's Built Environment Accessibility Panel. Works will be undertaken to the existing car park to accommodate accessible Blue Badge parking bays and to ensure an accessible walking route from the site entrance and bus interchange.

QUESTION 14

Question from: Gordon Richardson

Subject: Weston-Super-Mare bus and coach station

In Weston-Super-Mare, what is the start date for work to start on the Bus and coach station facilities outside Tesco stores - again this project has to start in this financial year with fully accessible bus and coach stands and toilets information point.

REPLY:

North Somerset Council are leading this project and have confirmed that the contract start date for the Weston-super-Mare Town Centre Enhancement scheme, which includes the bus interchange, is 1 February 2021 with work anticipated to be completed in November 2021. For clarity, the plan is for accessible bus and coach stands, information points but toilets are not included.

QUESTION 15

Question from: Haydn Gill

Subject: Road building (with reference to the Investment Fund report)

Question:

We are living in a climate emergency, transport is responsible for 29% of the region's CO2 emissions, and nationally an estimated 8,300 lives ended prematurely each year due to air pollution. I am concerned that WECA continues to fund feasibility studies for further road building, which clearly lead to more road mileage and pushes us further away from a future we want our children to live in.

Agenda item 20 (p252) shows that many UK cities have concluded that to become a carbon neutral city, car mileage needs to fall, by a substantial amount by 2030 (between 30% and 70%). If WECA continue building roads this will create problems in 2030, requiring a more severe (and unpopular) reduction in car mileage. Two recommendations are being proposed at this meeting, a bypass and a feasibility study for a package of new roads.

Are you willing to ignore the climate emergency we are living in and allow WECA to fund studies to deliver more roads, which will lead to more CO2 emissions and contribute to more frequent and extreme flooding, droughts and other weather events in the future?

REPLY:

WECA's approach for all new transport infrastructure is to balance the needs of the environment, our existing communities' health, inequalities and their need to travel, and the economy. This approach will also help us to manage congestion and work towards reallocating space on existing roads to more sustainable modes of transport. Road space is finite and we must make the most efficient use of it as possible in order to improve accessibility around the West of England.

In taking a balanced approach, the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4), adopted in March 2020, sets out a programme of transport schemes covering rail, cycling, mass transit, buses, walking and a limited number of new road schemes that would be necessary to create access to new development proposals and enable the reallocation of road space to more efficient travel choices and ensure that people are able to move around the network safely, efficiently and as sustainably as possible. This ensures that the transport approach remains aligned to our jointly stated ambition of carbon neutral emissions by 2030.

The initial funding for the schemes referred to aims to address and agree measures to both reduce development impact and address congestion issues in the relevant areas, with a focus on sustainable measures and limiting the use of car borne trips as far as possible to support our climate emergency declaration. It is important to note that roads serve many transport purposes and it is necessary to understand the specific transport context in which any proposal is being made.

QUESTION 16

Question from: Haydn Gill

Subject: Funding of cycling and walking schemes (with reference to the Investment Fund report)

Question:

My second question relates to the funding allocations for transport projects (p215) I note that 'Local cycling and walking infrastructure' has been allocated £1m for business case development up to 2022/23, and £3m is being spent delivery the CPNN Cycle link. This is less than 1% of the total £411m of planned improvements upto 2036 required in the WECA local cycling and walking investment plan. This pales in comparison to the £6m spent on Wraxhall roundabout to add 6 lanes through the roundabout, with no improvement in active travel, or the £1m for feasibility studies and business cases for bypasses and more roads my first question relates to.

Are you committed to delivering the WECA Local cycling and Walking investment plan, or is it not being taken seriously and I should metaphorically use it to line my hamster cage?

REPLY:

The Department for Transport (DfT) encouraged local authorities to produce a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) as a means of prioritising cycling and walking improvements. LCWIP's are therefore not intended to define the planned future investment in an area, but are a means to help guide existing investment and to help secure future funding when this is released by the DfT. The adoption of our LCWIP by this Committee in June 2020 is therefore a very positive statement of our aspiration for Cycling and Walking in our region and also leaves us well placed to secure additional central funding.

Significant investment in cycling and walking is already in place. The £1m you mention is part of a wider £10m allocation from our Investment Fund to support the design and delivery of cycling and walking schemes, and this funding sits alongside £3.8m secured during 2020 to support cycling and walking through active travel funding. There are also a number of individual cycling and walking schemes such as the CPNN investment that you mention. In addition, all of our infrastructure schemes are tasked with ensuring that walking and cycling enhancements are considered as part of any initial design of schemes that are undertaken across the network, whether these support bus use, rail or tackle air quality and congestion issues.

QUESTION 17

Question from: Amy Fletcher

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

How in any way does it make sense for us to consider expansion to a foreign-owned business, set in a beautiful part of rural Somerset, in the middle of a global pandemic, climate crisis, and illegal levels of air pollution?

Does airport expansion fit with any model of a sustainable future?

REPLY:

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A Climate Emergency Action plan has been approved and is now being implemented. Progress reports are required to be considered by the committee, and by the WECA Overview and Scrutiny committee every 6 months.

Subsequent to the North Somerset Council decision on the Airport's planning application, Bristol Airport has submitted an appeal. This appeal will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate.

QUESTION 18

Question from: Kevin Flanagan

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Having declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, re-iterated a year later that "[t]he Climate Emergency is at the heart of everything WECA does", then released a Climate Emergency Plan claiming a "clear intention to act", and given that two-thirds of constituent members (Bristol and B&ANES) are formally opposed to Bristol Airport expansion on grounds including the huge increase in CO2 emissions that would ensue, will you now vote under emergency powers to submit an objection to the appeal consultation?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

It is important to recognise that Aviation policy in the UK is a responsibility retained by central government, and therefore policy measures to reduce carbon emissions from aviation are directed by central government policy and any planning applications including an aviation element will need to be developed and assessed against extant national aviation policy.

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QUESTION 19

Question from: Richard Baxter

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Question 1 - WECA and its constituent authorities give conflicting stances on the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport. If the Planning Inspectorate asked the Combined Authority to clarify its view on whether it supports or opposes the current appeal, what would be its answer?

Question 2 - The consultation period for the Bristol Airport's planning appeal for expansion ends on Monday 22nd February. As this is the last WECA's committee before this deadline could the meeting address using emergency powers the confusing and contradictory stances which sees the two of the three constituent authorities oppose the expansion whilst WECA supports the application?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 20

Question from: Ruth Jones

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Will WECA now send an objection to Bristol Airport's appeal for expansion on the following two grounds;

- 1) democratic; given that the majority of your make up is now formally objecting i.e. Bristol and B&NES, and
- 2) response to the climate and nature emergency; given that expansion is in direct opposition to action that is required to achieve carbon net zero?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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Subsequent to the North Somerset Council decision on the Airport's planning application, Bristol Airport has submitted an appeal. This appeal will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate.

QUESTION 21

Question from: Dawn McGhee

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

As an overarching Authority where 75% of your make up is now from authorities formally objecting to the expansion of Bristol Airport (Bristol & B&NES) will you now vote under emergency powers, to send a WECA objection to the expansion to the appeal consultation?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 22

Question from: Lisa Hardless

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

1. The airport is big enough as it is so why the expansion of the premises and not the technology? i.e. harness the sun because it is free energy.
2. To expand would annihilate my future family, especially my youngest nieces, so why would you wish to harm your future flesh and blood yourself with toxic emissions without any conscience? Just for money is not a good enough reason because you cannot eat money if you are unhealthy or worse still; dead.

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 23

Question from: James Ward

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

As a combined authority in which 2 out of 3 constituent members (Bristol and B&NES) are formally opposed to Bristol Airport expansion, will you now vote under emergency powers to submit an objection to the ongoing appeal consultation?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 24

Question from: Cllr Jerome Thomas

Subject: Unspent WECA money

Question:

Please can the WECA Metro Mayor advise how much, if any, money is at risk of needing to be returned to its funder, primarily central Government, because it has not been spent?

In particular, I am interested in money that should have been spent by the end of the current financial year ending 31 March 2021.

If there is money that could and should have been spent, please it would be possible to provide a clear explanation of the reasons for failing to spend this money.

REPLY:

The key funds with a deadline for spend of March 2021 are the Local Growth Fund (LGF) and the Getting Building Fund (GBF). As set out in the One Front Door report (item 14) on this agenda, full spend of these funds is expected. To achieve this, for several years we have utilised structured overprogramming of the LGF and have also integrated the LGF and GBF programmes to maximise flexibility and provide the opportunity for projects to take advantage of the extended GBF spend deadline for half of the awarded funds of March 2022.

In the event that individual schemes in these programmes face delays, it is intended to employ funding swaps, in particular with the Economic Development Fund which is not time limited. The report seeks a delegation to the WECA Chief Executive in consultation with the West of England Chief Executives to ensure these swaps can be managed in advance of the next meeting of the Committee.

QUESTION 25

Question from: Sarah Cemlyn

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

1. Given that two of the three constituent authorities of WECA, namely BANES and Bristol Councils, now oppose the expansion of Bristol Airport, and that WECA strategic decisions are based on a two thirds majority, will WECA and the mayor now withdraw their support for the expansion of Bristol Airport, and write to the Planning Inspectorate to oppose the expansion?
2. Given that the Conservative government are carrying out an inquiry into how they may align any post- pandemic economic policies and decisions with the UK's climate and environmental goals, particularly in view of COP 26 this year, can the Mayor of WECA please show the same leadership by withdrawing WECA's support for the planned expansion of Bristol airport?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 26

Question from: Kim Hicks on behalf of the SOUTH BRISTOL WRONG ROAD GROUP

Subject: Spatial Development Strategy

Question:

BACKGROUND:

Item 12, para 22. Says: The strategy does not have formal, fixed targets but has been constructed to support the draft Spatial Development Strategy and Local Plans and sets the expectation that the funding delivers acceleration and additionality.

We understand that there is no draft SDS at this point. Equally, the BaNES local plan, for example, appears to not to be making a pronouncement on location areas, such as Whitchurch Village the SDL's or equivalent will be.

It appears that in the BaNES local plan review, *which is out for consultation at the moment*, BaNES have left it to WECA, in the replacement SDS, to decide where the sites for houses will be.

However, we have been told that the replacement SDS will not have the SDL's identified this time and we are told that it will be left to the local plans. Now the HDS is being constructed.

We appear to have come around in a full circle! The SDS failed at the independent inspection because it was poorly planned. Last time the SDS and JLTP4 were sent out for consultation at different times, 'cart before the horse' comes to mind. To the lay person it appears that the lessons have not been learned.

Constructive feedback: Para 22 is misleading if it is intended to convey that the housing delivery strategy will support and inform the draft Spatial Development Strategy and Local Plans as they are developed, rather than implying that it is being constructed to support an existing draft document.

QUESTION: Which document(s) will eventually identify the SDL's, (or equivalent), in the WECA area?

REPLY:

The SDLs were a concept for the Joint Spatial Plan. This approach will no longer be taken forward.

Instead, a high level strategic plan, the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), will set out the housing requirement for the WECA area and each UA (based on consideration of standard methodology, testing of spatial strategy scenarios and deliverability) and distribute growth through the preferred spatial strategy. The SDS will identify broad locations where this growth may be met, it will not identify specific sites.

Specific site allocations will come forward through Local Plans.

The Housing delivery strategy is a delivery document about how to accelerate the delivery of housing utilising the available tools, mechanisms and funding available to WECA and delivery partners. It is not about identifying housing numbers or specific areas for growth.

QUESTION 27

Question from: Sally Lawson

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Bristol Airport has appealed to the national planning inspectorate against the refusal of expansion. A public inquiry will consider their appeal against this refusal.

Below are questions related to this appeal, sent before the deadline of 5pm on Monday 25th Jan 2021, that I would like to be raised at the 29th Jan meeting.

1) Could the Mayor of WECA please withdraw WECA's support for the planned expansion of Bristol airport given that:

- a) that the majority i.e. 2 of the 3 authorities making up WECA (Bristol City Council and BANES (Bath and North East Somerset Council)) are against this expansion?
- b) that there will be a probable reduction in short to long-term public demand for flights due to i) COVID-related caution, ii) increased use of meetings platforms such as ZOOM and iii) growing public awareness of the damaging effect of air travel on the climate and the environmental crisis.
- c) This expansion would go directly against the aims of the UK government, who intend the UK to lead against climate chaos and environmental destruction, as they host COP26 in 2021, and this expansion goes against the Paris Climate Accord and the IPCC intentions of keeping global warming below 1.5°C. (see my statement, separate email)
- d) the permission already held by Bristol Airport for expansion that has not yet been utilised and may not be needed in view of the likely reduction in demand.

2) How can Bristol Airport reach carbon neutrality by 2025 if they take the following into account?

- a) technical carbon capture schemes are not yet developed to capture enough carbon for airport neutrality by 2025. Natural schemes (e.g. planting forests) are likely to take decades to reach their full carbon capture potential
- b) the permanent loss of the vegetation-covered land acting a present natural carbon sink and a living habitat for much wildlife that will be destroyed during airport and airport-parking expansion
- c) the increased use of concrete using cement (one of the main producers of man-made CO₂ emissions)
- d) the increase in fossil fuels to power road transport for passengers, workers and deliveries associated with a 20% expansion in air passenger numbers.
- e) the lack of viable fossil fuel alternatives to either power, or to generate fuel to power, large or medium sized planes or of planes designed to use these fuels by 2025? (If they are aware of real alternatives, please could they provide citations so we can read the evidence)
- f) The large increase in fossil fuels required to power the greater numbers of flights.

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 28

Question from: Johnny Devas

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

1. As two out of three local authorities forming WECA are now opposed to the expansion of Bristol airport, and as this expansion is incompatible with climate emergency targets, please tell me why WECA has not yet declared its opposition to the appeal by Bristol Airport, particularly as North Somerset Council had rejected the original application?

2. Quite apart from the fact that WECA declared a climate emergency in 2019, the proposed expansion of Bristol airport does not make economic sense. Development projects regularly over-estimate employment creation, with any increase mostly low paid, temporary and low-skilled.

In 2020 the New Economics Foundation reported that 75% of departures UK wide were for international leisure trips rather than for business, and that because more UK travellers fly abroad that international travellers fly in, the UK suffers from a large travel spending deficit of about £30bn. Bristol airport caters for a predominately overseas holiday market and any expansion simply amplifies the economic loss to the region.

Given the damage to both the environment and the regional economy, please tell me why WECA has not yet declared its opposition to the appeal by Bristol Airport?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 29

Question from: Ben Moss

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

With two statutory representatives of the combined authority - BANES and Bristol City Council - having approved council motions to object to any plans to expand Bristol Airport, how can WECA claim to represent both its constituents, and zero-carbon intentions, without also changing its position to objecting to the airports' expansion plans; and indeed that Tim Bowles writes to the planning inspectorate stating this change of position to an objection against expansion?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 30

Question from: Sarah Poppy Jackson

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

Over 75 % of your constituents' statutory representatives within the combined authority - BANES and Bristol City Council - have approved council motions clearly opposing any plans to expand Bristol Airport. With this knowledge, how can WECA claim to represent both its constituents, and zero-carbon intentions, without changing its position to objecting to the airports' expansion plans, and writing to the planning inspectorate to advise them of such a change of position?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 31

Question from: Duncan Still

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

I and many of my fellow health professionals colleagues, are profoundly disappointed with your decision to pursue Bristol Airport expansion.

I urge you to reconsider on grounds of public health and climate emergency. Future generations will salute and praise you if you reverse your course now but, I fear, will be less favourable if you choose not to. You are in a position of great power and authority. I urge you to use it well. Our future depends on it.

Background.

1. Bristol City Council carried a motion on Dec 8th which said that the planned Bristol Airport expansion 'must not go ahead'. This was a change from their previous position and has important implications for WECA.

2. The current stated position of WECA is to support the expansion of the airport (as stated in a letter submitted by them to the planning authorities).

3. That stated position must now change. This is because WECA is made up of three authorities; Bristol City Council, BANES and Sth. Glos, and two out of the three (BANES and now Bristol) are now against the plans. WECA's views must reflect this majority opinion.

QUESTION:

So, can you confirm that WECA will now come out against the airport's expansion plans and Tim Bowles must write to the planning inspectorate stating this objection.

And if not, can you please tell me why?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

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QUESTION 32

Question from: Cllr Martin Fodor

Subject: E Scooter trial in the West of England

Question:

Who uses the e scooters and where their journeys are from/to is an essential element of the success of this trial? Modal shift monitoring was promised.

Please supply results to date from the trial and state what further monitoring is due, with particular reference to use in Bristol and switching from other modes [eg walking, cycling, buses, trains, mobility scooters or cars] and where the journeys are [eg with reference to distances, locations and parts of the hire area, ideally ward or neighbourhood-based information] so that patterns of use and other factors around work and leisure use can be assessed.

REPLY:

The e-Scooter trial within the Region has seen very positive usage numbers since commencing at the end of October 2020. So far in Bristol we have seen over 65,500 rides since launch, totalling over 165,000 km travelled. Almost 20,000 individuals have used the eScooters and the average ride duration is 21 minutes. In Bath there has been over 15,000 rides since launch, totalling over 35,000 km travelled. Almost 6,000 individuals have used the eScooters and the average ride duration is 18 minutes.

The aim of the trials nationally was to provide a complementary form of transport to support people's travel options whilst public transport was at reduced capacity; the high usage figures within the region would suggest that there has been some positive early success here rather than simply generating new demand. However both the DfT and the region are keen to continue to understand how eScooter usage can support modal shift and reduce the number of car based trips in the future. Modal shift is inevitably harder to assess however, in addition to the current local monitoring that is already in place and has provided the details above, all trial areas are working closely with the DfT to agree and implement a consistent monitoring and evaluation approach that will help inform this aspect over the term of the trial.

QUESTION 33

Question from: Nicola Bindon

Subject: Bristol airport expansion

Question:

I would like to know if WECA will be changing its position on the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport (in light of the fact that Bristol City Council have now opposed it meaning that two out of the three WECA authorities now oppose it) and communicating this in writing to the planning inspectorate, and if not why not?

REPLY:

The Combined Authority was a statutory consultee to the original planning application in our role as a neighbouring Local Transport Authority; and it was in this capacity that we submitted a response at that time to North Somerset Council. As transport authority, we continue to work with North Somerset Council and Bristol Airport in improving public transport access to the Airport and to deliver the joint ambition to substantially reduce carbon emissions from surface transport access to the Airport and the wider region.

It is important to recognise that Aviation policy in the UK is a responsibility retained by central government, and therefore policy measures to reduce carbon emissions from aviation are directed by central government policy and any planning applications including an aviation element will need to be developed and assessed against extant national aviation policy.

More widely, the Combined Authority has recognised the critical need to address the impact of climate change and formally declared a Climate Emergency in July last year. We are committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and consideration of climate change impacts are being embedded into every aspect of the Combined Authority's work and activities. Through our Local Industrial Strategy and Regional Recovery Plan we are actively supporting investment in the de-carbonisation of aviation with our world leading firms in the region, with the ambition of being the vanguard of the development of the technology necessary for net zero aviation, which will help accelerate a reduction in carbon emissions regionally, nationally and internationally.

A Climate Emergency Action plan has been approved and is now being implemented. Progress reports are required to be considered by the committee, and by the WECA Overview and Scrutiny committee every 6 months.

Subsequent to the North Somerset Council decision on the Airport's planning application, Bristol Airport has submitted an appeal. This appeal will be determined by the Planning Inspectorate.