

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper I

Date 10 July 2024

Title of report: Western Gateway STB Communications Update

Purpose of report: To provide an overview of the communications for the Western Gateway STB.

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- i. Note the communications update and the next steps in communications for the Western Gateway STB.

1. Background

1.1 Sphere Marketing has been leading the communications for the Western Gateway Sub-national Body and has done so since Western Gateway was formed in 2019.

1.2 Communications tasks for Western Gateway include:

- Working closely with Western Gateway officers by attending weekly Programme team meetings, bi-weekly Strategic Transport Plan (STP) board meetings, monthly Senior Officer Group (SOG) meetings, monthly Sub-national Transport Bodies (STB) communication meetings, quarterly Board meetings, quarterly National Highways comms meeting and quarterly update for South West STBs on NH schemes & studies meetings.
- Coordinate and manage copy for all public-facing communication deliverables, including the website, press releases and social media.
- Compile and manage a communications plan for the Western Gateway STB.
- Proof read and edited public-facing documents to ensure clarity and consistency of objectives and information.
- Coordinate press management and ensure all inquiries are addressed appropriately.

2. Comms support for completed work packages: summary

2.1 From January to June 2024, comprehensive communication support was provided for the completion of significant work packages. This support included creating and distributing press releases, emails to stakeholders, local authorities, and media/press outlets, as well as developing website pages, news articles, and social media messages. The key work programmes supported were:

2.2. EV Charging study published - May 2024

- Publication of a detailed study on electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure needs and development.
- Comms activities:
 - o Press releases issued to announce the publication.
 - o Targeted emails sent to stakeholders, local authorities, and media outlets to highlight the study's findings and implications.
 - o Creation of dedicated website pages to host the study and related information.
 - o News articles and updates posted on the Western Gateway STB website.
 - o Social media messaging to promote the study and engage the public and stakeholders.

2.3 Strategic Transport Plan (STP) 2024-2050 published - May 2024

- Release of the long-term Strategic Transport Plan outlining the transport vision and strategy for the region from 2024 to 2050.
- Comms activities:
 - o Press releases to announce the STP's publication and its key objectives.
 - o Informative emails sent to stakeholders, local authorities, and media contacts to disseminate the plan's strategic goals and actions.
 - o Development of comprehensive website pages providing access to the full plan and summary documents.
 - o News articles and feature stories on the Western Gateway STB website to discuss the plan's components and expected impact.
 - o Active social media campaigns to raise awareness and encourage public discussion about the STP.

2.4 This strategic and multi-channel approach ensured broad visibility and engagement for these pivotal documents, effectively communicating their importance and impact to diverse audiences.

3. Newsletter statistics summary: January to June 2024

3.1 The monthly newsletters sent to approximately 190 recipients consistently achieved commendable open and click-through rates, demonstrating strong engagement with the content provided.

3.2 Overview

- Recipients: approximately 190 each month

- Open rate: Average across six months
- Click rate: Average across six months

3.3 Monthly breakdown

Month	Recipients	Open Rate	Click Rate	Content Highlights
January	190	23.1%	3.8%	Round-up of WG STB's 2023 work and 2024 outlook, including freight, STP, rural mobility, STB Conference, carbon baselining and forecasting tool, rural investment, Better Transport Week, coaches, alternative fuels for freight
February	192	24.5%	5.4%	Rural mobility pilots event, STB Conference, Board meeting, South West coach forum launch, freight update, 'In case you missed it' social media news from partners and local authorities
March	191	23.1%	4.3%	Leading by example' in coach, South West Freight update, STB Conference available online, 'In case you missed it' social media news from partners and local authorities
April	189	18.8%	3.2%	Strategic Transport Plan approved by Board, TravelWatch SouthWest, new team member introduction, upcoming coach forum, freight dates, 'In case you missed it' social media news from partners and local authorities
May	187	62.7%	8.6%	Launch of region's long-term transport plan, Electric Vehicle Charging Study, coach forum at Aerospace Bristol, discovering the Missing Link, diary dates, 'In case you missed it' social media news from partners and local authorities
June	187	27.6%	9.2%	Better Transport Week, South West EV forum, diary updates, Great Big Green Week, rail news, 'In case you missed it' social media news from partners and local authorities

3.4 Highlights:

- Highest open rate: 62.7% in May 2024
- Highest click-through rate: 9.2% in June 2024
- Content variety: Included event announcements, updates, comprehensive reports on ongoing and future projects, and special highlights such as the launch of key studies and plans.

3.5 Newsletter to Board members:

March 2024 Board Meeting

Recipients: 12

Open Rate: 75%

Click Rate: 25%

3.6 This summary highlights the high level of engagement among Board members for the March 2024 Board newsletter, with a significant majority opening the newsletter and a substantial proportion clicking through to additional content.

4. Events summary: January to June 2024

4.1 STB Conference at Interchange - February 2024

Attendees: Mena Abidakun, Hannah Fountain, Jessica Holroyd, Arina Salhotra and James White.

4.2 Comms support provided:

- Website page created with QR code
- Social media content developed and shared
- Lightbox marketing support for the stand

4.3 Interchange 2024 attendance:

Total Visitors: Over 2,000 (a 50% increase from 2023 when Interchange and the STB annual conference were separate events)

Attendance breakdown:

- Total attendees: 2,027
 - o Interchange conference: 416
 - o Google Prism: 580
 - o TIP Live: 214
 - o ITS UK Conference: 301
 - o STB Conference: 384
 - o Round Tables: 365
 - o Places Hub: 136
 - o Exhibitors: 71

Attendee demographics:

- MD/CEO/Owner: 243
- Director: 588
- Senior Manager: 973
- Apprentice: 61
- Graduate: 140

Visitor experience:

Nine out of ten visitors rated their experience as excellent, very good, or good.

4.4 This summary highlights the successful participation and support provided for the STB conference at Interchange, demonstrating a significant increase in attendance and positive feedback from attendees.

5. Media Coverage Summary: January to June 2024

March 2024 - Coach Strategy

Article: 'Western Gateway – the regional body with coach high on its agenda'

Publication: Route One, March Issue

Link: [Route One Article](#)

May 2024 - EV Charging Study

Article: 'Western Gateway EV infrastructure mapped out'

Publications: The Business Exchange (Swindon and Wiltshire, and Bath and Somerset editions)

Link: [The Business Exchange Article](#)

Article: 'Western Gateway and Peninsula Transport publish EV charging study'

Publication: Transport + Energy

Link: [Transport + Energy Article](#)

Article: 'Western Gateway and Peninsula Transport publish Electric Vehicle Charging Study'

Publication: Interchange

Link: [Interchange Article](#)

Article: 'South West need 33,000 public electric car chargers by 2023'

Publication: Planet Radio (Cornwall)

Link: [Planet Radio Article](#)

This summary highlights the diverse media coverage received for Western Gateway's key projects, including coach strategy and the EV Charging Study, across various reputable publications and platforms.

6. Website news summary: January to June 2024

6.1 The Western Gateway STB website has been actively updated with news and information on key events, publications, and initiatives over the past six months.

6.2 Below is a summary of the website news updates:

- January 2024
 - o Newsletter: [January Newsletter](#)
- February 2024
 - o Newsletter: [February Newsletter](#)
- March 2024
 - o Newsletter: [March Newsletter](#)
- April 2024
 - o Coach Forum at Bristol Aerospace: [April 2024 \(Jess\)](#)
 - o Newsletter: [April Newsletter](#)
- May 2024
 - o Discovering the Missing Link: [May 2024 \(Jess\)](#)
 - o EV Charging Study Publication: [Western Gateway and Peninsula Transport STBs Publish Electric Vehicle Charging Study](#)
 - o Coach Forum at Bristol Aerospace: [May 2024 \(Jess\)](#)
 - o Strategic Transport Plan Launch: [Western Gateway STB Launches Region's Long-Term Transport Plan](#)
 - o Community Rail Week Launch: [Community Rail Week Launches at Yatton](#)
 - o Newsletter: [May Newsletter](#)
- June 2024
 - o Newsletter: [June Newsletter](#)

6.3 This summary outlines the regular updates and comprehensive coverage of significant events and announcements, demonstrating the Western Gateway STB's commitment to keeping stakeholders informed and engaged through their website.

7. New pages added to the website: January to June 2024

7.1 Western Gateway STB has expanded its website with several new pages, aimed at providing detailed information on various initiatives and events. The following new pages have been added:

- Rural mobility pilots: January 2024
 - o A dedicated page detailing the Rural Mobility Pilots project, highlighting objectives, progress, and future plans.
- Rural mobility pilots Stakeholder Event: January 2024
 - o A page providing information on the stakeholder event related to the Rural Mobility Pilots, including event details, key takeaways, and participant feedback.
- STB conference 2024: February 2024
 - o This page covers the 2024 STB Conference, featuring event schedules, speaker details, presentations, and other relevant information.
- Electric vehicles: May 2024
 - o A comprehensive page focused on electric vehicles, including the latest developments, studies, and future plans for EV infrastructure within the

Western Gateway region.

- Meet the team: (added by programme team)
 - o An upcoming page that will introduce the team members of Western Gateway STB, showcasing their roles, expertise, and contributions to the organisation's projects.

7.2 This summary highlights the strategic additions to the website, designed to enhance transparency, stakeholder engagement, and information accessibility regarding Western Gateway STB's key initiatives and events.

8. Social media highlights: January to June 2024

8.1 Social media accounts

- X (formerly Twitter)
 - o Followers: 208
 - o Link: [Western Gateway STB on X](#)
- LinkedIn
 - o Followers: 149
 - o Link: [Western Gateway STB on LinkedIn](#)

8.2 Recent social media highlights

- STB Conference: February 2024
 - o Extensive social media coverage of the STB Conference, sharing key insights, speaker highlights, and event updates.
- Better Transport Week: June 2024
 - o Western Gateway STB served as an official partner for Better Transport Week, with social media posts promoting the event and highlighting the organisation's involvement.
- Great Big Green Week: June 2024
 - o Active participation and promotion of Great Big Green Week, emphasizing sustainable transport initiatives and community engagement.

8.3 This summary showcases the growth and engagement on Western Gateway STB's social media platforms, highlighting key events and partnerships promoted through these channels.

9. Next Steps for communications: July to December 2024

9.1 To ensure that all communication strategies and activities are in sync with Western Gateway STB's confirmed business plan.

Actions include

- Review and update current communication plans to reflect the priorities and goals outlined in the business plan.

- Develop messaging frameworks that align with strategic objectives and key initiatives.
- Schedule regular reviews to ensure ongoing alignment and adaptability to any changes in the business plan.

9.2 To conduct a comprehensive analysis of stakeholders to understand their needs, expectations, and influence.

Actions include:

- Identify and categorize key stakeholders, including local authorities, partners, media, and the public.
- Gather and analyse feedback from stakeholders to inform communication strategies.
- Develop targeted communication approaches for different stakeholder groups based on their specific interests and influence levels.
- Establish metrics and KPIs to measure the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement and adjust strategies as needed.

9.3 The programme team is updating and refreshing the website text to reflect organisational changes and project delivery and effectively communicate the difference we make as an STB.

9.4 Western Gateway is getting more involved with national campaigns to build its awareness across social media platforms and increase engagement, such as Great Big Green Week, Better Transport Week, and Net Zero Week, to name recent social campaigns.

9.5 The program team is formulating general social media messages that can be sprinkled throughout the year. These messages will be incorporated into a content calendar of specific campaigns, events, and news items.

9.6 This summary outlines the critical next steps for enhancing and aligning communications efforts with strategic business objectives, ensuring effective stakeholder engagement and streamlined communication processes.

10. Consultation, communication and engagement

10.1 This overview has been discussed and approved by the Programme Management Team.

11. Equalities Implications

11.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups.

12. Legal Considerations

12.1 The Western Gateway STB remains an informal non-statutory partnership.

13. Financial considerations

13.1 The costs associated with communications during this year will be covered within the 2024/25 budget.

14. Conclusion

14.1 The Board is asked to note the communications update and the next steps in communications for the Western Gateway STB.

Contact Officer

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