

## **JOINT MEETING - WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE & WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE**

**25 JUNE 2021**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REPLIES**

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

**Q1. David Redgewell - Bus Back better**

**Q2. David Redgewell - Bristol ring road**

**Q3. Ian Beckey - North Somerset joining West of England Combined Authority**

**Q4. Ian Beckey - Railways**

**Q5. Question from Kim Hicks - Strategic Development Strategy (SDS) timetable**

**Q6. Question from: Kim Hicks - Joint Local Transport Plan**

**Q7. Question from: Cllr Martin Fodor (Bristol, Green) - Climate emergency action plan update**

**Q8. Question from: Cllr Martin Fodor (Bristol, Green) - E-scooters**

## **QUESTION 1**

**Question from: David Redgewell**

**Subject: Bus back better**

### **Question:**

With the Department for Transport publishing the Bus Back Better strategy and instructing local Transport Authorities such as the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset council to improve bus services through enhanced quality partnerships or quality contracts, what progress is being made on this submission to the buses minister Baroness Vere of Norbiton, and setting up a Bus advisory panel and reinstating a public transport users forum by Mayor Norris, as zoom or an in person meeting and to discuss this issue with the Bristol Mayor's Transport board?

### **REPLY:**

Encouraging more people to travel by bus is important to help unclog our roads and meet our carbon emission targets. A report is being presented to the West of England Combined Authority and Joint Committee on 25 June giving details of the response of the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council to the National Bus Strategy. It has been published at [Agenda for Joint meeting - West of England Combined Authority Committee and West of England Joint Committee on Friday, 25th June, 2021, 11.15 am - West of England Combined Authority \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

We are working to a challenging timescale to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan for submission to Government by 31 October 2021. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan will include the outline of a Passengers' Charter and we will follow the guidance published by Government on how to give bus passengers more of a voice and a say.

## **QUESTION 2**

**Question from: David Redgewell**

**Subject: Bristol ring road**

### **Question:**

Why is West of England Combined Authority and South Gloucestershire council going out to public consultation on the roundabout junction improvements schemes on the Bristol Ring road with the consultation making very little if any reference to the importance of walking and cycling and improving bus lanes or priority measures in view of the West of England mayoral transport bus strategy wanting to improve orbital bus services in East Bristol and Kingswood part of which will use the ring road? - and the need to improve air quality around Bromley Heath, Warmley and Kingswood. At the following roundabouts Lyde Green, Rosary Roundabout, Deanery Road and Kingsfield Roundabout - Especially in view of the reference to such important policy in Bus Back Better, the Government White paper, on improvements to bus service and gear change the Government policy document on walking and cycling, and Great Britain railways with station near to the Ring road at Keynsham Filton Abbey wood and Bristol parkway. Will Mayor Norris, Mayor Rees and the council leaders Toby Savage, South Gloucestershire Council, B&NES leader Kevin Guy and Don Davies, North Somerset council review this policy in line with government guidance on integrated transport policy and the original scheme proposed by the western gateway transport board.

### **REPLY:**

We recognise the importance of walking and cycling to unclog our roads and to promote health and wellbeing.

Public consultation on this scheme is open and we would encourage you to make your views known and share any detailed comments that you might have about the scheme or its individual elements. The public consultation will inform the development of a full business case, which takes account of the benefit a scheme will bring to multiple transport modes and this business case will be submitted to Government for funding to deliver the scheme.

South Gloucestershire Council has launched a 12 week consultation on the proposed A4174 junction improvement scheme. The council has investigated options to improve the layout of five junctions on the A4174 Ring Road between the Lyde Green and Kingsfield roundabouts and do include pedestrian and cycling improvements and measures to assist bus priority.

The West of England Combined Authority continues to work with South Gloucestershire Council and the Unitary Authorities more widely, to ensure that all transport schemes in the region seek to improve multiple modes of transport and particularly sustainable transport wherever they can and that individual projects take a joined up approach to improving transport corridors rather than being considered in isolation from the wider network. The scheme itself is part of a wider package of improvements to ring road junctions proposed in the draft Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (2020 – 2036) for the West of England and this document provides the overall

approach and strategy to ensure that modal shift, sustainable transport and our declared climate emergency are central to the transport schemes that are proposed in the region.

### **QUESTION 3**

**Question from: Ian Beckey**

**Subject: North Somerset joining West of England Combined Authority**

**Question:**

What progress is now being made on a governance review of the West of England Combined Authority to allow North Somerset council to join the Authority in a shadow form to begin with and in full negotiations with the local government minister, city and county of Bristol mayor, South Gloucestershire council, B&NES and North Somerset council? – to undertake a new devolution with central government especially in view of the Government White paper on Bus Back Better on improvements to bus services on advance quality partnership and quality contracts which will require North Somerset council to work closely with the West of England combined authority in the delivery of bus services. Especially with depot for First group in Bristol, Lawrence Hill, Hengrove, Wells and Weston Super Mare, Stagecoach West at Patchway and HCT at Bristol Parson Street, Rapt Bath at Keynsham. Bus franchising powers require a strong Authorities and the ability to purchase depot assets from the Transport companies.

**REPLY:**

Taking forward a governance review and negotiations with government with a view to North Somerset Council joining the Combined Authority is a matter that would need to be taken forward jointly by the political leaders of the West of England authorities.

## **QUESTION 4**

**Question from: Ian Beckey**

**Subject: Railways**

### **Question:**

What progress is being made within the West of England Combined Authority with Mayor Norris in setting up a railway executive group of officers to work as a team with Network Rail western routes and First Group Great Western Railway on the delivery of the very important Metrowest network of local train services around Bristol and Bath with the Portishead line and the Henbury line? - Especially in view of the Government new white paper Great British Railways. It is very important that a full governance review is carried out at the mayoral transport authority to put together a full integrated transport authority if the Authority is to gain extra railway and bus power and operate along the lines of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. Please advise us of progress on such a review.

### **REPLY:**

The West of England Combined Authority has a Strategic Rail Steering Group in place that oversees the rail programme. The group includes Network Rail, Great Western Railway, Department for Transport and representatives from all the West of England Unitary Authorities. Alongside regular programme delivery meetings with Network Rail, our rail projects, including the Portishead and Henbury Lines are continually reviewed via the Steering Group. We are taking a holistic approach to our network to seek to achieve the maximum benefit to communities across the region. This includes ongoing consideration of powers, and indeed, access to funding.

## **QUESTION 5**

**Question from: Kim Hicks (on behalf of South Bristol Wrong Road group)**

**Subject: Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) timetable**

### **Question:**

What is the timetable for the West of England Combined Authority consulting on the SDS and will you consult again when each Unitary Authority's local plans are produced?

### **REPLY:**

Ensuring clean, inclusive recovery and **growth** for the West of England is vital. As indicated in the Committee Report, the Spatial Development Strategy timetable has been subject to review. The revised timetable sets out that the formal consultation period for the Spatial Development Strategy is likely to take place in Spring 2022, for a period of 12 weeks. All Stakeholders on our database will be notified of this following the Committee. Local Authorities preparing Local Plans will also undertake public consultation as part of their plan making process.

## **QUESTION 6**

**Question from: Kim Hicks (on behalf of South Bristol Wrong Road group)**

**Subject: Joint Local Transport Plan**

### **Question:**

Given that the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 was produced for the (failed) Joint Spatial Plan, when will you update the transport plan and when will the public be consulted about the update?

### **REPLY:**

Good Joint Local Transport Plans connect people and places so we can have a vibrant, inclusive and carbon neutral West of England.

The Joint Local Transport Plan 4 sets out the range of the West of England's transport policies and considers the impacts of current challenges as well as future growth on the transport network. It is therefore a stand-alone document and so was not prepared to solely support the Joint Spatial Plan. When the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 was adopted in March 2020, the West of England Joint Committee requested a commitment to review the plan including establishing what will be required to reach the Combined Authority's Climate Emergency Action Plan target to be carbon neutral by 2030.

We have commenced work on the evidence base to inform the next plan, including progressing the procurement of a Transport Decarbonisation Study which was approved at Committee on 29 January 2021. We are also awaiting an announcement from central government on the national decarbonisation strategy.

As yet timescales for the next Joint Local Transport Plan have not yet been agreed and the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 remains the extant transport strategy for the West of England. However, it is currently envisaged that the earliest that public consultation on the next Joint Local Transport Plan could take place is from Summer 2022.

## QUESTION 7

**Question from: Cllr Martin Fodor**

**Subject: Climate Emergency Action Plan (agenda item 11)**

### **Question:**

The West of England Combined Authority declared a climate emergency in July 2019, making a commitment to work towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) set out five challenges and associated and objectives for reducing emissions in the region and meeting this objective: 1. Low carbon transport system – Work to decarbonise the transport system and increase walking and cycling and the use of public transport; building on positive behaviour change following the covid-19 pandemic. 2. Low carbon business – Help business and local people benefit from growth in the green economy; maximising government investment in the region and supporting our businesses to build back better. 3. Renewable energy – Work to decarbonise the energy system and increase local renewable energy. 4. Low carbon buildings and places – Increase the energy efficiency performance of buildings and develop low carbon standards in new developments. 5. The green environment – Protect and enhance the environment through a proactive approach to green infrastructure.

I'd like to understand **what is the scale of the gap to be bridged?** – i.e. how far are we on the way to the 2030 target in terms of what the West of England Combined Authority region authority is taking responsibilities for and are we on track to reach it? In this regard, what does this mean for issues like: retrofitting, renewable generation, nature recovery, transport, or SMEs [for instance 18 SME have been helped to complete energy saving projects – how many will need help to take action by 2030]

### **REPLY:**

There is a climate and biodiversity emergency.

The trajectory outlined on page 63 of the report pack provides an estimate of the scale of the gap to be achieved if the region is to achieve the ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

There is no clear established pathway to delivering net zero which can make placing targets or detailed trajectories on different sectors or challenge areas difficult. New technologies and approaches are constantly emerging and challenge areas are often overlapping, with action that is taken in one area having an impact on emissions and trajectories in another.

The Actions contained within the Climate Emergency Action Plan were developed using the Unitary Authorities' baselines of emissions and suggested trajectories to ensure that we were targeting the largest causes of emissions.

The progress report provides a regional update on progress towards our climate emergency ambitions, including metrics on projects solely within the control of the Combined Authority.

The regional and national datasets have been chosen as key indicators that align with the ambitions of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and activity led by the West of England Combined Authority. The indicators summarise the state of the region for each priority area, and we expect the activities of the Climate Emergency Action Plan to contribute to positive change. We do not have total control over these measures because many other factors play a role so no specific targets have been assigned, but it is important we understand the current position.

## QUESTION 8

Question from: Cllr Martin Fodor

Subject: E-scooters

Question:

Regarding the Future Transport zone scheme of e-scooters: **what's the actual observed modal shift and how many users are observed to swap from car journeys or hire cabs, compared to swapping from walking and cycling?** In this regards I'd like to understand:

- a. If it's primarily saving fossil fuels and cutting pollution or tending to increasing mobility and reducing fitness by reducing active travel
- b. In terms of safety what has been learned about the quality of cycle facilities in the areas used by e-scooters
- c. Whether the trial supports need for the safe cycling network to be upgraded to deal with all the extra travel by vulnerable users
- d. How authorities, organisations and people across the region feed in to the trial evaluation.

**REPLY:**

We all want to change the way people travel around to help cut our carbon emissions. There is a trial of e-scooters taking place which is set to be extended. We will look at the evidence provided.

The current statistics indicate 28% of e-scooter trips replace car and taxi journeys and 52% replace Walking or Cycling.

To date the trial has seen a total of 994,661 rides covering 2,303,950km. From the surveys undertaken by the operator, it is estimated that approximately 275,000 car journeys and 141 tonnes of CO2 have been averted due to users opting for e-scooters over cars.

E-scooters are intended to be complementary to walking and cycling rather than a form of travel that is in conflict, in much the same way as has previously been seen with electric bikes. All e-scooter journeys involve an element of active travel as part of an overall journey and often provide the first / last mile solution to enable public transport use. By providing an additional sustainable transport option, the aim is to also reduce wider car dependency over time, thereby increasing the regularity of active travel and public transport use in general.

E-scooter users (and the general public) are encouraged to give regular feedback about the network and cycle facilities and any incidents reported that highlight poor quality of facilities or poor carriageway condition, such as pot-holes, are recorded and any trends or hot-spots analysed. This is also anticipated to be an area that DfT will reflect on as part of the overall review of the trials.

Data is not available at present to understand this need, however extra travel by vulnerable users would indicate that sustainable and active travel is increasing - a shift that is already supported by the type of transport infrastructure invested in across the region. As noted in (b) above, it is also anticipated that this would be an area that Department for Transport will reflect on.

The Department for Transport is undertaking the trial monitoring and evaluation to provide the evidence base for any ministerial decision on the future of e-scooters, independently of the Unitary Authorities hosting the trial.

The West of England Combined Authority is undertaking its own monitoring and evaluation working closely with the Unitary Authorities and will link with the overall Department for Transport approach. The public can always provide comment on any transport aspect directly to the Unitary Authorities or to the Combined Authority through the travelwest website, <https://travelwest.info/projects/e-scooter-trial>, or the e-scooter trial inbox at [escootertrial@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:escootertrial@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)