

Western Gateway partnership board meeting

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

In person (National Composites Centre, Bristol and Bath Science Park) and on Teams

Attendees	<p>Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Gloucestershire County Council (Vice Chair) (MH) 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 Richard Cook, Gloucester City Council (RC) Richard Bonner, West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (RB) Ruth Dooley, GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (RD) Lhosa Daly, National Trust (LD) Paul Moorby, Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (PMO) Ben Pritchard, Arup (BP)</p>
Apologies	<p>Cllr Huw Thomas, Cardiff City Council (HT) Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council (MR) Ian Edwards, The Celtic Collection and ICC Wales (IE) Prof. Ian White, University of Bath (IW) Cllr Kevin Guy, Bath & North East Somerset (KG) Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority (DN) Cllr Rowena Hay, Cheltenham Borough Council (RH) Cllr Richard Clewer, Wiltshire Council (RC) Cllr Jim Robbins, Swindon Borough Council (JR) Gavin Powell, Cardiff Capital Region (GP)</p>
In attendance	<p>Jo Jenkinson, GW4 Alliance (JJ) Sally Edgington, Cities & Local Growth Unit (SE) Naomi Lynch, Bristol City Council (NL) Gareth Newell, Cardiff Council, (GN) Andy Cornelius, South Gloucestershire Council (AC) 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 & GW4 (FW) Billy Davis, Secretariat (BD) Tom Burton, Secretariat (TB)</p>
Guests	<p>Rob Kearney, Plexal (RK)</p>
Chair	<p>Cllr Jane Mudd, Newport City Council (Vice Chair) (JM)</p>
Minutes	<p>Tom Burton, Western Gateway (TB)</p>
Venue	<p>National Composites Centre, Bristol and Bath Science Park</p>
Start time	<p>10:00 am</p>
Finish time	<p>12:00 am</p>

<p>Action 14: Secretariat to liaise with rail operators re. concerns about the negative implications of reworking Swansea-London trains to go through Old Oak Common.</p> <p>Action 15: Secretariat to further explore ways to raise the profile of the Vision and readily investible schemes with partners and Government.</p> <p>Action 16: Severn Estuary Commission to take flood risk management into consideration as part of its work programme.</p>	<p>03/11/23</p> <p>03/11/23</p> <p>04/03/24</p>
<p>3.0 Director's update</p>	
<p>3.a Activity update – FOR AGREEMENT, Item 3</p>	
<p>JW outlined the general activities undertaken by the Secretariat since the last Board meeting as well as those that were upcoming.</p> <p>He requested board members to continue to provide details of events in the Western Gateway area for potential partnership involvement.</p> <p>JW introduced new Public Affairs Officer Billy Davis, whose time will be shared between Western Gateway and the Great Western 4 (GW4).</p> <p>He informed the Board that the projects approved at the previous board meeting were now up and running. JW confirmed that the budget was therefore on track to meet spend forecast. This means that 2023/24 will include spend against much of the carry forward from previous years. The resulting impact is that public grant spend in 2024/25 will be lower than 2023/24 as less money will be carried forward. As a result, the Secretariat will be looking to diversify its funding base, including through event sponsorship and reducing the number of external commissions carried out next FY.</p> <p>Focusing on the three-year government grant funding coming to an end in March 2025, JW highlighted that there is now an urgent need for agreement from the UK Government for a new funding settlement. The Partnership will continue to demonstrate its value to help secure funding.</p> <p>JW discussed approaches from other partners and stakeholders that had enquired about Western Gateway participation. These include a proposal from 3Ci to create a Western Gateway net zero prospectus and an approach to endorse a bid covering the English side of the Western Gateway to create a new national forest as part of a DEFRA competition. The Board discussed these. They were particularly recognised potential value in the 3Ci proposal but requested further information on both before they decide.</p> <p>Decisions:</p> <p>The Board noted the previous 3 months of work programmes.</p> <p>The Board noted the budget update.</p> <p>The Board noted the Director's emerging policy issues.</p> <p>The Board agreed to progress talks with 3CI and Connected Places Catapult on potential investment project.</p>	
<p>Action 1: Secretariat to develop the 2024/25 business plan before the beginning of the next financial year.</p>	<p>29/03/24</p>
<p>Action 2: JW to continue conversation with 3CI and Connected Places Catapult.</p>	<p>04/03/24</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>29/03/24</p>

4.0	Cyber and tech super cluster. Presentation from Plexal – FOR INFORMATION, Item 4	
<p>JM spoke about the value of the cyber and tech super cluster work carried out by Plexal.</p> <p>RK outlined the key functions of Plexal and work carried out in producing the interactive map of selected cyber and tech related assets in the area. He covered their approach, the categories used, the development of the map over time, and their recommended next steps for the partnership to take.</p> <p>JM stated that the slides would be circulated and the report’s findings would be accessible to read following the meeting.</p> <p>The Board discussed the number of assets that could be put on the map and the need to ensure this piece of work doesn’t duplicate that of partners and other stakeholders. Board members were reassured by JW of the map’s uniqueness due to the geography covered and the value it presented to attract investment on the international stage.</p> <p>BJ confirmed that the map illustrated a cluster with genuine connections across the River Severn. She further stated that there would be a formal launch of the cyber map and prospectus to champion the Western Gateway and further attract interest and investment for the area.</p> <p>The Board also discussed how the Western Gateway could bring its existing clusters closer together and support a partner bid for funding through the UK Research and Innovation’s Place Based Impact Accelerator.</p> <p>The Board considered how future opportunities could be signposted to have a positive impact on the areas of the Western Gateway and the potential to compare the assets on a high-level UK scale.</p> <p>Decisions: The Board noted the completion of the map and delivery of the report by Plexal. The Board discussed Plexal’s recommendations, including the need to connect the clusters found in Bristol/Bath, Gloucester/Cheltenham and Cardiff for greater impact.</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>		04/03/24
5.0	Update on international discovery work – FOR DISCUSSION, Item 5	
<p>JC introduced the paper, updating the Board on work undertaken to progress the Internationalisation workstream since the last board meeting.</p> <p>He informed the Board that Henham Strategy had been appointed to support a scoping exercise for an international strategy, which is now completed, and which had achieved strong engagement across 15 stakeholder organisations.</p> <p>JC stated that the team had stressed the importance of avoiding duplicating existing stakeholder work on internationalisation and were focused on providing additionality.</p>		

<p>The Board discussed what further opportunities were available for the Partnership to take forward this workstream and how we make sure investment pitches were appropriate for an international stage and how to elevate the whole area to investors. RB asked about engagement with the Office for Investment and JC confirmed that a 2-day visit is being finalised for late February.</p> <p>Other potential opportunities for the strategy, such as R&D capabilities and the area’s export gap, were mentioned. JW informed the Board that the Partnership is part of an impact assessment study with the other Pan-Regional Partnerships (PRPs). Awarded to Henham Strategy, the work will outline the impact of PRPs to date and develop a consistent impact framework going forward, including on international work.</p> <p>Decisions: The Board discussed the proposed Western Gateway Internationalisation activities identified and authorised preparation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 2–3-page Internationalisation Strategy • A Western Gateway Investment Prospectus accompanied by a digital map and a route map to identify the Enquiry/Delivery Lead Organisations. <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>04/03/24</p>
<p>6.0 Independent Economic Review update and emerging 2024/25 business plan – FOR AGREEMENT, Item 6</p>	
<p>SJ introduced the paper regarding the emerging findings from the Independent Economic Review and the consequential implications for Western Gateway strategy and 2024/25 business plan.</p> <p>She confirmed that Oxford Economics had completed their quantitative and qualitative work and provided initial concluding points to the Secretariat, which will be refined into a summary report for publication. Evidence, findings, and methodology used will be provided to the Partnership for future updates.</p> <p>SJ outlined the initial findings, highlighting new opportunities, progress achieved, and persistent issues facing the Western Gateway economy. She stated that this work alongside the international piece would support the Partnership in distinguishing itself more significantly from other PRPs.</p> <p>A draft business plan for 2024/25 was shown to the Board.</p> <p>JM thanked SJ for the work carried out. She recognised the business plan was an ongoing process and welcomed feedback from the Board.</p> <p>The Board considered how best to address persistently low productivity levels in the Western Gateway area in the business plan. There was also a discussion relating to shaping how the Partnership promotes the area’s assets in the business plan.</p> <p>Decisions: The Board provided feedback on initial outcomes and activities for the coming year.</p>	

	<p>The Board agreed preparation of a new over-riding narrative and business plan for our area and partnership focused on innovation, connection and sector intersection as the Western Gateway’s unique selling point. The Board noted emerging political alignment and supported further work to foresight external influences.</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>29/03/24</p>
<p>7.0</p>	<p>Events, including UKREiiF and the Western Gateway Convention – FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION, Item 7</p>	
	<p>JB introduced the paper, providing an update on planning for the Partnership’s key events for board decision regarding the 2024 Convention and Party Conferences.</p> <p>He informed the Board about activity for UKREiiF and MIPIM representation. JB stated that a headline agenda for UKREiiF 2024 had been agreed with the officer working group but that all speakers needed to be confirmed by April. He highlighted that the working group had met twice to agree a funding strategy and are engaging with several private sector firms about securing sponsorship to cover costs.</p> <p>JB referred to ongoing conversations with Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) regarding how to support their presence at MIPIM and encouraged board members planning to attend to join and help represent the Partnership.</p> <p>JB outlined the work supporting the 2024 Convention, including visits to potential venues and tendering exercises. He suggested preferable dates and a venue to consider. He also informed the Board on cost implications regarding sponsorship support and event management.</p> <p>The Board discussed the benefits and drawbacks of hosting an event in different areas as well as how it may be perceived. They also considered the option of organising satellite events and attending existing opportunities outside of the Western Gateway geography that could be held before the Convention and other confirmed events.</p> <p>There was a discussion regarding what type of activities the Partnership would like the Secretariat to organise for the Party Conferences later this year.</p> <p>Decisions: The Board viewed and discussed which venue and date would be best for the Western Gateway Convention. The Board agreed to the idea of hosting a reception-style event at Conservative and Labour Conferences in partnership with other organisations. The board recognised the reasons for ICC Wales being preferable on balance for a 2024 event, but recommended that other venues should be considered again in the future to ensure our profile events are taken to other parts of the Western Gateway geography.</p> <p>Action 7: Secretariat to proceed with booking ICC Wales for the conference and continue to prepare for the event.</p>	<p>05/07/24</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>Action 9: Secretariat to organise activity for the Party Conferences.</p>	<p>25/06/24</p> <p>29/09/24</p>
8.0	Governance Review – For DISCUSSION, Item 8	
	<p>JM stated there were several areas needing to be addressed regarding the Partnership's governance.</p> <p>JC introduced the paper, providing context for the recent Governance Review.</p> <p>The Board discussed the suggested wording around Vice Chair appointments which was considered too prescriptive and it was suggested that the Board might benefit from a third Vice Chair post.</p> <p>CY asked about the Steering Committees noting that Severn Edge had not met and JC advised that the Secretariat were proposing to set out a comprehensive new approach to the Steering Committees reflecting the new Business Plan.</p> <p>Recommendations: The Board agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to maintain the existing board membership. • not to prescribe a term for the Gloucestershire District. <i>Please note this is amended from the original recommendation.</i> • to move to a staggered transition for Business Representative terms. • To a minimum three business voices on a Steering Committee. • to appoint a Member Local Authority to act as a mediator in accordance with paragraphs 5 and 7 of the Accountable Body Role. <i>Discussions progressing with Newport.</i> • to disband the Policy Officer Group. • that the Secretariat continue to put informal meetings in diaries with the Local Authority Chief Executives on a 2-monthly basis. • That the Governance Review be adapted to reflect conversation, including suggestions for future Steering Committee governance and this be brought back to a future meeting. 	
	<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>29/04/24</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>29/04/24</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>29/04/24</p>
	<p>Action 13: Secretariat to diarise Area Champion meetings up to April 2025 to keep in touch with Board Member organisations.</p>	<p>29/04/24</p>
	<p>Action 14: Secretariat to work with the Low Carbon Energy Officer Group to develop a Forward Plan to April 2025.</p>	<p>29/04/24</p>
	<p>Action 15: Secretariat to review equality, diversity, and inclusion outlined in the governance regarding business representation.</p>	<p>29/04/24</p>
9.0	Workstream updates	

9a	Energy from the Severn – For DISCUSSION, Item 9a	
	Not covered at board meeting. Please see papers for more information.	
9b	Hydrogen – For DISCUSSION, Item 9b	
	Not covered at board meeting. Please see papers for more information.	
9c	Innovation and Investment – FOR DISCUSSION, Item 9c	
	Not covered at board meeting. Please see papers for more information.	
9d	Strategic Rail – FOR DISCUSSION, Item 9d	
	JC drew attention to the West of England Combined Authority decision a few days previously to award £200k in funding to the further progression of a Business Case for Filton Bank electrification. JC has spoken to WECA about the opportunity to convene key stakeholders to discuss the strategic importance of this scheme and the opportunities to close the funding gap to realise this Business Case.	

10.0	Partner updates	
	MH shared news breaking that morning that the Berkeley site at Severn Edge is benefitting from a significant investment by the Chiltern Vital Group including a consortium of Rolls Royce SMR and the University of Bristol which is a hugely positive development in realising the Severn Edge Vision.	
11.0	AOB	
	JW shared that several Board Members will be staying on to conduct the formal interviews for the vacant position of Chair of the Partnership.	
12.0	Time and date of the next meeting:	
	Monday 29 th April 2024, 10am-12pm.	
	Close and sandwich lunch	