

Appendix F

Stakeholder Consultation Report

Outcomes of consultation activity June–August 2011

Version dated 24 August 2011

Weston Package

Stakeholder consultation



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Introduction

The Corporate Support Unit was contacted in June 2011 to provide communications and marketing support for the Weston Package stakeholder consultation. Based on the communications strategy and the Major Scheme Business Case previously written the objectives, target audiences and identification of stakeholders were mainly in place.

The aim of the communications plan was to support the Highways Team in the provision of effective and professional communication with the relevant stakeholder groups and to turn the strategy into action.

A high awareness of the Weston Package was needed as well as a “call to action” where stakeholders were requested comments on the schemes. To gain concrete feedback is notoriously difficult and with the holiday season beginning, it was vital that key stakeholders were informed quickly and their comments in writing were encouraged.

To achieve this, and because of the wide list of stakeholders, it was important to prioritise those likely to be affected by, or interested in, the schemes. To this end, a working document of Communications Activity was prepared identifying the key stakeholders for each scheme. The document was issued weekly to the Highways Team to provide updates on progress and requests for action. The working document identified clearly who was responsible for which action and gave a focus to the communications project.

There was a tight deadline and the need to generate comment quickly from as many stakeholders as possible. There were three key communications tools that were likely to deliver maximum impact in a minimum timeframe: web-based communications, signage along the identified routes and face-to-face meetings/presentations. Although backed up with other methods, these tools became the core for stakeholder consultation.

The Weston Package is part of a wider programme of major transport schemes in the West of England sub-regional economic area. As such it is widely communicated across the sub-region under the Travel+ branding. This branding appears on leaflets, on vehicles and wherever work is being done to improve transport options. The Travel+ communication includes a regular forum that reaches key sub-regional stakeholders including businesses, transport groups, the freight industry, the Primary Care Trust and local universities. The sub-regional major scheme programme also has the support of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership.

Liaison with the West of England communications team enabled media coverage including web links to progress with speed. The Weston Package document produced by Travel+ was extremely useful in face-to-face meetings and presentations and was distributed to stakeholders in person and via the North Somerset website.



The following pages outline the detailed communications activity over the last eight weeks –
23 June – 17 August 2011.



1.0 Overview

Consultation with stakeholders was given a high priority within the Weston Package proposals. This was considered to be particularly vital in Weston-super-Mare which is a traditional town with a close-knit community where the views of organisations and its residents can “make or break” changes or plans. With this in mind, extensive consultation began in 2009 which helped to shape the details of the scheme.

Once the revised Communications Strategy was in place (appendix C), North Somerset Council appointed dedicated resources to communicate the details of the Weston Package to key stakeholders and request comments. The aim was to consult with as many people as possible during a sustained eight week period before the bid deadline. To this end, the consultation picked up momentum during June, July and August 2011 with a planned mix of communication methods that included:

- Road signs
- Web site presence (both our own and through Travel+), new web page and dedicated home page listing
- Electronic survey
- Social media
- Media coverage
- Articles in NS Life magazine
- Presentations
- Meetings
- Letter drops
- Briefings to staff and politicians
- Linking with Travel+ branding and website

The methods chosen for communication varied according to the likely issues and preferences of the target stakeholder. For instance, the general public were encouraged to comment on the Weston Package through the on-line survey and via the web site. Businesses, landowners, transport organisations, retailers, trade organisations and other key stakeholders were offered face-to-face meetings so plans could be explained to them. Councillors from North Somerset and Weston-super-mare Town Council received face-to-face presentations. All parties were asked to send in letters or emails outlining their views. Details of the ongoing consultation activity can be found in the working document on request.

In all, a total of 42 letters and emails have been received from the business community, 372 people completed the online survey, 1,058 viewed the Weston Package webpage and over 36,000 people have had the opportunity to see information about the Weston Package via social media.



2.0 Consultation with general public

North Somerset Life

The council's monthly magazine, NS Life, carried a full page article on the Weston Package in the July 2011 edition (appendix B). This award-winning magazine is distributed to every household in North Somerset (93,000 copies) by Royal Mail and has a proven 85% readership amongst adult residents. A second reminder article appeared in the August edition directing people to the Weston Package web page and requesting their participation in the survey (appendix B)

Signage

With commuters making up a significant section of the "interested general public", large framed signs were erected along the key routes that would be affected by Weston Package works. They were erected in situations to include car drivers, pedestrians and public transport users. These signs directed commuters to the web site for information (appendix B)

Media coverage

The local newspaper, the Weston and Somerset Mercury, ran articles on the Weston Package as well as featuring on its website.

The endorsement of John Penrose MP for Weston-super-Mare and Minister for Tourism & Heritage, also resulted in a flurry of media coverage in the Weston Mercury and on BBC News, Somerset (appendix B).

Online presence

A new web page was created on the North Somerset Council website to give information on the Weston Package. A specific shortcut to the actual page was created (www.n-somerset.gov.uk/westonpackage) to make it easy to find. A homepage link with copy and a photograph formed the headline on the website for three weeks. The website address was advertised through roadside signs and in letters and emails that were sent out between 30 May and 31 July 2011.

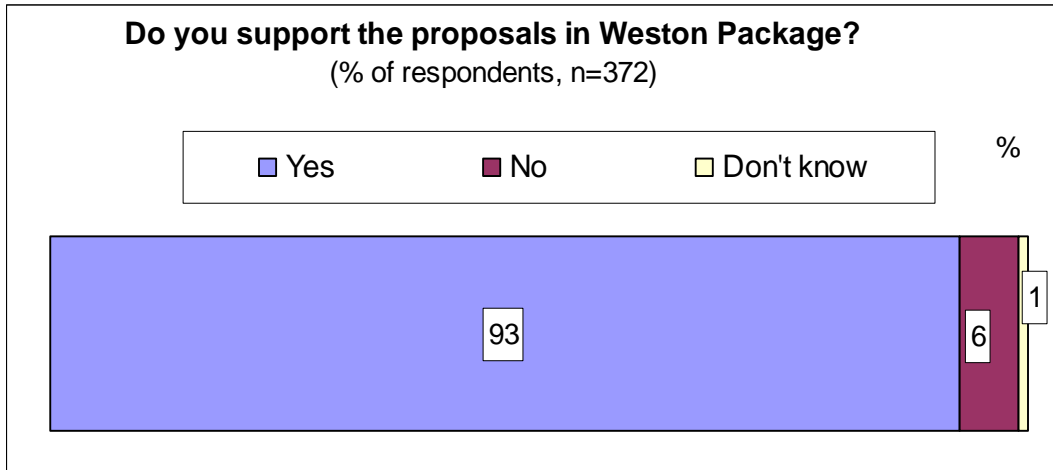
Over this period, 1,058 people viewed the Weston Package web page with 841 people using the shortcut to directly access it. A web link was set up on the web page to a short three question survey.

Links through to and the West of England's Travel+ site were also used.

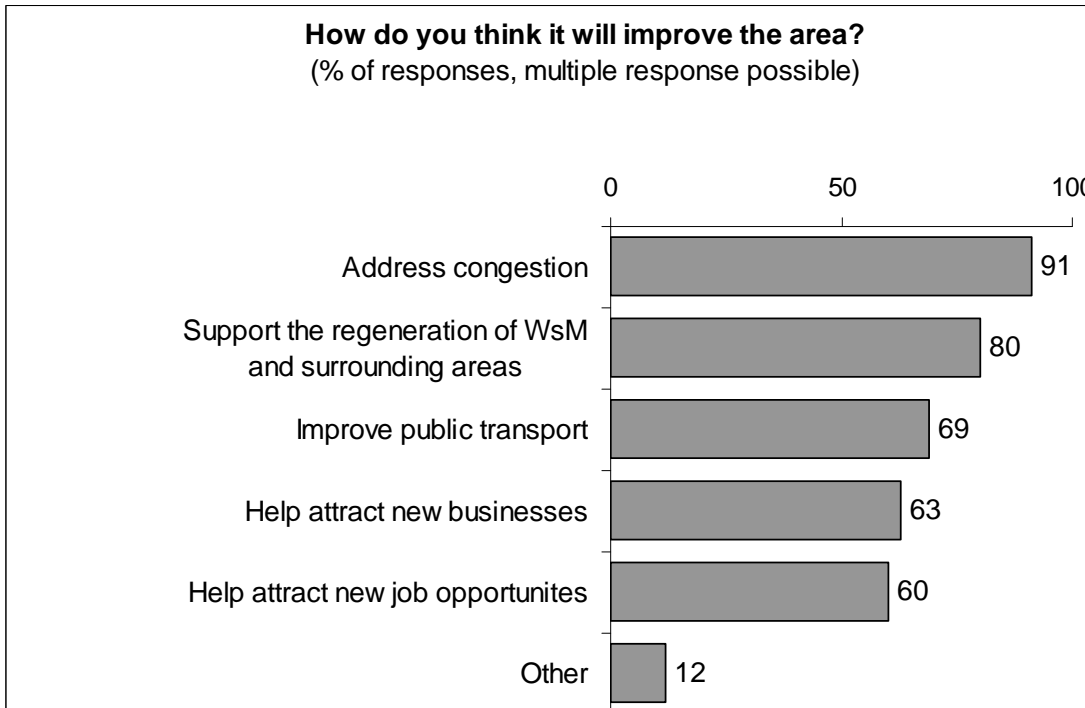


Electronic survey/econsult

The electronic survey ran from 27 June to 1 August 2011. 372 people answered the question concerning support for the Weston Package. The results show that 93% of respondents support the proposals.



Respondents were asked how the proposals will improve the area. The most commonly selected option was that it will address congestion, accounting for 91% of the responses.





Twelve percent of respondents chose “other” within this question. These 44 people (plus an extra 14 respondents who didn’t tick “other”) gave some free-text explanation of the other benefits. These along with comments from the third question (“Do you have any other comments you would like to make?”) have been reviewed.

The main positive comments fall into the following categories:

1. Better for business/tourism/jobs (47 comments)
2. Improve traffic flow/reduce congestion (25 comments)
3. Better public transport (8)
4. Cleaner/better environment (8)
5. Safer (7)
6. Better for residents (7)
7. Stress reduction (5)
8. Improved pedestrian and cycle facilities (3)
9. Better for disabled people (1)

On the negative side, many of the comments do not relate to the Weston Package. The vast majority of negative comments (43) related to the need for Junction 21 outbound improvements. Seven people thought that the scheme would not bring improvements to the area and six people thought that the gains made by the scheme would only be temporary and offset by new housing.

A copy of the questionnaire and the detailed report with comments can be found at appendix C.

Social media

During the period of the eight week campaign, over 36,000 members of the general public were able to see information on the Weston Package via social media.

The council was able to make use of Twitter and Facebook to give out information and invite comments about the Weston Package. This was a potentially risky strategy as the subject proposed is rarely kept on track and it can attract negative comments on other unrelated issues. However, it was felt that providing information was given regularly and questions were answered quickly, that it was a good way of communicating the message to residents, especially the younger age profile.

- **Twitter**

We used the North Somerset Council Twitter account to send six targeted tweets between 28 June and 3 August 2011. These messages had a reach of 35,236 Twitter users in total through tweets and re-tweets.



- **Facebook campaign**

At the time of writing (10 August 2011), the North Somerset Council Facebook group has 951 'friends'. These are people, organisations, businesses and other stakeholders who all have an interest in Council business.

A Facebook page was created on 23 June 2011. This was used to communicate to people about Weston Package plans and the bid. It served as a dedicated place where people could post questions, concerns or comments. We were able to read and respond to this form of communication, which helped to improve understanding of the bid.

We used the North Somerset Council Facebook group to promote the Weston Package page and encouraged people to join. We also posted messages about the Weston Package on the group's wall and we encouraged people to communicate with us there.

Between 27 June and 3 August 2011, we posted 12 messages on the North Somerset Council Facebook group wall. Each message would have appeared in the newsfeed of over 900 stakeholders.

Within this time, nine people 'liked' our posts. In addition, we received 36 comments and we replied 15 times.

For the full social media report, see appendix C.

Other groups

Sustrans, the leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys they take every day, was directly approached and responded with qualified support and its letter can be viewed in appendix A.

It was important to involve the elderly population who were not so likely to be using online communications. Weston-super-Mare Senior Citizens Forum, with over 2000 members, was consulted and we received an email of support.

3.0 Statutory bodies

Comments from English Heritage, Natural England and The Environment Agency were received during the 2009 initial consultation. As these organisations are already aware of the details of the Weston Package and their comments and concerns will be picked up during the planning procedure, it was felt that they should not be approached in the interim for additional comments.



The Local Economic Partnership is fully supportive of the West of England Partnership bid and of the Weston Package portion of the bid. Bristol Airport, another key stakeholder, has also written in support of the West of England bid.

A meeting took place with Avon and Somerset Constabulary and the organisation is supportive of the scheme. Its Traffic Management section wish to receive notice if the scheme goes ahead so it can plan effectively. Various other comments were made and addressed at the meeting and these can be found at appendix A.

We consulted with our Equality and Diversity staff and information has been sent via them to the Physical Sensory Impairment Engagement Group. This group covers representatives from a very wide range of impairments and will be kept informed throughout the process and may require different formats for information later.

4.0 Key business stakeholders

Local and national businesses

A list was drawn up of the key businesses that would be affected by the Weston Package. The list included developers, large and influential local trade groups, organisations and smaller local businesses. Face-to-face visits were arranged with as many of the key stakeholders as possible, particularly those most likely to be affected, so that plans could be discussed in detail and any questions could be answered immediately.

Of particular importance concerning the Junction 21 improvements is local tourism business and landowner/developer The Mead Group. This company owns land on the boundary of Junction 21 and at the Locking Parklands site as well as operating the Puxton Park tourism business. A presentation was given to the company and after liaison with their consultant Hydrock Byways & Highways, Mead Realisations has sent in a detailed letter of support. The Mead Group has also given the council preliminary approval to use its land if necessary during the construction phase and will be happy to work in partnership with the council

The support of First Bus around the changes in Elmham Way and at Worle Station is welcomed. Discussions are ongoing with First Great Western/Network Rail where we are working closely with them on a weekly basis. Concerns have been addressed and the organisation is positive towards the Worle Station scheme.

The Sovereign Shopping Centre, representing 39 large, well-known retailers including Wilkinson, Waterstones, Body Shop, Currys, Evans, Halifax and Burger King, has emailed its support of the package and in particular welcomes the Junction 21 M5 and Marchfields Way elements.

GVA Grimley Limited has written on behalf of its clients the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and St Modwen Properties Plc. St. Modwen has written in its own right too.



This partnership is leading an employment led, mixed use site at Locking Parkland that is expected to provide opportunities for up to 2,000 new jobs and 1,500 homes. St Modwen also owns employment sites at Hutton Moor and Westland Distribution Park on Winterstoke Road. All parties support the Weston Package.

The Arcadia Housing Group is a major employer in Weston-super-Mare and is planning to close its five regional offices to build a new 40,000 sq ft headquarters in Weston-super-Mare on land near Junction 21 of the M5.

“The proposed Weston Package improvements would undoubtedly make it easier to attract inward investment in the area by businesses such as ours, creating new employment opportunities and positive economic spin-offs.” **Nick Horne, Chief Executive, Arcadia Housing Group.**

We were pleased to receive the support of Alliance Homes (formerly North Somerset Housing) that provides about 6,500 homes within North Somerset. The company views *“improvement to the transport network as being a fundamental part to improving the employment prospects and life circumstances for many of our tenants.”* **Clive Bodley, Chief Executive, Alliance Homes.**

Trade organisations

Support from local trade organisations has been strong and many of the small and medium sized businesses registered their views through these organisations.

In particular, the Weston-super-Mare and District Chamber of Trade and Commerce wrote on behalf of its 91 members in support of the schemes. North Somerset Industrial Association has written in support after discussing the Weston Package plans with its membership of 25 key businesses.

“For the Industrial Association the main reason is the improved access for deliveries and despatches. Upon this the health and many present and future companies depends as, of course, does the future job opportunities of the people of Weston. We wish you success in this essential bid.” **Charles Walker, Chairman, North Somerset Industrial Association.**

Visits to explain plans to the Weston-super-Mare Town Centre Partnership and the Business Enterprise Agency resulted in supportive letters from these organisations.

Tourism

In 2010 there were 6,484,000 visitors to Weston-super-Mare, of which 5,903,000 were day visitors, bringing £368,878,000 into the local economy in direct and indirect expenditure.



The important role of tourism in the economic development and job creation in Weston-super-Mare cannot be underestimated.

Tourism businesses have been quick to support the Weston Package plans which many see as complimenting the other investment and infrastructure developments in the town.

The Weston-super-Mare Hotels and Restaurants Association that represents over 120 tourism businesses in the town has sent in its full support for the Weston Package.

“...the Weston Package aims to address current congestion issues, unlock major development potential, complement other investment in Weston (and the South West) as well as help to deliver significant sustainable development and Weston, and I wish to register our full support for it.” **Keith Fearn, President, Weston-super-Mare Hotels and Restaurants Association.**

One of the largest tourism businesses in the town, the Grand Pier, has written in support of the scheme as has the smaller Mendip Outdoor Pursuits and the coach transport company WebberBus. New tourism businesses that are planned, such as the Leisure Dome, support the schemes too (GVA Grimley Limited on behalf of its client LeisureDome (UK) Ltd).

Over 200 coach companies around the country were contacted with details of the scheme and asked to comment with WebberBus and National Express expressing their support.

“...Based on the size of the town, the provision of National Express services for Weston is not what we would like to be able to provide. Vital to us improving the service is the need for a much reduced time to get through Junction 21 and the links to wherever we may serve in the area.” **Mike Lambden, Head of Corporate Affairs - Bus and Coach**

Educational organisations

Weston College has become an increasingly important organisation within Weston-super-Mare with its new additional university campus and increased student numbers. The college is fully supportive of the Weston Package.

“The proposals outlined within the Weston Package bid will help to ensure the future of Weston-super-Mare as a thriving community which offers a safer, greener environment with education, training and employment opportunities accessible to all. Improvements to the bus routes, links between rail and bus travel and easing the congestion around Junction 21 of the M5 will play an integral part in assuring much needed development and regeneration.” **Judi Harper, Vice Principal, Weston College**



Priory Community School, that borders on the area of Queensway's current bus stop area near McDonald's, has sent in a letter of support following a face-to-face meeting with them to explain the plans.

A meeting was held with the Hans Price Academy to show them the detailed plans and the organisation is supportive of the Weston Package.

Retailers

There were specific issues for retailers concerning the Marchfields Way, Queensway, Worle Station and Winterstoke Road businesses as identified in the communications strategy. This issue has also been raised in the "challenges" section on page 14 of this report. Many of the businesses are multi-nationals with local management making it particularly difficult to speak to the right people on the ground, obtain responses to posted letters or generate response.

To make sure that all the businesses were contacted, a 'ground assault' was mobilised with letters being hand delivered to every business within the area. Details of the businesses contacted are within the Communications Activity working document.

As the retailers were visited they were able to ask questions on-the-spot and any reservations or problems could be discussed and explained. This approach resulted in no objections to the plans. Following a face-to-face visit, a positive email was received from McDonalds giving full support to the Weston Package, which is particularly important because of its strategic position. Sainsburys and Argos also emailed in support.

5.0 Politicians, local councils and councillors

The Minister for Tourism & Heritage, John Penrose who is also MP for Weston-super-Mare, is fully supportive of the Weston Package and went "on the record" with his views and issued press releases supporting the scheme (appendix A).

Officers from North Somerset Council officers attended the full council meeting of Weston-super-Mare Town Council on 4 July 2011 to give a presentation on the Weston Package. Numerous questions and a great deal of discussion was followed by a letter of strong support for the schemes.

Relevant parish councillors were emailed with information and North Somerset Council Parish Clerks were briefed in case questions arose at their meetings with the parishes.

Constant information was given to the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Highways and Transport. The Management Teams were informed and the rest of the North Somerset Council staff were given information through its internal electronic newsletter The Knowledge (see appendix B).



In addition, internal staff customers were contacted to make sure they were briefed. This included the Transport Policy, Economic Development, Seafronts & Tourism and Equality and Diversity sections.

Local politicians were fully briefed to deal with community concerns/issues and we are in constant communication with them, making sure that they are aware of comments made.

6.0 Further consultation

Consultation continues with the stakeholder list and letters are still arriving from businesses. Meetings and briefings continue to be held. The council intends to continue with the collection of this information even after the bid is submitted and the Communications Activity working document will continue to be kept up-to-date.

Plans are in place to pick up any loose ends from the comments made through the survey, letters, emails, and social media. These will be passed on to relevant departments for information. Although these comments do not relate directly to the Weston Package, they are none-the-less addressing transport issues.

Because of the volume of strong support for the Weston Package scheme, the council is preparing a database of all businesses and interested parties that have been in contact with us. An electronic newsletter template will be designed and at least two communications are planned between now and the end of 2011. The first will thank everyone for their contribution to the discussion, for their support and will give details of the survey results and comments received. The second will inform them of the outcome of the bidding process and the council's plans.

If the bid is successful, communication would continue into 2012 and beyond to keep businesses, organisations and residents informed of progress. This continual communication should assist with any problems encountered during the construction phase. If unsuccessful, a damage limitation exercise will need to be planned and executed locally.

We have received an invitation from Weston-super-Television (a new community online TV station) to do interviews about the Weston Package when the outcome of the bid is known. All other forms of communicating information to the public, such as updating of web site, press releases and road signs will be used again to keep people fully informed of the progress of the Package.

NS Life, North Somerset Council's magazine for residents, will continue to be used to keep the general public informed about the scheme as will *The Knowledge* for staff.



If the bid is successful, some additional tools would be used to maintain good communications and promote additional understanding of the schemes. This may include displays in the form of a road show in key locations and also the use of the council's Gateway sites for exhibitions. A scheme leaflet may be required to back up the exhibitions and presentations. Regular bulletins to businesses and trade groups would be issued throughout the construction phase along with additional talks, meetings and presentations.#

7.0 Letters of support

The consultation has generated a large amount of support amongst local businesses, with many of them writing in letters and emails. A list appears below. In particular, it was pleasing to receive letters of support from all major trade groups and developers.

1. Abbey Manor Group Ltd
2. Agilisys Limited
3. Alliance Homes (formerly North Somerset)
4. Arcadia Housing Group
5. Argos (Worle)
6. Avon & Somerset Constabulary
7. Bristol Airport
8. Davan Caravans Ltd
9. First Bus Limited
10. GKA Aerospace
11. Grand Pier
12. GVA Grimley Limited on behalf of Leisure Dome (UK) Ltd
13. GVA Grimley Limited on behalf of the Homes and Communities Agency and St. Modwen Properties Plc
14. Hydrock Byways & Highways on behalf of Mead Realisations
15. John Penrose MP for Weston-super-Mare, Minister for Tourism & Heritage



16. Lidl UK GmbH
17. McDonalds, Weston
18. McLaren Life
19. Mendip Outdoor Pursuits
20. National Express
21. North Somerset Enterprise Agency
22. North Somerset Industrial Association (25 members)
23. Persimmon Homes
24. Priory Community School
25. Rapide System Supplies Ltd
26. Sainsburys (Worle)
27. Saxonia Guest House
28. Sovereign Centre (39 retail businesses)
29. St. Modwen Properties Plc
30. Summerfield Developments (SW) Ltd
31. Sustrans
32. Towens of Weston Limited
33. UK 3B Scientific Ltd
34. Vanguard Surveillance and Security
35. WebberBus
36. Weston Area Health, NHS
37. Weston College
38. Weston-super-Mare and District Chamber of Trade and Commerce (91 members)



39. Weston-super-Mare Hotels and Restaurants Association (120 members)

40. Weston-super-Mare Senior Citizens Forum (2000 members)

41. Weston-super-Mare Town Centre Partnership

42. Weston-super-Mare Town Council

Ninety-three percent of people who completed the online survey were supportive with many comments outlining how these changes should have been made before:

"It's about time."

"Get on with it!!"

"These improvements are long overdue."

The Local Enterprise Partnership, as part of the West of England Major Schemes Programme, is fully in support of the Weston Package.

8.0 Opposition

The challenges

There has been little opposition to the scheme either through the survey or within letters and emails received.

There were six main challenges for this consultation to address that we identified in advance. By identifying these issues early we were able to address concerns in our strategy for consultation. The resulting lack of opposition from any areas was as welcome as it was surprising.

1. The potential for mixing up the Weston Package with other transport initiatives

One of the key concerns in communicating the message was achieving an understanding of what the scheme included. Confusion with the M5/Junction 21 outbound issues appeared possible. It was important to ensure the message was very clear to mitigate this risk

2. The potential of objections from the large retailers around the Marchfields Way

We were expecting to receive some opposition and negative comments to the changes around Marchfields Way, so it was important to reach this group. The retail sector is, however, a notoriously difficult group to reach, especially by telephone. Letters were delivered by hand to all retailers who may be affected by the changes.



Where relevant staff were available at the stores, they were briefed in person. This resulted in a great deal of verbal support and a few concerns which were addressed as they arose, but mainly in apathy. Argos, Sainsburys and McDonalds were among the letters received all of which were supportive of the package.

3. The inertia of stakeholders

The support for the Weston Package was almost universal with those contacted. However, getting people to send their thoughts in writing was much harder. A mixture of face-to-face visits to key stakeholders to gain strong buy-in to the project, provision of clear information, follow up emails and use of a full range of the marketing mix allowed us to turn inertia into action in some cases.

4. The time of year

Holidays of key staff during July and August presented some challenges. The chasing up of comments was made more difficult by the summer holidays, particularly in the education sector. Contact with two schools, including the new Hans Price Academy was important to our consultation and was followed up. Face-to-face meetings were held with the Hans Price Academy to explain the schemes and, although positive, we await their final comments.

5. Each of the six schemes within the Weston Package had a different set of stakeholders

By dividing the consultation into schemes, we were able to make sure that all the right stakeholders were included for the relevant information. In the end, most of the letters received mentioned more than one of the schemes and the stakeholders were interested in the Weston Package as a whole.

6. Strong level of animosity by local press to council-led schemes

We were able to overcome this by letting others tell the story to the media rather than the council. Weston-super-mare Town Council and John Penrose MP issued information that appeared in a positive way in local press. Copies of some articles are attached in appendix B.

As mentioned previously, the majority of comments from the general public were positive (93% of 372 comments) but there were some negative ones. The vast majority of negative comments (43*) related to the need for Junction 21 outbound improvements. Seven people thought that the scheme would not work or improve the area and six people thought that the gains made by the scheme would only be temporary and offset by new housing very quickly. (*Some of these comments included more than one negative from the same person)

In all cases, the negative comments were satisfied with immediate response by email or telephone, so that objections were addressed and plans explained in more detail.
