

Western Gateway Partnership Board meeting

Monday 29th April 2024 10:00-12:00

In person (Cyber Innovation Hub, Cardiff) and on Teams

<p>Attendees</p>	<p>Sarah Williams-Gardener (Chair) (SWG) Cllr Jane Mudd, Newport City Council (Vice Chair) (JM) Cllr Mike Bell, North Somerset Council (MB) Cllr Mary Ann Brocklesby, Monmouthshire County Council (MAB) Cllr Robert Francis-Davies, Swansea Council (RFD) Cllr Rob Stewart, Swansea Council (RS) Cllr Claire Young, South Gloucestershire Council (CY) Cllr Darren Price, Carmarthenshire County Council (DP) Cllr Rowena Hay, Cheltenham Borough Council (RH) Cllr Huw Thomas, Cardiff City Council (HT) Cllr Rowena Hay, Cheltenham Borough Council (RH) Richard Bonner, West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (RB) Ruth Dooley, GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (RD) Lhosa Daly, National Trust (LD) Paul Moorby OBE, Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (PMO) Ben Pritchard, Arup (BP) Ian Edwards, The Celtic Collection and ICC Wales (IE) Prof. Ian White, University of Bath (IW) Hillary Marshall, West of England Combined Authority (HM) Andy Cornelius, South Gloucestershire Council (AC) Jo Jenkinson, GW4 Alliance (JJ) Huw Bryer, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (HB) Oliver Rooke, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (OR) Ben Mosley, West of England Combined Authority (BM)</p>
<p>Apologies</p>	<p>Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council (MR) Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority (DN) Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Gloucestershire County Council (Vice Chair) (MH) Cllr Kevin Guy, Bath & North East Somerset (KG) Cllr Richard Clewer, Wiltshire Council (RC) Cllr Jim Robbins, Swindon Borough Council (JR) Gavin Powell, Cardiff Capital Region (GP) Cllr Richard Cook, Gloucester City Council (RC) Cllr Anthony Hunt, Torfaen County Borough Council (AH) Cllr David Hopkins, Swansea Council (DH) Richard Ennis, West of England Combined Authority (RE) Geth Williams, Wales Office (GW) Joe Coyne, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (JC) Sally Edgington, Department for Business and Trade (SE) Tom Taylor, Department for Business and Trade (TT)</p>
<p>In attendance</p>	<p>John Wilkinson, Secretariat (JW) Steph Jary, Secretariat (SJ) James Cooke, Secretariat (JC) Joe Ball, Secretariat (JB) Barbara Jackson, Secretariat (BJA) Sara Pritchard, Secretariat (SP) William Mansfield, Secretariat (WM) Fiona Williams, Secretariat (FW) Billy Davis, Secretariat/GW4 (BD)</p>

	Marianne Agolia (MA) Nicola Lomax, Secretariat (NL)
Chair	Sarah Williams-Gardener
Minutes	Nicola Lomax
Venue	Cyber Innovation Hub, Cardiff
Start time	10:00 am
Finish time	12:00 am

Item	Summary of the discussion held and decisions made	Deadline
1.0	Welcome, apologies for absence and declaration of conflicts of Interest	
	<p>SWG thanked Board members for attending and the Cyber Innovation Hub for hosting the meeting.</p> <p>SWG expressed her thanks to Mayor Marvin Rees for his support and enthusiasm for the Western Gateway as this will be his last Board meeting.</p> <p>SWG also extended her thanks to Lhosa Daly for her dedication in championing the partnership and for her valuable inputs during her time on the Board.</p> <p>SWG noted that because of the changes to LEPs, Ruth Dooley and Paul Moorby will no longer be able to be part of the Board. She also noted that this may be Cllr Jane Mudd’s last Board meeting following her standing for election as Police and Crime Commissioner. She thanked all three for their passion and support during their tenures on the Board.</p> <p>SWG welcomed Cllr Darren Price as a new member to the Board representing the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.</p> <p>No new conflicts of interest were declared. Apologies for absence were noted.</p>	
2.0	Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising	
	<p>Addressing the actions from the previous meeting, JW provided an update on the open actions:</p> <p>Action 1: Secretariat to develop the 2024/25 business plan before the beginning of the next financial year.</p> <p>Action 2: JW to continue conversation with 3CI and Connected Places Catapult.</p> <p>Action 3: JW to circulate information about West of England National Forest proposal when it becomes available and particularly the implications on planning designations.</p> <p>Action 4: Secretariat to send follow up email asking the Board for input and potential volunteers to plan how to connect the clusters and consider leveraging future projects.</p> <p>Action 5: Henham to reconvene stakeholder organisations from the Board organisations to feedback on their findings and develop a Western Gateway international strategy.</p> <p>Actions 6: Secretariat to produce business plan supported by IER evidence base, PRP impact evaluation work, as well as board member contributions regarding points of focus and general feedback, before the next financial year.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p>

<p>Action 7: Secretariat to proceed with booking ICC Wales for the conference and continue to prepare for the event.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Action 8: Secretariat will ensure a connected event in Westminster is arranged to ensure the Conference has a UK angle. This will be alongside a series of business launch events held across the Western Gateway geography in the run up to the conference.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Action 9: Secretariat to organise activity for the Party Conferences.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>Action 10: Secretariat to reconsider and amend the constitutional terms as part of the appointment of vice-chairs, to remove some of the prescription and to consider a third Vice-Chair position.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Action 11: Secretariat to initiative a conversation with the existing Business Representatives and the Chairs of regional Business/Chamber Boards to discuss the potential benefits of a Western Gateway Business Advisory Board.</p>	<p>Not started</p>
<p>Action 12: Secretariat to prepare a revised Steering Committee governance to reflect the 2024/25 Business Plan for the next board meeting.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Action 13: Secretariat to diarise Area Champion meetings up to April 2025 to keep in touch with Board Member organisations.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>Action 14: Secretariat to work with the Low Carbon Energy Officer Group to develop a Forward Plan to April 2025.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>Action 15: Secretariat to review equality, diversity, and inclusion outlined in the governance regarding business representation.</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and no matters were arising.</p>	
<p>3.0 2024/5 business plan and budget approval</p>	
<p>JW outlined the context for the 2024/25 business plan (see paper 3.0 “2024/5 Business plan and budget” and “Appendix 1: 2024/5 Business plan” for full details).</p> <p>The business plan has been developed from our 2022 prospectus; the delivery priorities set by DLUHC; an updated Independent Economic Review and a recent EY report on the investment gap within the Western Gateway pan region.</p> <p>JW drew attention to the key takeaways from the IER and the EY investment reports.</p> <p>The IER has highlighted that our economy is forecast to grow more strongly than the UK (excluding London) and the Oxford to Cambridge Arc; that business investment in innovation is the strongest of any UK region and, unlike some regions with only one or two sector strengths, we continue to have key strengths across multiple sectors.</p> <p>Weak productivity continues to be an issue and there is a significant challenge around income deprivation, with 9% of the most income deprived areas of the UK within the Western Gateway pan region.</p> <p>The EY report has also highlighted that there is an investment gap of between £3m and £9m per business within the Western Gateway region when compared with London and the South East.</p> <p>JW outlined the Partnership’s refreshed vision and explained how our work programme will be centred around four main outcomes (Increase investment; Enhance innovation; Improve connections; Boost our recognition). Our work will continue to be grounded in four core ways of working (lead, convene, collaborate, advocate). To monitor progress, a</p>	

balanced scorecard has been created which will provide the framework for tracking the delivery of our key activities in the four outcomes.

JW noted that as public sector partners develop local and sub regional economic strategies, it will be important to have a consistent narrative across the whole area that reflects the above outcomes.

HT suggested that we make sure that Economic Development leads are involved in the Plan for Sustainable Growth and we work closely with them to ensure there is a joined-up approach with local economic plans. JW agreed to take this forward with Economic Development leads.

MAB noted the importance of ensuring investment in the region is equitable, with a risk of increased income inequality if this is not considered. JW agreed to ensure an approach for inclusive growth is articulated within the business plan and the Plan for Sustainable Growth which will be launched at the Convention in July.

CY highlighted the need to clearly articulate what is different about the Western Gateway (as opposed to MCA, CJs) and emphasised the importance of a list of explicit asks of a new government. HT agreed and commented that we need to be clear why there is a need for the Western Gateway. JW agreed that we would look to refine the business plan narrative to make the Western Gateway's unique role and identity clearer. We are working on a list of asks for the next government which will be part of our Plan for Sustainable Growth.

RD noted the need for government to recognise the role of PRPs in the development of regional investment funds. RD also flagged a lack of alignment in the referenced reports with reference to low productivity but a high investment in tech. SJ noted that there are many causal factors for low productivity, the most significant being a high number of economically inactive people in the region and low wages.

JW outlined the budget for 2024/2025. The 2023/24 Business Plan aimed to deliver a high level of spend to reduce an historic underspend because of COVID. The Business Plan aimed to reduce the budget carry forward from £559,000 at the start of 2023/24 to £174,000 carry forward into 2024/25. The underspend has been reduced and the budget outturn for 2023/24 has resulted in a carry forward of £163,000 into 2024/5.

JW clarified that whilst DLUHC are supportive of our spend profile and delivery, they were not able to make an inflationary adjustment to our grant or provide any additional funding which means a reduction in funding of 6%.

JW explained that in order to maintain the budget at similar levels, the level of income generated from sponsorship will need to be significantly increased in 2024/5 to off-set the lower levels of public sector grant available, with a target of achieving £200,000 of sponsorship income. This sponsorship will largely be generated from activities as part of UKREIFF and the Convention.

JW outlined that with no confirmed UK Government financial support beyond 31st March 2025 and with the above constraints, we have sought to retain as much flexibility as possible in the budget over the course of the year, by maintaining a £50,000 redundancy/risk reserve for our Accountable Body and leaving £25,000 unallocated. We will profile our spend on programmes more slowly in the first half of the year and only release budget for uncontracted work when we have certainty of income.

JB provided an update on progress made towards securing sponsorship for UKREiIF and the Convention. We have secured £45k of sponsorship for UKREIFF and are looking to

secure £100k of sponsorship through the Convention. We have several confirmed sponsors for the Convention, with AB Ports being the first major sponsor. JC acknowledged that this is a new approach for the Partnership and asked the Board to forward any contacts or organisations they feel would be able to support us with sponsorship. RD suggested it would be helpful to know who has been already approached to reduce duplication.

The Board discussed the budget for the forthcoming financial year and agreed it was a prudent approach.

RB highlighted the financial commitments from the Crown Estate towards the Severn Estuary Commission which shows the partnership is being seen as a trusted delivery partner by organisations who are seeking to achieve similar aims.

HT acknowledged the pressures on the budget for the Severn Estuary Commission and asked for clarity that further funding would be released should income certainty and government funding be confirmed. JW agreed that if we can generate additional income we could consider additional funds for the Severn Estuary Commission's work.

IE emphasised that a £200k income target was more than achievable with the right plan and the right people driving it forward and emphasised the need to look at what we can do differently to get partners involved and attract business sponsorship.

RD noted from her experience with the LEPs that rollover provisions for redundancy is a prudent approach.

JW described how the lack of budget certainty beyond 31st March 2025 will shortly start to have an impact on our ability to plan activities like UK-REiiF 2025 and next year's Convention. In addition, a significant risk is that secretariat staff will want to secure longer-term, more secure roles elsewhere, if no long-term guarantee can be provided.

JW outlined one additional option to mitigate these risks whereby funding partners together under-write the costs of the first six months of the next financial year in addition to their match funding contributions so that the Secretariat can plan with confidence. This would need to be contractual across all public sector partners so that any future financial burden wouldn't fall on South Gloucestershire Council, our Accountable Body. JW has approached the Chief Executives who have responded positively to having this conversation.

JM reflected on the significant progress made during the lifespan of the Western Gateway and stressed that the key question to ask is what would be the potential impact on the WG region of not funding the Partnership.

HT noted the need to prioritise job security for Secretariat staff rather than a focus on future events.

JW summarised the comments from Minister Young at the recent Western Gateway APPG. It was clear that the work of PRPs is valued but the government is unable to make any funding commitments until the next Spending Review. JW noted that other PRPs are in a similar position and we are conducting a joint piece of work with the other PRPs to articulate the impact of the PRPs in each region and look at the opportunities going forward. This report will be available in June.

HB noted that DLUHC were not able to provide clarification over funding at this stage.

Decisions:	<p>The Board agreed to sign off the business plan subject to making the amendments discussed.</p> <p>The Board agreed to approve the 2024/25 budget and the risk mitigation strategies outlined.</p> <p>The Board agreed to the under-writing of the Secretariat by funding partners in principle but noted this is subject to the necessary approvals within their respective organisations. JW agreed to take this conversation forward with the Chief Executives on 9th May.</p> <p>Action 1: JW to explore how to involve Economic Development leads in the Plan for Sustainable Growth and to ensure there is a joined-up approach with local economic plans.</p> <p>Action 2: JW to ensure an approach for inclusive growth is articulated within either the business plan or the Plan for Sustainable Growth.</p> <p>Action 3: JB to share an update of Convention Sponsorship and key partner targets. Board to respond with contacts / leads.</p> <p>Action 4: JW to refine the business plan narrative to make the Western Gateway’s unique role and identity clearer and to ensure list of asks for the next government is part of our Plan for Sustainable Growth.</p>	<p>16 July 24</p> <p>16 July 24</p> <p>20 May 24</p> <p>5 July 24</p>
4.0	Balanced scorecard and milestones update	
	<p>(For full details see paper “Item 4 balanced scorecard activity update”).</p> <p>SJ provided an introduction and overview of the Balanced Scorecard which will be used to report against the outcomes in the business plan. SJ explained the three quadrants covering the priority outcomes, with one focussed on the development and well-being of Secretariat staff and the wider partnership voice. In total there are 32 activities that the Secretariat will track across the four quadrants of the balanced scorecard.</p> <p>SWG acknowledged the amount of work undertaken on the Business Plan and the Balanced Scorecard and noted that it shows how much work is being undertaken by the Secretariat.</p> <p>SJ agreed to work on a mechanism for allowing the Board access to the Balanced Scorecard going forward.</p> <p>MAB asked about the investment activity in the Balanced Scorecard and whether we have targets and whether we are tracking a rate of return for investment as part of this work. JW confirmed that WG are not able to directly deliver investment but do so through our ability convene, collaborate and amplify. JW advised the Board that we have started to track in-kind contributions so we can quantify the value for investment we deliver as a Partnership. Larger investments are highlighted through case studies. JC drew attention to the work on Severn Edge at Berkeley as a key example of this.</p> <p>Action 5: SJ to find a mechanism for providing the Board with access to the Balanced Scorecard.</p>	<p>16 July 24</p>
5.0	Convention for the Western Gateway	
	(For full details see paper “Item 5 - 2024 events update”).	

	<p>JB provided an update on activities for UKREiIF. Local authority partners have been invited to a pre UKREIFF dinner on 15th May. All board members and local authorities have been invited to attend alongside representatives from several key major projects across the area.</p> <p>JB noted that our own online presence to promote our UKREiIF Pavilion’s agenda will be launched this week. He asked the board to share and promote this to contacts and a full communications pack will be circulated shortly.</p> <p>JB also gave a further update on the activities for the Convention which continue to progress well. We have a target of 700 ticket sales and sales are continuing to increase. We are working with Orchard on promising zonal sponsorship leads. JB noted that we are keen to work with partners to promote the Convention and will be sharing communication packs shortly.</p> <p>JB asked for Board members to advise us which of the breakout sessions they would like to take part in.</p> <p>JB provided an update on prioritisation of events for 2025 considering the budget constraints discussed. UKREiIF 2025 is the highest priority event for the Partnership due to its sponsorship potential. Attendance or sponsorship at MIPIM 2025 will not be part of our 2025 events schedule. Attendance at Party Conferences is a high priority in 2024 ahead of the General Election and is accommodated in the existing budget. Our position on Party Conferences for 2025 will be reviewed later this year.</p> <p>IE offered to promote the Convention at ICC events in the coming months. JB agreed to send copy for Convention advertising.</p> <p>JW noted a discussion with IE about the using the Convention to market test a business membership model and the Secretariat will continue to explore this.</p> <p>JW and SWG expressed their thanks to Joe, Sara and the team for all of their hard work towards generating sponsorship for both UK-REIFF and the Convention.</p> <p>Action 6: JB to send Convention advertising material to IE for promotion at the ICC.</p> <p>Action 7: Secretariat to develop a business membership model for market testing at the Convention.</p>	<p>31 May 24</p> <p>05 July 24</p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Governance review and business board reps</p>	
	<p>(For full details see paper “Item 6 Governance update”).</p> <p>JC provided an overview of the current business and non-political representation on the Board.</p> <p>Due to the transfer of LEP functions to economic growth boards within local or combined authorities, Ruth Dooley and Paul Moorby OBE will no longer be Board Members of the Western Gateway under the terms of the existing Constitution.</p> <p>The three-year term for the Independent Business Representatives is shortly due to expire. Lhosa Daly has shared her intention to step down from the Board, with Ian Edwards and Ben Pritchard expressing an interest in staying in post for a further period of time to support a more flexible transition of these roles.</p>	

JC outlined how the establishment of Corporate Joint Committees (South West Wales CJC and South East Wales CJC) will also have an impact on Board representation.

JC highlighted the principles that underpin the future governance model and outlined the possible options. The Board discussed the recommendations as follows:

- Amend the Constitution to create 5 new regionally-based independent business positions for the Western Gateway Board (1 from each of Gloucestershire, Swindon & Wiltshire, South East Wales CJC, South West Wales CJC and West of England).
- Retain a minimum of 2 Independent Business Board representatives appointed directly by the Western Gateway through an open recruitment process.
- Retain a minimum of 2 Higher Education / Innovation Representatives on the Board.
- That all appointments be reviewed by an Employment & Appointments Panel with a priority focus for achieving equality, diversity and inclusion in Board representation.

IW noted that it would be good to ensure that there is a way of addressing expertise gaps, particularly as the Western Gateway regions covers so many sectors. SWG agreed.

HT noted the importance of CJC representation and the need for business membership.

CY questioned what the mechanism is if we are unable to meet our EDI requirements. JW noted CJC or growth board members would be subject to their own EDI recruitment requirements but that we can review this if we do not feel we have the right balance.

PM observed that it has been a fantastic five years contributing to the WGPRP and expressed his thanks to everyone that has supported him. He reflected on the hard work to get the PRP to this point.

JC provided an update on the previously discussed mediator role within the Constitution. Following discussions with the legal team at South Gloucestershire Council, it was concluded that there is little value in appointing, by name, a mediating Authority. There are options open to the Board which includes the ability to seek an independent view with an appropriate 'peer organisation' such as a Solace or the LGA. It is proposed to remove this clause from the Constitution.

JC outlined the proposed options for new Steering Committee governance to re-align the steering committees with the Business Plan. It is proposed that we will have four strategic Steering Committees. This will not preclude oversight or working groups. JC suggested to the Board that they indicate if there are Committees they would like to contribute to.

CY asked about the recruitment of partners for the Severn Edge Steering Committee. She noted that South Gloucestershire Council are keen to be involved. JC explained that partners will largely be self-selecting due to the nature of the project but is keen to ensure South Gloucestershire have representation and a say in how to incorporate strategic partners.

Decisions:

The Board agreed to amend the Constitution to create five new regionally-based independent business positions for the Western Gateway Board.

The Board agreed that they would retain a minimum of two Independent Business Board representatives and a minimum of two Higher Education / Innovation representatives.

	<p>The Board agreed that all appointments will be reviewed by an Employment & Appointments Panel in order to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion in Board representation.</p> <p>The Board agreed to remove the references to a mediator from a Local Authority from the Accountable Body Role within the Constitution.</p> <p>The Board agreed to align the steering committees with the Business Plan as described in appendix 2.</p> <p>Action 8: Secretariat to make the changes to the Constitution following the Board’s decision to create five new regionally-based independent business positions and to remove the mediator role.</p> <p>Action 9: Secretariat to initiate the nomination process for five new regionally based business positions.</p> <p>Action 10: Secretariat to recruit board members for the new Steering Committees.</p>	<p>16 July 24</p> <p>16 July 24</p> <p>16 July 24</p>
<p>7.0</p>	<p>Partner updates</p>	
	<p>Hilary Marshall advised that Steven Peacock will be the new permanent Chief Executive at WECA and will be joining later in the year.</p> <p>MAB updated the Board on the recently signed MOU with higher education and further education organisations in the region.</p>	
<p>8.0</p>	<p>AOB and Close</p>	
	<p>JM expressed her gratitude to the Board and noted that she will continue to champion the Western Gateway.</p> <p>Time and date of the next meeting: 16th July 2024. The Board was asked for any suggestions for where it could be hosted.</p> <p>SWG expressed her thanks to the Secretariat team for their comprehensive preparations for the Board meeting and thanked the Board for their time and valuable contributions today.</p>	