

## **Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body**

### **Board Meeting**

#### **Paper A**

Date **25<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

Title of report: **Cycling Strategy Route Development Plan, phase 1**

Purpose of report: **Share Western Gateway's recommended next steps for progressing our Cycling Strategy**

#### **Recommendations:**

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- I. Review report and recommendations.
- II. Approve the recommended next steps for further development, utilising the £20,000 allocated in the 2025/26 budget.

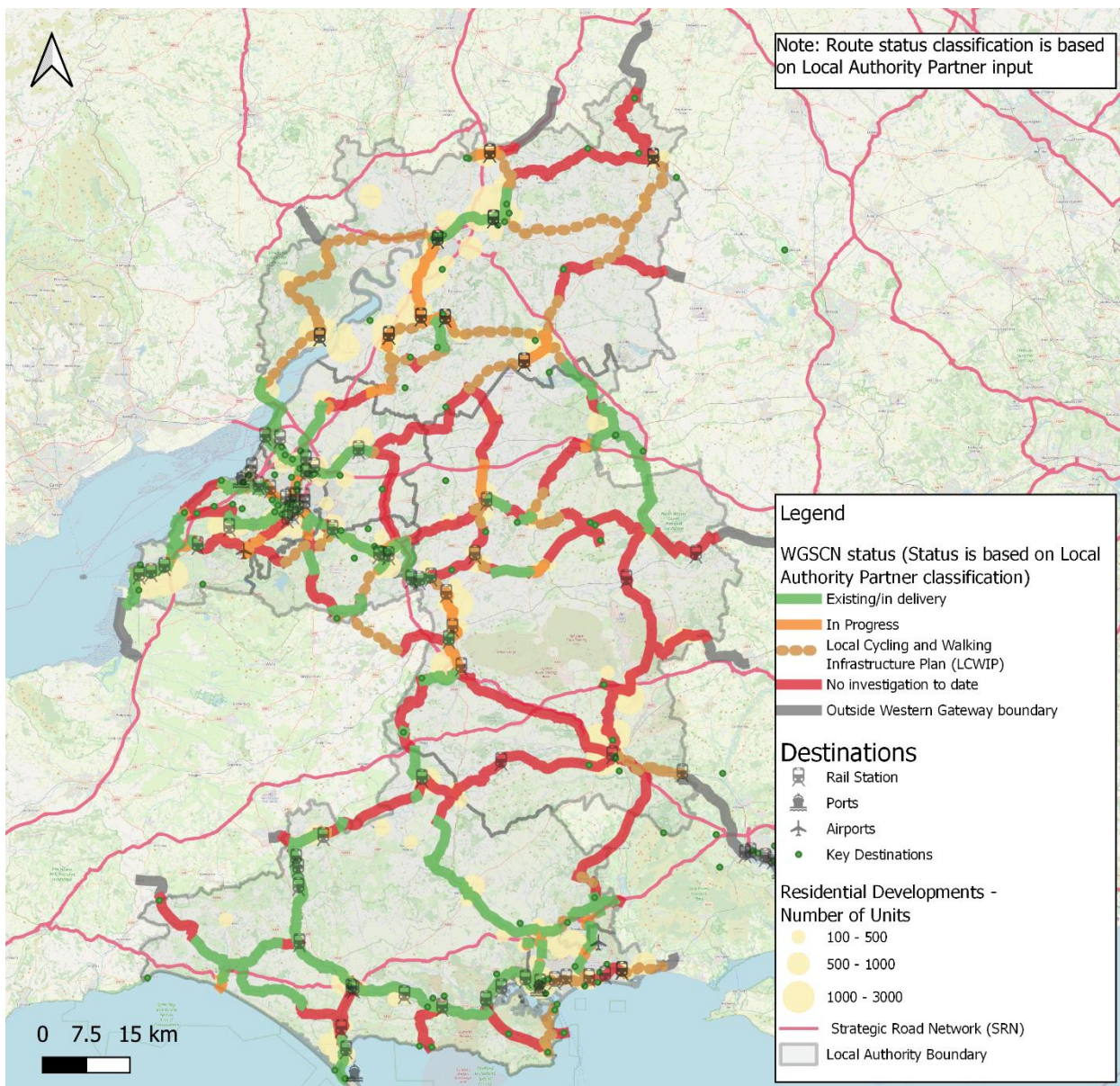
### **1. Background and purpose**

- 1.1 The Western Gateway Cycling Strategy was approved by the Board on 25 March 2025 (pending minor updates, which have now been completed). The strategy can be seen on our website at [Cycling | Western Gateway STB](#) and the network map can be seen in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 At the same meeting, the Board approved the Business Plan for the 2025/26 financial year, which included £20,000 allocated to progress the cycling strategy and develop a business case for priority route(s).
- 1.3 To provide recommendations on where best to direct that investment, Western Gateway (WG) commissioned Atkins to undertake a review of 12 high priority routes from the approved network (the ten highest scoring routes, plus two additional routes to provide geographical coverage) and provide recommendations on potential next steps. The review is circulated with this paper.
- 1.4 It should also be noted that the Government recently announced its intention to deliver a third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy later this year. This is likely to come with funding opportunities. Active Travel England have also recently released a draft version of a long-awaited Rural Design Guidance document, which reiterates commitment to increasing cycling and notes the potential benefits for rural economies and communities (where past Local

Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan [LCWIP] funding has primarily been directed at urban areas).

## 2. Western Gateway cycle network – next steps option assessment

- 2.1 An initial review of the entire network was undertaken in partnership with local authority officers, segmenting the routes into sections that have been a) fully or nearly delivered i.e. with a firm and funded delivery plan, b) those in progress i.e. have some feasibility or design work undertaken, but with funding uncertainties, c) those that feature in an LCWIP or similar plan but have not progressed towards delivery and d) those on which no meaningful work has been undertaken so far (i.e. the remainder of the network). The overall map output is shown below.



- 2.2 12 priority routes were then assessed in greater detail to identify where and how Western Gateway could potentially take action to initiate, support or otherwise progress the delivery of these routes, including consideration of potential funding or delivery options. Each route was segmented and the sections assessed

against the following criteria, considered to be reflective of the opportunities and/or role of Western Gateway in facilitating delivery:

- Crosses an LA boundary (and thus needs cooperation to deliver)
- Links to a planned development site (and thus has a role in enabling growth and a opportunity for delivery through development)
- Links to or crosses the SRN (and thus provides an opportunity to relieve pressure on the SRN and could be a candidate for delivery through SRN improvement or designated funds)
- Connections to key settlements, gateways, regionally significant destinations and tourism areas (as defined in the STP)
- Local officer views on the need for route section and whether WG support is required

In more general terms, the length of each section and its value as a standalone section (if not connected to an existing or soon-to-be-existing route) was also considered.

2.3 Given the potential for different types of funding/delivery opportunities to come forward, we also aimed to identify sections at different stages of delivery, to include some that could soon be ready for detailed design/delivery (capital) and some that require further development or feasibility work (revenue), thus enabling us to respond to whatever delivery opportunities arise.

2.4 The sections prioritised through this process can be seen in 3.4 below. These sections are not necessarily those with the greatest strategic value in the region, but those where WGSTB input can most usefully lead to delivery of parts of the network that will be of benefit. Other key sections of the network will be delivered by LA partners without the need for direct WG input (though endorsement or support may be welcomed).

### **3. Options and recommendations**

3.1 Officers had initially expected this study to identify discrete route sections that could be progressed by Western Gateway to complement or extend schemes already underway by local authority partners - potentially cross-boundary sections or additional rural links that would align with our regional role. However, that is not what has generally emerged from this assessment process.

3.2 In practice, the majority of the cross-boundary sections are currently too isolated (i.e. not yet/imminently connected to a longer route) to progress as individual sections in the short term – they don't make sense as standalone sections. These sections are therefore best developed and delivered over the longer term, in partnership with local authorities, as part of a wider route. Western Gateway will continue to maintain discussions and seek opportunities for this more extensive delivery over time.

3.3 To effectively use the £20,000 allocated in this year's budget, and respond to funding opportunities that may come along in the next 12-18 months as part of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3), we have identified a

shortlist of routes that are ready for further development within this timeframe, and in which Western Gateway have a role to support delivery. These are as follows:

**3.4 Route delivery – routes in progress by Local Authority (LA) partners.** WG involvement may assist in progressing design, business case and/or funding application:

**1) Kemble to Cirencester (part of Bristol to Cirencester route)**

Initial feasibility studies are complete but further design and delivery programme not in place. Route links a university strategic development site and a mainline station, with a potential funding / delivery opportunity identified.

**2) Cam & Dusley to Stonehouse to Stroud (and Gloucester) (part of Bristol to Stroud and Stroud to Gloucester routes)**

Gloucester to Stonehouse and Stonehouse to Stroud in progress by LA partner as part of Cycle Spine project, although funding and delivery programme for this section is not in place. Opportunity for WG input to support development of a complementary LCWIP link to Cam and Dursley providing a link to a station with services to Bristol, and substantial planned development in the area. Opportunity for WG input to less developed sections of Stroud to Gloucester link subject to discussion with GCC.

**3.5.0 Route development – routes planned by LA partners but not being progressed to date .** WG input may help to confirm route alignments and aspirations, and complete end-to-end routes complementing work to progress other sections.

**1) Wareham to Poole to Bournemouth to Christchurch:**

Key route linking major settlements across the south coast, key destinations and gateways to surrounding key tourism areas. Parts of route are existing / in progress whilst others have had no investigation to date. Opportunity for WG input to support end-to-end route development through a feasibility study on missing links. Includes a cross-boundary link Wareham to Poole.

**2) Barrow Lane, Felton to Bedminster (part of Bristol Airport to Bristol):**

Function of route dependant on strategic connection between Bristol and the airport. Given the regional significance of the airport it may be appropriate for WG to input to route development – initially feasibility study on missing links joining up small sections in progress. Potential for development funding.

**3) Clevedon to Portishead (part of Weston Super Mare to Bristol):**

Supporting plans to extend the Pier-to-Pier route to Portishead and onward connections to Bristol. Route not in development at present. Inter-urban link between key destinations and within key tourism area. Forms a missing link within a wider regional route under development by partners. Opportunity for WG input to support end-to-end route delivery through a feasibility study on this link.

**3.6 Additional routes are identified for further investigation and discussion with partners to understand the potential for WG input. These include:**

- Bristol to Filton
- Hicks Gate roundabout to Keynsham High St

- A367 to Odd Down
- Marlborough High St to London Road
- Salisbury to West Dean

#### **4. Recommendation**

4.1 Based on the output of this assessment, officers recommend the following next steps:

- Review overall report and the priority actions identified with the relevant local authorities
- Further refine the most appropriate route sections to progress from the list in section 3.4 and the actions required.
- Develop a brief for each action to progress and seek a cost estimate.
- Develop a programme of delivery activity accordingly. Note that identified actions may include options such as using the £20,000 budget as a match to leverage additional funding.

4.2 In the longer term, Western Gateway will continue to work with partners to progress delivery of the whole network.

#### **5. Consultation and engagement with partners**

5.1 The development of the overall cycling strategy has been informed by regular workshops and meetings with Local Authority officers and members throughout the whole programme. The overall strategy and priority routes within the network were agreed at the Board meeting in March 2025.

5.2 Feedback was sought from all local authority partners to inform our assessment of the current status of each route in the network, described in section 2.1 above.

5.3 The attached report, containing our assessment of how WG can support delivery of routes, has been shared with Local Authority officers for further feedback.

#### **6. Equalities Implications**

6.1 There are no specific equalities implications identified. Improvement of facilities for cycling typically also improves conditions for people with mobility impairments and widens access to a low-cost, healthy form of transport.

#### **7. Legal Considerations**

7.1 No legal considerations identified.

#### **8. Financial considerations**

8.1 £20,000 has been allocated in this year's budget for the progression of the cycle network. Following direction of the Board and further consultation with local authorities, Western Gateway will develop briefs and commissions to initiate the next stages of work.

## **9. Conclusion and recommendations**

- 9.1 The Board is recommended to approve the recommended priorities for further development described in section 4, utilising the £20,000 allocated in this year's budget.

### **Contact Officer**

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Appendix 1: WG Strategic cycle network

