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Date: 7 September 2011  
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Dear John,

## **LEP support for the West of England Major Transport Schemes**

I am writing on behalf of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership in support of the five Major Transport Schemes that have been submitted by the four West of England authorities.

Together these schemes represent a substantial step change in the provision of critical transport infrastructure in the West of England. They form an essential element of the LEP's delivery plans to achieve its key targets for growth in employment and economic activity. This will enable the West of England to play the fullest role in securing the UK's economic recovery. The LEP Board met on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and endorsed this letter of support.

The schemes which are being submitted to the Department of Transport by the required date of 9 September are:

- Bath Transportation Package
- Ashton Vale to Bristol City Centre Rapid Transit
- Weston Package
- North Fringe to Hengrove Package
- South Bristol Link Road.

## **Background to the LEP and its support for the schemes**

Since its formation last year, the West of England LEP has made considerable progress in identifying, agreeing and pursuing its key economic objectives. The LEP incorporates the four unitary authorities and all of the key business organizations in the region (in particular, Business West, CBI, Institute of Directors and the Federation of Small Businesses). The aspirations of the LEP are particularly focused on delivering significant and sustainable economic growth over the next 20 years. More specifically, the LEP proposal to Government in September 2010 contained the following key economic objectives:

- the promotion of key growth sectors in the area to contribute to achieving 3.4% growth in GVA by 2030
- The creation of 95,000 jobs by 2030
- Securing £1bn of private sector investment over the next five years.

The West of England area is widely recognised as having the highest rate of regional growth and economic activity, both historic and forecast. The area is expected to return to pre-recession levels of employment by 2013, whereas on average the Core Cities are expected to return to peak in 2017 and the Core City LEPs in 2015<sup>1</sup>.

The LEP has been working hard to put the West of England area at the forefront of the national economic recovery. Enhanced transport infrastructure, and in particular securing approval of the five Major Transport Schemes, has been identified as one of the LEP's major priorities. It is central to the delivery of the LEP's key economic objectives referred to above. The Major Transport Schemes will improve access to jobs, reduce congestion, attract new business and maintain the strong performance of existing business.

The LEP therefore fully supports the five Major Transport Schemes in the West of England, recognising that they are vital to improving access and connectivity, and securing wider economic growth. The LEP has been actively engaged in the development of these schemes, together with the key business organisations noted above and other businesses who have themselves separately written to express their support.

A particular priority for the LEP is the delivery of a successful Enterprise Zone and Enterprise Areas. The Major Transport Schemes are necessary to achieve this ambition for the following reasons:

### **Focusing on delivery of the Enterprise Zone and Enterprise Areas**

In order to meet the key economic targets of the LEP, a higher level of economic activity is required than that which is currently being achieved. For the West of England to achieve this, it will be vital to identify and develop key sites to deliver jobs and homes across the four authority areas. The delivery of the Enterprise Zone at Temple Quay in Bristol, and the broader set of Enterprise Areas is central to this. Together with other major employment sites, the Enterprise Zone and Areas have the potential to deliver 60,000 of the 95,000 jobs by 2030 that the LEP has set itself as a minimum objective.

Significant opportunities exist within our priority key sectors at the following Enterprise Zone and other Enterprise Area locations:

- Avonmouth/Sevenside Enterprise Area
- Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area
- Science Park Enterprise Area/Emersons Green
- Filton/A38 Enterprise Area
- Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone
- Weston-super-mare Gateway Enterprise Area.

The LEP is committed to exploiting the Enterprise Zone design and implementation to maximise its contribution to jobs and GVA growth across the LEP area. Simplified planning

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford Economics, February 2010

controls, retention of business rates and high speed digital connectivity will increase the rate at which new jobs are generated in the growth area.

One of the key opportunities of the Enterprise Zone and Enterprise Areas is the potential transport connectivity between them that would be achieved if the Major Transport Schemes were approved. Improved transport connectivity will provide mutual benefits in terms of potential for clustering, collaboration between sectors, and the provision of conditions to support knowledge transfer and new business start ups. It is this type of collaboration that marked Bath and Bristol out as 2 of the top 9 hotspots of creative industries in the UK in a recent study by NESTA. The Enterprise Zone at Temple Quarter with its integrated transport hub will, among other things, link the creative hotspots of Bristol and Bath and will provide the sector with the opportunity for further innovation and growth.

The West of England region will be able to secure the maximum economic benefits from the Enterprise Zone and Enterprise Areas if they are linked up by the Major Transport Schemes.

### **LEP support for the Joint Local Transport Plan and Major Transport Infrastructure**

The delivery of key strategic transport infrastructure will be instrumental to the future viability and delivery of the Enterprise Zone/Areas and priority growth locations. As well as these transport schemes, which are necessary to unlock the full potential of the Enterprise Zone/Areas, the LEP recognises the need to bring forward a number of other key pieces of infrastructure identified through the West of England Joint Local Transport Plan as the next priorities over the plan period to 2026. Key amongst these will be rail schemes which have the ability to unlock growth and maximise the opportunities for electrification.

The Map at figure 1 (appendix) illustrates the Enterprise Zone, Enterprise Areas and priority growth locations, and the major transport schemes for which the authorities are seeking investment from the Department of Transport. The schemes are vital to ensure the economic potential of the area is realised, and that the planned growth is supported by the provision of necessary infrastructure.

Additional transport investment is a key lever to drive the continued economic success of the West of England, enabling it to play a leading role in the UK's economic recovery and growth potential. Good internal and external connectivity are key characteristics of a successful and competitive city region.

The benefits of the recently announced decision to electrify the Great Western Mainline will also be realised if the Major Transport Schemes are approved, providing quick and easy access between the West of England region and London via Bristol Temple Meads.

Cities are drivers of the economy, and it is in City Regions, such as the West of England, that returns on transport investment are greatest. The West of England authorities commissioned KPMG to assess how the above programme of Major Transport Schemes proposed in the area would support employment growth. The tested package of five priority infrastructure schemes will deliver additional economic output of some **£356m per annum** (2010 prices) within the area.

We hope that you will take into account the very strong support of the LEP for the Major Transport Schemes programme in the West of England.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Skellet  
Chairman of the West of England Local Enterprise Board

CLlr Barbara Janke  
Vice Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board

**Figure 1: Major Transport Schemes Enterprise Zones/Areas & Priority Growth locations**

