

Western Gateway

Sub-national Transport Body



Western Gateway Board Revised Work Plan for 2026/27

25 February 2026

Background



September 2025: DfT announces STB funding will end in March 2027



December 2025: Work Plan approved



December 2025 – £600k bid submitted



January 2026 – £450k confirmed (-£150k gap)

Work Plan Key Themes

- **Co-ordination:** Cross boundary collaboration including rural mobility, coach, freight, rail and Regional Centre of Excellence
- **Prioritisation:** Maintain the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) and Strategic Investment Plan (SIP)
- **Linkages and strategic partnerships:** neighbouring STBs and Network Rail, National Highways and Homes England

DfT Letter

There will be no further central government funding for the Western Gateway beyond March 2027. STBs will remain valuable partners to the DfT and its agencies as they continue to provide regional advocacy and support to their members.

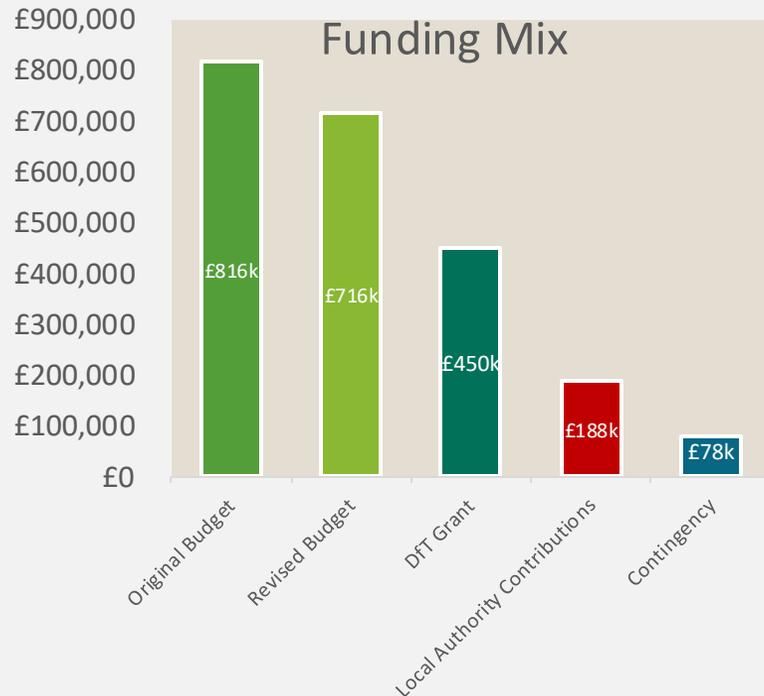
Confirmation request for Western Gateway to accept the allocation

Budget Overview (2026/27)

- **Original Budget:** £816k
- **Revised Budget:** £716k
- **Funding Mix:** £450k from DfT, £188k from Local Authorities, £78k contingency

Planned Expenditure

- £375k Staff & organisational costs
- £341k Projects / early business case development



Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole are unable to provide a contribution for 2026/27

Proposal to put in place a protocol for managing this

Staffing Options

Option A

Recruit (18-month contract)

Option B

WECA secondment (12-month contract)

Option C

Consultant FTE ((x1.5)12-month contract)

£100k savings delivered via:

 Freeze vacant Transport Officer post

 Bus work paused

 Resilience Stage 3 paused

Current Risk:

 Transport Officer vacant

 Senior Transport Officer leaving March 2026

2026/27

2027/28 Transition Model

2027/28

Revised work programme and transition to new role

Regional convenor and advisory role

STP & SIP: Light touch of STP and SIP and ensure documents are transition ready

Maintain **SIP** and **advocate** for SIP schemes and regional issues

Business Case support for SIP schemes

Provide advice, technical support and business case development for SIP schemes

Delivery focused work:

- **Rail work** - early business case development, moving forward Avonmouth Rail Freight Terminal, Heart of Wessex Line advocacy
- **Dorset Multi-Modal Corridor Study** - progression in line with LA aspirations
- **Rural Mobility** – phase 2 – 2025-26 pilot schemes, disseminating monitoring & evaluation and key learnings, further pilots for 2026-27
- **Resilience work** – Stage 2 – regional approach
- **Newsletter/information service** for regional/national learnings and opportunities

Cross boundary regional **collaboration on delivering strategic plans**, in partnership with key stakeholders

Newsletter/information service for regional/national learnings and opportunities

Partnership work - Network Rail, National Highways and Homes England on rail and road strategies, RIS3, M4 Dorset Coast, A303

Continue to **engage** Network Rail, National Highways and Homes England

Regional Centre of Excellence – focused on vision led planning incl. SW Corridor Study with Homes England & additional tools

Regional Centre of Excellence – continued

EV, Rail, Coach & Freight **Forums** (revised format)

Continue **forums**

Senior and Transport **Officer Groups** (revised format)

Combined Senior and Transport **Officer Groups**

Work area on hold:

- Buses – regional level studies and analysis to support bus delivery (project coral support for LAs) – To be reviewed
- Resilience work – Stage 3 – Possible development of national tool – To be revisited
- Technical support for officers in emerging MCAs and FSAs – pick up 2027/28 when clearer
- Avonmouth Rail Freight Terminal business case development – discussion other partners
- Coach work (beyond forums) – discussion with Peninsula Transport

Technical support for officers in **emerging MCAs and FSAs**

Budget

£450k from DfT for 2026/27

£375k staff

£341k projects

£188k from Local Authorities

£637k from WG Reserve

Staff cost tbc

Project costs tbc

£188k tbc from Local Authorities

Future of Western Gateway beyond March 2028 to be determined, dependent on Board agreement and commitment of continued local authority financial support.

Ten Point Action Plan

STP/SIP Light Touch Refresh

Secure staffing solution

Continue priority workstreams

Pause non-critical workstreams

Accelerate early business case development

Commission consultant support if required

Streamline meetings

Maintain strategic partnerships/linkages

Maximise communications → newsletters/briefings

Accelerate advocacy role

STP and SIP Refresh Approach

STP/SIP Options-Comparison

1 - Do Nothing

2 - Light Touch (Recommended)

3 - Light Touch+Adjust Weighting

4 - Reopen Submissions + Detailed Review

Why Review is Required

Housing & employment growth gaps

Alignment with new government priorities

Devolution context

Under-representation of areas

Key Findings

Priority SIP programme misses key growth areas.

Rescoring existing schemes would not materially change outcomes

Under-represented areas lack proposals

Adjusting criteria weightings would still leave gaps

Recommended Approach

- Start with **Option 2**
- Escalate to **Option 3** if needed
- **Option 4** only if required

Recommendations

The Members of the Board are recommended to approve:

- I. Acceptance of the Department for Transport grant of £450,000 for 2026/27**
- II. Funding for 2026/27 and 2027/28 as set out in Table One, Table Two and Table Three**
- III. Revised Work Plan for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix One**
- IV. Progression of option 2 for the STP/SIP light touch review outlined in section 3 and Table Five.**

Technical Programme Progress Update

- **Freight** - annual progress report, industry engagement including Logistics UK, surveys, Freight Forum with Peninsula, next Forum preparations, with ongoing support for local authorities.
- **Rail** - Network Rail's study on reinstating Westbury Platform 0 and related capacity upgrades is progressing well with work expected to complete by March 2026. Next steps focusing on advancing the Bath-Wiltshire Metro with partners. A rail case for change document is being developed to unite key schemes and strengthen the case for rail investment. Scoping for Dorset Metro is underway, along with a wider umbrella Case for Change for Wilts/Dorset/BCP/Somerset.
- **Electric Vehicle** - Finalising plans for the 10 March 2026 EV forum and exploring further engagement options.
- **Coach** - Coach forum in partnership with Peninsula Transport on Friday 27 March 2026.
- **CoE** - The Spatial and Transport Planning Tool (SPT) has been launched and is now in use following training, with planned upgrade and continued support. The tool has been shortlisted for a national transport decarbonisation award. Updates to the Carbon Assessment Playbook being scoped.
- **Resilience** - The resilience assessment is progressing through scope refinement and data preparation, with upcoming work focused on finalising datasets, scoring climate-related hazards, producing mapped outputs, and engaging stakeholders to confirm weighting and local insights.

Technical Programme Progress Update Cont'd

Rural Mobility Pilots

Existing projects

- **Bridport /West Bay shuttle:** Strong patronage and positive feedback, slightly below targets except in summer, with funding being secured to continue Saturday services.
- **GCRP - Robin DRT marketing campaign:** Research completed and promotions underway, producing insights useful for rural DRT schemes nationally.
- **Forest of Dean Mobility Club:** Shared Car Club launched in the previous year, with e-Bike hire to be delivered through the wider transport hub; the pilot has generated useful operational insights, and the council is securing resources to support continued delivery.

New Projects

- A Friday to Saturday night shuttle bus linking Lyme Regis and Bridport will launch, led by Lyme Regis Town Council.
- A scheme will combine real-time parking data with coach/tour operator coordination to reduce visitor pressure and support sustainable access to the Cotswolds.
- A project in south-east Dorset will work with local stakeholders to identify integrated rural transport solutions, led by Dorset Council.

Recommendations

The members of the Board are recommended to note the progress of the programme update report

Finance Update

Q3 2025/26 Summary

- Total Funding 2025/26: £996,000
 - Local Authority Contributions: £180,000
 - DfT Grant Funding: £816,000
- Total Actual Spend (YTD): £628,274.17
- Forecast Year-End Expenditure: £782,915.01
- Contingency / Remaining Balance: £213,084.99

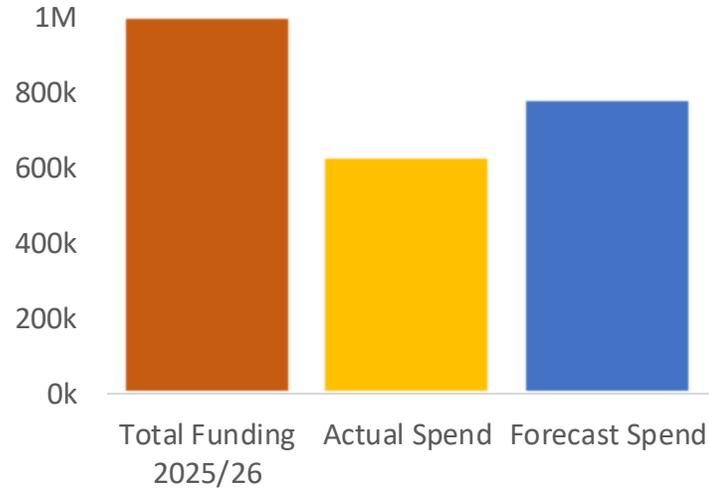
Staffing Budget

- YTD Staffing Spend: £459,488.49
- Forecast Full-Year Staffing & Engagement: £551,203.13
- Costs broadly in line with expectations
- Underspends expected due to recent staff departures

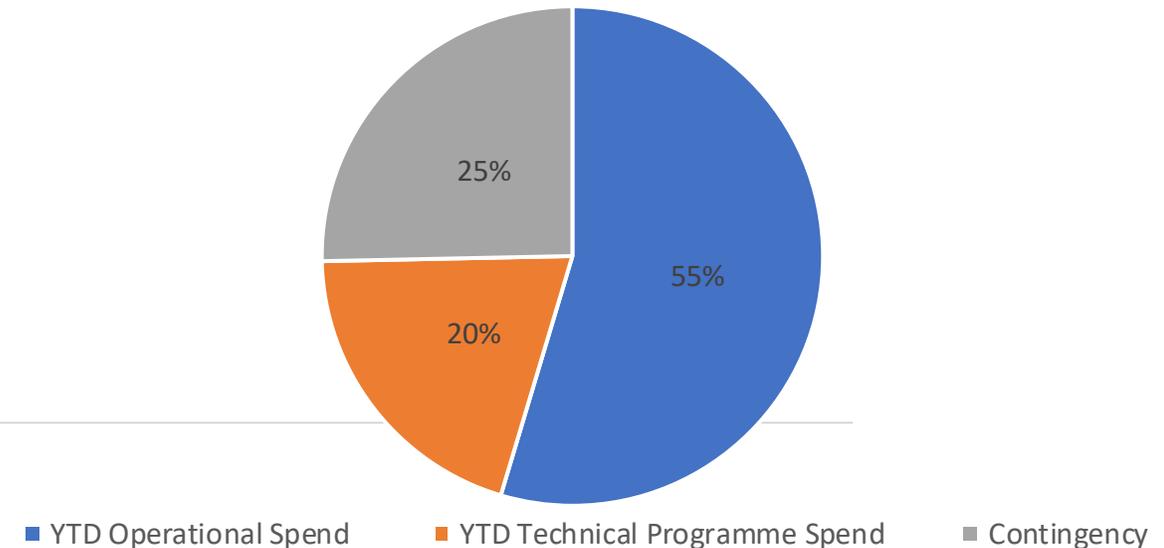
Technical Programme Budget

- YTD Technical Spend: £168,785.68
- Forecast Full-Year Technical Spend: £231,711.88
- Programme of work delivered in-house and consultant support
- Spend profile milestone-based (not evenly spread across year)

Actual vs Forecast Spend 2025/26



Actual Spend Breakdown



Recommendations

The members of the Board are recommended to note the current financial position to the end of Q3