

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body

Board Meeting

Paper D

Date	30th September 2026
Title of report:	Technical Programme Progress update
Purpose of report:	To provide a progress update on the ongoing work to deliver the technical work programme of the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body.

Recommendations:

The members of the Board are recommended to:

- To note the progress of the programme update report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report contains an update on the progress of a number of elements of the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body (STB) technical work programme.

2. Freight Strategy Implementation and freight forums

- 2.1 Progress Update: We held a freight Forum on the 18th June 2026 with speakers from Logistics UK giving a context of the freight industry in the south west and their role, Maritime Transport updating how they are trying to support younger drivers and experience of eHGVs, and Poole Harbour Commissioners providing an update including progress on the Hamworthy rail link. Speakers were well received, especially Logistics UK which prompted lots of discussion.
- 2.2 Next Steps/Upcoming priorities: The next South West freight forum is on the 21st October 2026. Speakers from Steer consultants about the work they are doing for Transport for the South East developing a freight fuel infrastructure strategy, and WSP updating on recent policy changes in freight.
- 2.3 We are enabling Professor Daniela Paddau from the University of the West of England (UWE) to deliver workshops to local authorities, providing an expert view of how to incorporate freight into Local Transport Plans in collaboration with the local authorities. These sessions will be taking place October-December 2026.

3. Rail Strategy

- 3.1 Progress Update: An allocation of up to £30,000 has been awarded to take forward the economic appraisal for the reinstatement of Westbury Platform 0. Rail Case for Change work in progress bringing together rail studies in one accessible document to advocate for further rail investment within the region. Wessex Case for Change consultants brief issued, bids expected back mid-October 2026. Letter of support to be issued to the Department for Transport (DfT) for funding of the Hamworthy Freight Line - Port of Poole expansion which is now construction ready (see Item 6, Paper B).

4. Electric Vehicle Charging

- 4.1 Progress Update: We held an EV Officer forum on the on 30th June 2026 with Devon council talking about their engagement strategy alongside their EV ChargePoint rollout, and a representative from EVUK talking about their free roadshows and impacts and benefits they have.
- 4.2 We have shared data from Transport for the North STB showing locations of properties with and without driveways, to help inform where local authorities prioritise public charge point locations.
- 4.3 Next steps: We are finalising the agenda for our next forum on the 21st October 2026. Speakers include North Somerset police talking about their fleet electrification, and opportunities for blue light services collaboration for charging infrastructure.

5. Coach Strategy

- 5.1 Progress Update: We tried to run a forum in July but were unable to fix speaker dates. The next one will be later in the Autumn. We attended the Confederation of Passenger Transport's Quarterly member meeting, promoting the coach forum and providing an update on Bus and Coach work.
- 5.2 Next Steps/Upcoming Priorities: The next forum will be in early November 2026.

6. Rural Mobility

- 6.1 Progress Update: The Round 1 pilot projects have now been successfully completed, with the full evaluation report published on the Western Gateway website. The report brings together the outcomes and learning from the pilot projects delivered across the South West, providing evidence of their impact and highlighting key lessons to inform future rural mobility interventions. To maximise the reach and value of the findings, the report is being promoted through Western Gateway's partner network and relevant communication channels. The full South West Rural Mobility Pilot Outcomes is available on the Western Gateway website: [View the full evaluation report](#).

- 6.2 Delivery of the Round 2 pilot projects is progressing. The South Dorset Rural Mobility Study has now been completed, while the Lyme Bay Night Link Bus pilot is approaching completion. The Cotswolds Data-Driven Visitor Management pilot is also progressing, with further details on the delivery status and outputs of each project provided below.

Dorset Council - South East Dorset Rural Mobility Pilot

The South East Dorset Rural Mobility Pilots Study has now been completed. The study has provided an evidence-based assessment of rural mobility challenges and identified a practical, scalable framework to improve accessibility and connectivity across rural communities in South East Dorset.

Key findings confirm that rural mobility challenges are driven by dispersed settlements, high levels of car dependency, limited public transport provision, poor first and last-mile connectivity, and difficulties accessing essential services.

The study concluded that these challenges cannot be addressed through a single intervention and require an integrated, place-based approach supported by partnership working.

The study developed four complementary pilot propositions: Integrated Public Transport, Community Mobility, Locally Accessible Services, and Rural & Tourist Mobility Hubs. Together, these provide a scalable framework to improve accessibility, connectivity and social inclusion in rural communities.

A presentation of the findings will be delivered by the project team at Dorset Council at the upcoming Senior Officers Group meeting.

Lyme Regis Town Council - Lyme Bay Night Link Bus (LB1)

The LB1 pilot service remains operational and is currently expected to continue until at least 30 September 2026. The service is being delivered through a revised operating model, with First Bus as the operator. The final operating date will be confirmed following consideration of patronage and financial performance.

The Western Gateway team visited Lyme Regis in August 2026 to observe the LB1 service in operation and review progress with Lyme Regis Town Council. The visit provided an opportunity to assess the service in its local context and highlighted the importance of reliable evening transport in rural and coastal communities, where alternative travel options can be limited.

The service has continued to attract passengers, including younger users, despite some disruption arising from planned and ongoing road closures affecting the route on certain operating days.

The pilot is expected to conclude shortly, with the remaining period focused on monitoring service performance and capturing the key learning and outcomes to inform future rural mobility interventions.

Gloucestershire County Council - Data driven visitor management in Bourton-on-the-Water

The pilot is progressing and is designed to combine real-time parking information with collaboration with coach and tour operators to help manage visitor pressure and support more sustainable access to the Cotswolds.

Approval has been secured to use three existing streetlight columns to support the scheme. A fourth column has been identified as unsuitable due to its heritage status, and a temporary column will therefore be required. A revised contractor quotation and installation programme are being sought to confirm the remaining costs and delivery timescales.

The project has experienced some delays associated with the approvals and processes required for the use of existing streetlighting infrastructure.

Next steps are to confirm the revised costs and installation programme, progress the required approvals, and provide stakeholders with confirmed delivery timescales. A site visit will also be arranged once the installation and go-live dates are established.

6.3 Call for Pilot - Round 3

Round 3 of the Western Gateway Rural Mobility Pilot Programme has now launched and published on the website [here](#), with up to £50,000 available in 2026/27 to support innovative rural mobility projects across the region.

The programme builds on the first two rounds, which have supported six pilot projects since 2024, and continues to focus on the six Rural Mobility Grand Challenges: operational sustainability, Net Zero, equity, affordability, meeting local needs and sustainable tourism travel.

The funding opportunity is open to local authorities, businesses, charities and community organisations, with applications closing on 8 November 2026.

To support applicants and ensure a consistent application process, a prospectus, application form, FAQ and internal briefing/QA materials have been produced and circulated through Western Gateway's partner and communication networks.

7. Regional Centre of Excellence

- 7.1 Progress Update: We have brought in DfT connectivity scores into the tool and published a technical note to support and underline the robustness of the Spatial Planning Tool (SPT) for use in creating transport strategy.

7.2 We have been supporting the DfT in the update of the Carbon Assessment Playbook (CAP), updating the baseline and improving functionality to support with the reporting of user carbon impacts of proposed projects and proposals. The update should be complete in October 2026.

7.3 Next Steps/Upcoming Priorities:

- Continue to actively support local authorities with the SPT we are looking to run a session running through using the SPT for vision led planning.
- We are in discussion about ongoing hosting arrangements
- We will support local authorities using the CAP when it is published and ensure there are training sessions
- Future workshops and engagement activities being scoped.

7.4 **University Partnerships and Student Placements:** Western Gateway continues to strengthen partnerships with universities across the region to support transport planning skills development and provide opportunities for students and graduates. The most recent placement has now concluded, with interns supporting the SIP refresh. A further two students will undertake 20-day unpaid placements from September 2026, supporting Western Gateway's work programme. Engagement with universities continues to expand the pipeline of student placements and strengthen links with the region's future transport planning workforce.

8. Resilience

8.1 Progress Update: Following the use of the resilience metric within the Strategic Investment Plan scoring, further work has been undertaken with additional data processing for including in the resilience work.

8.2 Next Steps: Continuation of work to provide a draft document regarding transport resilience in the region. At present, the work focuses on climatic hazards and the location of major transport infrastructure, based on open data.

9. A303 West of England Line Corridor Task Force

9.1 Working with Peninsula Transport we are pressing on with our A303 West of England Line Corridor Task Force. The Task Force with representatives from our local authorities, Network Rail, South Western Railway, Department for Transport and National Highways met for the second time in July. We are about to launch a one page case for change document highlighting the importance of this rail road corridor providing connectivity to/from the South West and facilitating and supporting the growth in homes and jobs.

9.2 Without clear direction and investment, the corridor will remain unreliable and underperforming, limiting its ability to support local communities and enhancing growth. As Sub-national Transport Bodies we are in a unique position to be able to bring together all interested parties along the corridor and see beyond boundaries, taking a multi modal approach to tackling these issues.

9.3 Closely linked to the Task Force's work is the West of England Line Stakeholder Advisory Board and the proposals for the Line's Modernisation Plan. It is led by South Western Railway and Network Rail. We are pleased to be key member of the Board, building as it does on our previous work funding business case development for the Tisbury Loop. We look forward to continuing to support and work on proposals in the Modernisation Plan.

10. Buses

10.1 A review of subsidised cross boundary bus services & Demand Responsive Transport provision across the region has commenced. This work is being supported by the two university students that are currently on placement with Western Gateway.

11. Consultation, communication and engagement

11.1 This update has been discussed by the Programme Management Team.

12. Equalities Implications

12.1 No adverse impact on any protected groups.

13. Legal considerations

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

14. Financial considerations

14.1 The technical programme is produced within the allocated budget as spelt out in the business plan.

15. Conclusion

15.1 This paper provides a summary of the various element of the Western Gateway technical programme of work and the progress made since the last board meeting as well as the work that has taken place so far, this financial year. The Board is recommended to note these.