



# 19. Water Transport Supporting Statement

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# 19. Water Transport Supporting Statement

## 1. Setting the Scene

- 1.1 Waterways in the JLTP area fall into 5 categories:
- River Avon downstream from Hanham Lock with Bristol City Council being the navigation authority;
  - Bristol Harbour, the responsibility of the City Council;
  - River Avon upstream of Hanham Lock with navigation controlled by British Waterways;
  - River Avon upstream of Kennet & Avon Canal;
  - Kennet & Avon Canal with navigation controlled by British Waterways.
  - Apart from ferry services in Bristol Harbour, water transport is orientated towards leisure. Previous commercial freight activity has ceased.

## 2. Vision

Our vision is to see water transport playing an increased role in the provision of public transport in the JLTP area with recreational use of waterways focusing increasingly on access by public transport, cycling and walking as an alternative to the car.



## 3. Water Transport and the Shared Priorities

### Congestion

Movement of swing bridges can interrupt traffic flow in the vicinity of Bristol Harbour. Bristol Harbour ferries are part of the public transport system and can contribute towards combating congestion by providing an alternative to car use.

### Road Safety

Waterside footpaths and cycle paths provide off-road facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

### Accessibility

Waterside footpaths and cycle paths give access to local facilities and to the countryside.

### Air Quality

The Bristol Harbour swing bridges can cause significant traffic congestion when opened for vessels, with consequent adverse impact on air quality.

### Other Quality of Life issues

Bristol Harbour is a major city centre urban space and the River Avon is a major feature in both Bath and Bristol. The proximity of water creates community safety challenges. Waterside paths and the water itself provide opportunities for recreation and sport, promoting healthy living. The River Avon and Kennet and Avon Canal are major countryside assets, contributing to the area's diverse landscape and biodiversity.

## 4. Issues

- 4.1 Water transport in the JLTP area was once dominated by Bristol Harbour with ships carrying goods and passengers up the Avon Gorge from the Severn Estuary. With the development of the Port of Bristol at Avonmouth and Royal Portbury Dock (see

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Freight Supporting Statement), the 'Floating' Harbour and the River Avon downstream from Bristol are today used almost exclusively by leisure craft.

- 4.2 Transport issues now focus on recreational use of the water and in particular access to waterside facilities. Regattas and other events taking place in the Harbour at peak holiday periods attract large crowds and put pressure on the transport system. Another issue is the adverse impact on road traffic of the Plimsoll, Merchants and Prince Street swing-bridges when required for the movement of vessels.
- 4.3 The JLTP area historically had a number of ferry services providing short cross-river links (e.g. the Pill ferry) and links across the Severn Estuary. Today, regular ferry services operate in Bristol Harbour, mainly for tourists, but with peak commuter services to Temple Meads station. A cross-harbour link was introduced in Autumn 2004 between Capricorn Quay and the SS Great Britain. Usage of the cross-harbour link is limited and the main issue revolves around how this form of water transport can be promoted and patronage increased. There have been discussions about the potential development of new ferry services, for example using hovercraft between North Somerset and Bristol and 'park and glide' in Bath, and opportunities may arise for innovations of this kind.
- 4.4 Between Hanham Lock and Bath, navigation on the River Avon is controlled by British Waterways and attracts a range

of leisure craft from trip boats to cruisers, yachts, rowing boats and canoes.

Transport issues focus on access to the water and along the banks. Vehicular access to moorings, marinas and landing stages is variable; in many places it is constrained by narrow lanes and poor sightlines. The towpath is a major attraction. The river is followed by two bus corridors and services along these routes offer scope to gain access by public transport; the Avon Valley Railway offers an alternative means of access.

- 4.5 The River Avon is a major part of the heritage of Bath and caters for a number of pleasure trip boats and other leisure craft. The towpath is part of the National Cycle Network. Issues revolve mainly around enhancing access to the river and making greater use of it as a landscape and recreational feature. Upstream of Bath the river is navigable for only a short distance to Bathampton and access to the water is restricted.
- 4.6 The Kennet & Avon Canal is part of the British Waterways national canal network and has undergone extensive restoration. The K&A Canal Rural Transport Partnership was established in 2003 and promotes non-car access. The canal attracts a large number of leisure craft and also accommodates houseboats. The towpath is a key part of the National Cycle Network and is well used. Transport issues focus on the pressures for car access, especially off the A36, competition for parking and the scope for attracting more access by bus and rail.



## 5. Delivery Programme in the Plan Period 2001/02 to 2005/06

5.1 In the first LTP period the following measures and schemes have been implemented:

- New cross-harbour ferry introduced in Bristol Harbour;
- Traffic management schemes and public transport promotion in support of major Harbour events;
- Working with partners on enhancement of river and canal towpaths as part of National Cycling Network;
- Involvement of Councils in the Kennet & Avon Canal Rural Transport Partnership, Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership and Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, all seeking to reduce reliance on car access to waterways.

## 6. Good Practice

### Bristol City Docks

In the previous LTP period two new landing stages were provided in Bristol City Docks to serve local ferry services. The landing stage at the Mardyke was funded through the LTP and the other as part of the Temple Quay regeneration scheme.

An EC VIVALDI project funds the operation of a cross-harbour ferry between the SS Great Britain and Capricorn Quay, providing an efficient link between areas such as Southville and the city centre. The service operates during peak hours on weekdays and all day on weekends carrying up to 3,900 passengers per month.

### Kennet & Avon Canal

The Kennet & Avon Canal Rural Transport Partnership was set up in 2003 with the aim of 'enhancing rural transport services within the canal corridor in order to

promote and improve sustainable access to, and use of, the canal'. The Partnership's work focuses on tourism and leisure visitors to the Kennet & Avon Canal, while also improving access to jobs, services and recreational activities for rural populations.

The partnership includes Bath and North East Somerset Council, other authorities, British Waterways, the Countryside Agency and a range of business and voluntary sector organisations. The [visitkanda.com](http://visitkanda.com) website gives information on how to get to the canal by train, bus, bike or foot plus suggestions for walks and bike rides along the canal.

## 7. Strategy

7.1 The water transport strategy focuses on the following:

- Enhancing waterside access as key parts of the regeneration of Bristol city centre and Western Riverside in Bath.
- Working with partners on promoting sustainable access to recreational facilities on the River Avon and Kennet and Avon Canal through visitor travel plans, enhanced public transport information, marketing and other initiatives (see [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk); [www.visitkanda.com](http://www.visitkanda.com); [www.heartofwessex.org.uk](http://www.heartofwessex.org.uk));



- Seeking ways and means of increasing patronage of Bristol Harbour ferries and integrating them further into the public transport system, e.g. ticketing.
- Taking account of the role of waterside paths in accessibility planning and Rights of Way Improvement Plans.
- Exploring the potential for other ferries or innovative forms of water transport.
- Exploring the potential for niche freight markets on the Avon and canal, e.g. small scale carrying of solid fuel to boaters and riverside properties.
- Working with Bristol Harbourmaster to meet navigational requirements of harbour craft whilst minimising adverse impact on traffic flow through bridge swings.

## 8. Targets

No specific target has been set but the water transport strategy has links with LTP1a, b and c Accessibility and LTP3 Cycling trips.