

Response to questions to the Strategic Leaders Board on 14 October 2016 from the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

Joint Spatial Plan:

1) Will WELEP ensure that when commercial development such as at Severnside (not just housing) is planned as part of the Joint Spatial Plan, that the provision of rail stations and bus lanes to serve the new developments are considered first, ahead of any road improvements? Does SLB agree that rail, bus and cycle provision is the best means to lower the road congestion and improve air quality in the West of England?

The approach to formulating the emerging spatial strategy, as reported to the Strategic Leaders Board, adheres to sustainable principles including intensification in main urban centres and the best use of urban land, as well as the location of development outside of the green belt in main town and cities, free standing settlements and consideration of the Green Belt, alongside a range of other sustainability requirements including transport.

For transport the emphasis is on multi-modal, corridor packages where highway, public transport and 'smarter choices' investment is closely linked. A key feature is the relationship between the management of some radial routes alongside new investment in orbital links, which provides the opportunity on several corridors to reallocate radial highway capacity to prioritise public transport and cycling.

Maintaining access at rail stations:

2) Will the SLB hold Network Rail accountable to ensure access to Pilning, Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Rd and Patchway is at least maintained at its current level after electrification and four-tracking?

The West of England has repeatedly raised its concerns with Network Rail about their plans for replacement and Equalities Act compliant footbridges as part of electrification and the four tracking of Filton Bank and we will continue to do so.

3) What technical survey has been done on the Pilning footbridge to explore the possibility of simply raising the metal bridge superstructure and inserting extra bricks and steps on the pediment? If this has not been done, will the SLB require Network Rail to preserve the Pilning bridge metal superstructure until such a survey has been made?

Network Rail has been asked to respond on this issue and a response is awaited.

4) Is there any reason why a regular stop at Pilning at xx:32 (towards Bristol) and xx:41 (towards Cardiff) cannot be inserted into the GWR timetable, given that the rail service at Pilning at 08:32 on Saturday has an identical timetable to that of Monday to Friday? Will SLB request GWR to start a trial daily commuter service in 2016 to build the case for a full service?

The views of Network Rail on this suggestion have been sought and a response is awaited.

Bristol Temple Meads Station:

5) Are contingency plans being developed for Temple Meads Station so that if funding is not found via the proposed Temple Meads Enterprise Zone, a Station Street to connect the new Arena with a bus interchange on the Friary is still delivered as a minimum?

Sir Peter Hendy's report of November 2015 to the Secretary of State for Transport on the replanning of Network Rail's investment Programme clearly places all plans to redevelop Bristol Temple Meads station in Control Period 6 (2019-2024). Design work is funded up to GRIP stage 2, expected October 2018, when a clear picture will emerge of timescales and funding. It should be noted that Network Rail is looking for third party funding to take it to GRIP stage 3 and beyond.

MetroWest Phase 1

6) Will the SLB ensure that Network Rail commits adequate resources to the delivery of Filton Bank four-tracking and MetroWest Phase 1 plans to reduce further slippage in the MetroWest Phase 1 timetable?

Network Rail has stated that the four tracking at Filton Bank is due to be completed by December 2018. With MetroWest Phase 1 opening in late 2019 or in the first half of 2020 there is no risk of slippage arising from four tracking.

MetroWest Phase 2

7) Will the SLB challenge the Port study costing of £128m for a bridge at St Andrews Gate level crossing, and request that the study scope is widened to consider a road bridge at St Andrew's Rd Station north of the conveyor belt terminus?

Bristol City Council is to commission a MetroWest enhancements study which will include extending services on the Henbury Line. The study will need to take account of the MetroWest Phase 2 GRIP2 report which confirmed there are no minor track and signalling interventions that could mitigate the adverse impact of additional train crossings on highway traffic to/from the Docks and the Bristol Port Company's bespoke GRIP2 study produced by Network Rail into separating track from highway by means of putting the railway into a cutting underneath the entrance to Avonmouth Dock.

8) Will the SLB support Network Rail in its urgent bid for DfT funding for Bristol East Junction so that MetroWest Phase 2 can be delivered?

The West of England fully supports Network Rail's proposals for Bristol East Junction and will continue to do so with Ministers and Department for Transport officials.

9) Will the Strategic Leaders' Board therefore arrange an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State to ensure that Network Rail is resourced adequately so that it can meet its statutory duties to rail passengers, most immediately for Pilning station?

The views of the Strategic Leaders Board on requesting a meeting with the Secretary of State are sought.