

Report subject	Western Gateway Rail Strategy
Meeting date	11 November 2020
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Western Gateway Rail Strategy is an area wide rail strategy which outlines how rail will help deliver the overall vision and objectives for transport in the Western Gateway area.
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>(a) Council endorse the Western Gateway Rail Strategy.</p> <p>(b) Pursue the six route maps as identified in the Rail Strategy and support the development of any business cases or feasibility studies arising.</p>
Reason for recommendations	<p>To ensure BCP Council has a strong voice in the up-to-date regional rail strategy. This will enable the council to plan positively for rail.</p> <p>To provide a framework for future rail investment as part of the Western Gateway arrangement. This would enable the council in partnership with other Western Gateway members and Network Rail to procure and deliver the necessary studies, business cases, needed to support enhanced rail infrastructure.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	
Corporate Director	Bill Cotton, Corporate Director for Regeneration and Economy
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Recommendation

Background

1. At the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body (STB) Partnership Board meeting of 19th June 2019, members of the Board agreed for officers to pursue “production of an area wide rail strategy”. To meet that objective, a commission was awarded to WSP for the first of two phases of work. BCP Council is represented on the Board by the appropriate Portfolio Holder.
2. At the STB Board meeting of 8th December 2019, members of the Board were informed of the progress in developing the draft strategy and the outcome of the stakeholder consultation. At the following Board meeting of 4th March 2020, members of the Board were presented with phase 1 of the strategy. The Board agreed to continue funding the rail strategy towards the production of phase 2, which includes an accompanying summary document of both phases to assist Western Gateway in presenting its future ask to government.
3. Since the March 2020 STB Board meeting the full strategy has been developed and is provided in Appendix 1. It is important to note that the need for change is clearly articulated in the document and the base line conditions of existing services are equally well defined. At the September 2020 SSTB Board meeting the full strategy was endorsed by the Board.

Rail Strategy Phase 1

4. The rail strategy has a clear vision; with the five themes (Choice, Social Mobility, Decarbonisation, Productivity and Growth) supported by focussed objectives and priorities. These objectives and priorities were developed and defined by the stakeholder engagement exercises into a series of Conditional Outputs under each theme.
5. The 23 Conditional Outputs that form the focus of the Rail Strategy are the target aspirations or minimum standards needed to meet the outcomes expected by the rail strategy. These Conditional Outputs thereby give the Western Gateway, the constituent Local Authorities and industry stakeholders a clear vision of what success looks like.
6. Three strategic definitions have been used against which some of the Conditional Outputs are framed: Service designation, hub definition, and accessibility definition. Service designation attempts to categorise services and flows within four categories; Urban / Metro, Suburban, Regional, and Intercity. Hub definition relates to interchange and journey speeds at key locations i.e. line with the Western Gateway's Strategic Transport Plan three hubs approach. Accessibility definition relates to two distinct areas; Access to Stations i.e. the journey to the station, and Access for All i.e. within the station and aboard the train.

Rail Strategy Phase 2

7. Phase 2 of the Rail Strategy is principally focussed on three parts. Part 1 is a condensed summary of the phase 1 report with amendments following feedback and review arising from the eConsultations and eWorkshops. Part 2 focusses on the theme chapters (Choice, Social Mobility, Decarbonisation, Productivity and Growth) that were developed in Phase 1 of the Rail Strategy. Each theme is summarised in a high-level objective and developed into a number of priorities. These in turn are

linked to a series of actions, for the short, medium and long-term. Part 3 sets out the delivery approach for the Rail Strategy.

8. The Rail Strategy is very clearly not a wish list of schemes and interventions based on legacy requests, instead it sets out clear outcomes that Western Gateway wants from the rail network. Rather the rail strategy allows for the broad outcomes which Western Gateway want to be tested by Network Rail through their own internal processes thereby allowing the right infrastructure or timetabling outputs identified to be taken forward for funding and delivery in a coordinated and timely fashion.
9. The delivery of the Western Gateway Rail Strategy has been structured in to six 'route maps' in order to focus and align actions and interventions to relevant bodies and themes. The purpose of the route maps is to set out a series of well planned, effective and prioritised activities to meet the Western Gateway's vision for the rail. The six route maps are:
 - Strategy, governance and collaboration
 - Strategic Planning (Task Force) & Configuration States
 - Digital Solutions Taskforce
 - Stations & Access to Rail Task Force
 - Freight Task Force
 - Future Ready & Resilience Task Force
10. A supplementary glossy brochure similar to those used by other STBs has been produced and is given in Appendix 2. This condenses the Rail Strategy into a clear and hard-hitting document to lobby government and act as a briefing tool in setting out the Western Gateways vision and route maps to achieving it.

Williams Review

11. The Rail Strategy considers the potential implications of the Williams Review. The review has considered the structure of the whole rail industry and the way in which passenger rail services are delivered. The review was expected to make recommendations through a White Paper for reform to the industry that prioritise passengers' and taxpayers' interests. However, due to the COVID-19 emergency the review has still yet to be published.
12. The COVID-19 Emergency Measures Agreements (EMAs) introduced to ensure the rail system continued to function throughout the COVID-19 emergency were replaced in September with Emergency Recovery Management Agreements (ERMAs) that confirmed the end of the franchising regime. The Williams Review is still expected to be published in due course, but Government is working to alternative franchising mechanism to replace the ERMAs. Consequently, the conditional outcomes and recommendations within the Rail Strategy have been designed to be flexible to changes to industry structures.

Continuous Strategic Modular Planning (CMSP)

13. CMSPs are Network Rail's localised studies designed to understand timetabling and infrastructure requirements necessary to deliver the outcomes that rail industry stakeholders such as local authorities want. Future CMSPs are planned within both Western and Wessex Routes as set out in Table 1 including a CMSP for Dorset Connectivity which is currently in progress. As the two Network Rail route areas

cover more than the Western Gateway not all the future CMSPs are relevant, several of the CMSPs are relevant to BCP Council.

Year	CMSP
2019	West of England line (completed, Wessex Route) Solent Connectivity (completed, Wessex Route) Resilience (completed, Wessex Route – NR internal only)
2020	Bristol – Birmingham (ongoing, Western Route) Bristol – Exeter (Western Route) Bristol - South Wales (Western Route, Wales System Operator leading) Dorset Connectivity (ongoing, Wessex Route) Solent to Midlands Freight (Wessex Route, in conjunction with Highways England) South West Main Line Capacity (London Waterloo to Woking) (Wessex Route)
2021	West of England (Bristol travel to work area) (Western Route) South West Main Line Capacity (Woking and beyond) (Wessex Route)
2022	Western route decarbonisation (Western Route) Swindon corridors (Western Route)
2023	Bristol to South coast ports (Western Route) Taunton to Reading (Western Route)

Table 1- Future CMSPs

14. It should be noted that the Rail Strategy outcomes will be investigated in-depth through the CMSP process to identify the outputs necessary to make them possible. This is the approach through which changes to track or service will be delivered as Network Rail will own the development and delivery process for future business cases.

Implications for BCP

15. Currently BCP Council is working jointly with Dorset Council and Network Rail on the Dorset Connectivity CMSP. The remit for this CMSP is to examine potential improvements to:

- North to South connectivity from the Dorset Coast via the Heart of Wessex line to Bristol, South Wales, Swindon and the South West either by more frequent direct services or improved interchange at Yeovil. Castle Cary or Westbury with services on the West of England line and Great Western Main Line
- East to West connectivity between rural Dorset and the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole conurbation
- East to West connectivity between the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole conurbation and the Solent area
- It will also take into account aspirations for improved diversionary capability for Great Western services via the Heart of England and West of England lines during perturbation and engineering work, taking into account the findings of the recent West of England line CMSP and Solent CMSP
- Understand performance and resilience issues in the study area and consider how this might be addressed

16. Whilst it is too early for any of the outcomes of the Dorset CMSP, it should be noted that the alignment of the emerging outputs Dorset CSMP closely follow the approach

recommended by the Western Gateway rail strategy of addressing regional connectivity issues and better connecting (housing) development to rail.

17. The Dorset CMSP does not directly examine increased London frequencies or reducing the journey times as it is focussed on addressing poor local usage of the rail network and improving regional connectivity to the east, north and west. As referred in Table 1, the South West Main Line Capacity (Woking and beyond) CMSP planned for 2021 will involve BCP Council. and will examine journey time and frequency questions. This planned CMSP will build on the ongoing South West Main Line Capacity (London Waterloo to Woking) CSMP which will consider the constraints at the Waterloo throat and at Clapham Junction as well as the need for an additional track(s) onto Woking and how these impact the possibility of additional services. Work in the recently published Solent Connectivity CMSP by Network Rail did identify capacity constraints at Southampton Central hindering additional local services. This work has suggested service extensions to Totton for train terminations currently taking place at Southampton Central freeing up network capacity and the introduction of bidirectional signalling at Eastleigh platform 1 would enhance capacity and timetable resilience for Waterloo services directly benefiting BCP Council.

COVID-19

18. Work on this strategy started before the Covid-19 pandemic. The short-term effects of lockdown on rail patronage are well documented. As things stand passenger numbers are rising but are still considerably below pre-Covid levels. It is unknowable whether working, shopping and travel behaviours will revert to the historic 'normal' after the pandemic (and when that might be), but the focus of the Rail Strategy, setting out the Western Gateway's aspirations for the rail network remains valid. Indeed, the long-term vision and objectives still stand despite the impacts of COVID-19 in the main due to the focus of the Rail Strategy on long term outcomes rather than specific outputs.

Consultation, communication and engagement

19. The Rail Strategy has been developed with extensive input from industry stakeholders. Phase 1 of the Rail Strategy involved three workshops across the Western Gateway area and an eConsultation were held with the constituent authorities, Network Rail, Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Freight Operating Companies (FOCs). Interested industry stakeholders including passenger groups were invited to participate in the eConsultation.
20. For phase 2 the programme of engagement was adapted to be carried out digitally due to COVID-19. Consequently, three eConsultations were held supplemented by an eWorkshop with the stakeholders. These digital events added detail to the outputs and assisted with packaging specific interventions. Each eConsultation was supplemented with dedicated meetings with the Network Rail Western (including the Bristol to Birmingham CMSP) and Wessex (including the Dorset CMSP) teams due to the high synergies of these workstreams. The draft Rail Strategy was subsequently consulted on with the industry stakeholders and the constituent authorities during August 2020.
21. The entire consultation and engagement process is summarised in Figure 1.

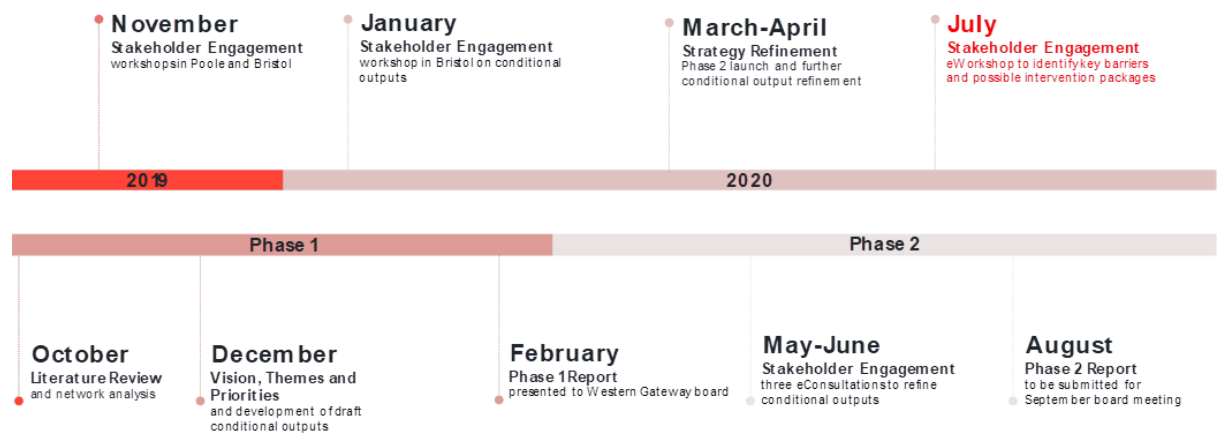


Figure 1: Consultation process

22. An extensive amount of feedback on the draft Rail Strategy was provided leading to a number of alterations being incorporated into the final strategy. Beyond minor detailed changes on the specific nature of some assumptions, the main amendments and revisions focussed on delivery and clarification of what will be recommended or be required to deliver by when and by which organisation. Clarity has been added regarding the role and interface with Network Rail on the delivery side of the strategy and revisions to service designations, frequencies and specific outcomes have been made. The phrasing of 'targets' has been revised to 'minimum aspirations', and words around the purpose of the strategy document – to be a guide and tool for the region's sub-national ambitions – has been included.

Options Appraisal

23. The first option available to the council would be to do nothing and not adopt the Rail Strategy. This option is not recommended as the council currently does not have a clear regional rail strategy and failure to endorse the approaches within the strategy would jeopardise the region's effectiveness at facilitating strategic investment from government in the region's rail network.
24. The second option would be for the Council to adopt the Western Gateway STB Rail Strategy. The constituent members of the Western Gateway STB will benefit from the STB providing a single, unified voice to government; signalling our collective priorities on strategic rail investment in partnership with rail industry stakeholders such as Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies and the Council is recommended to adopt the Western Gateway Rail Strategy

Summary of financial implications

25. There are no specific capital or revenue implications associated with the adoption of the strategy itself, as it was funded by the Western Gateway. However, it should be noted that funding opportunities will need to be sought to realise a number of the aims and aspirations set out in the strategy, as and when they affect the council and this may include the preparation costs for bids to government through the RNEP; and will need to be aligned to the Corporate Plan and the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Summary of legal implications

26. While there are no direct legal implications arising from the adoption of the Strategy at this stage, further legal advice may be required in respect of supporting the objectives of the Strategy as outlined in this Report. This may include advice on potential funding arrangements, advice and agreements arising from dialogue with rail companies and infrastructure providers, and in respect of procurement of professional advice. Legal Services will continue to provide support and assistance to the work of the Strategy.

Summary of sustainability impact

27. It is anticipated that the rail strategy will have a positive impact on the environment. Improved connectivity, station enhancements and the provision of new stations within the Western Gateway will all contribute to rising passenger numbers and a transfer of trips from away from road to rail, reducing congestion, reducing harmful emissions and improving accessibility.
28. It should be noted that the Rail Strategy has decarbonisation as one of its five key themes with the objective “to enable rail to contribute more actively towards the decarbonisation of the Western Gateway”. The three priorities for decarbonisation are listed below:
- (i) Identify ways to reduce the carbon emissions per passenger of rail journeys on diesel rolling stock
 - (ii) Identify alternatives to diesel rolling stock including priorities for electrification
 - (iii) Identify ways in which more freight can be transported by rail rather than road, in particular to deep-sea ports

Equalities Implications

29. No adverse impact on any protected groups.

Background papers

Published works

Appendices

Appendix 1- Western Gateway Rail Strategy Technical Report

Appendix 2- Western Gateway Rail Strategy Brochure