

House of Commons



South West Regional
Committee

Transport in the South West

First Report of Session 2009–10

Volume I



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West**

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Volume I

*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and
written evidence*

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The South West Regional Committee

The South West Regional Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine regional strategies and the work of regional bodies.

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Summary

This report looks at the issue of transport in the South West of England. The importance of transport to the region was underlined by the size of the response to our inquiry, with well over 90 submissions from interested parties and members of the public.

We examined the processes by which regional and central Government determines the South West's transport needs and then seeks to meet them. We found that the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Funding Advice represented a significant advance on previous decision-making procedures, but feel it can still be improved. We support the proposed move to a Single Regional Strategy and the creation within the region of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board, which will coordinate both the planning and delivery of transport projects in the South West. These steps should improve the strategic planning and development of transport infrastructure in the region, and reduce the number of parallel processes that can cause confusion.

Regional stakeholders told us that they felt the way that priority lists of transport projects were selected was insufficiently objective and transparent, and that there was limited opportunity for them to influence the outcome of strategic planning. We therefore recommend that the Regional Funding Advice process be opened up to greater public scrutiny and that transport providers become more involved with local campaign groups.

In a tight fiscal environment, long delays and budgetary underspends can put investment in the region at risk. Processes should be streamlined at both the regional and national level and the region itself needs greater capacity to evaluate options objectively and manage them effectively, particularly in relation to environmental impact.

Road travel needs to be made more sustainable and environmentally friendly. For those who need to travel by car, this will also have the beneficial effect of reducing congestion. Local and regional bodies should prioritise projects that reduce car use and support public transport. This should include measures to make bus travel more attractive in urban and suburban areas. We also encourage the Highways Agency, as it maintains and improves the national road network, to bring forward measures that prioritise multi-occupancy forms of transport.

We looked at the so-called Second Strategic Route, the A303 and connecting roads to the west. Progress on this has historically been related to the issue of protecting Stonehenge, and we urge the Government to identify a traffic solution there as a national priority. We also consider that the Department for Transport should consider the value of the A303 in terms of the resilience it provides for the region as the only major alternative to the M4.

We acknowledge that, in rural areas that are not on main routes, public transport may be minimal and residents may have to use a car. We recommend that regional government identify which communities in the South West are the most isolated and bring forward tangible projects to improve their access to rural bus and rail services.

Despite the region's extensive coastline, its ports can be neglected by regional and national

bodies. We believe that ports should be integral to any comprehensive transport strategy.

We welcome wholeheartedly the news that the mainline railway will be electrified between London and Swansea. This will make a real positive difference to the region and will make a sustainable mode of transport more attractive to travellers. However, the project may also delay the addition of new rolling stock to address persistent overcrowding. We urge the Government to publish its new rolling stock plan as soon as possible. In response to concerns about the high cost of some rail fares in the region, we also recommend that the Minister for the South West investigate the impact of ticket prices on the region.

Without quick and reliable alternatives, the region's airports will continue to play an important role in its economy. However, they could be more ambitious in improving their links with public transport and we support the Regional Development Agency's moves to ensure this happens.

We welcome the work being done in the Bristol Cycling City initiative and encourage other local and regional bodies to learn from their experience. More generally, the South West needs to improve the access that travellers have to good information about sustainable transport options. The investment would be small by comparison with, for instance, a large road-building project, but it could have a significant effect on boosting sustainable forms of transport. We recommend that decision-makers consider making funding for such projects more readily available.

The Department for Transport's *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System* has refined the priorities of central Government, and the region is now in the process of reflecting this in its planning. As it does so, we recommend that it consider the scope for promoting ambitious behavioural change and for prioritising improvements to sustainable transport above car use in future. In the long term, climate change may threaten some of the South West's transport networks. This is a powerful argument in favour of doing more to promote both the sustainability and resilience of the region's transport.

1 Introduction

Transport in the South West

1. The South West region is the largest of the English regions and has a widely dispersed population. The length of the South West peninsula creates problems in transport terms due to the sheer distance from the rest of the country and the inherent vulnerability to failures of major arterial routes.¹

2. Transport in the region faces numerous challenges. Bristol, the largest urban area within the region, has the slowest moving urban traffic in the country. The stretch of railway between Swindon and London has the highest rail fares in Europe. The region has the oldest rail fleet, the poorest access to bus routes and the greatest reliance on car use of anywhere in the country.²

3. The South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) told us that the current transport provision in the South West is not adequate to meet existing or future needs or to support economic growth and regeneration.³ While large parts of the region are heavily dependent on improvements to their connectivity, securing access to markets and the maintenance of a resilient transport network, attempts at improving the connectivity within and beyond the region have been piecemeal for the last 50 years.⁴

4. We therefore felt it was important and timely for the Regional Committee to look into the subject of transport in the South West. As a Committee we wanted to know whether the major transport issues in the region were being addressed, who was responsible for identifying priorities, and whether timely investment was being made in the right places. Importantly, we wanted to find out what people who live and work in the region thought about transport in their region.

Our inquiry

5. We announced our inquiry in June 2009, inviting stakeholders, passenger groups, campaigners, and interested parties to submit written views on:

- Whether transport provision in the South West is adequate to meet the demands placed upon the region;
- What the priorities should be for improvement;
- How these priorities should be reflected in the upcoming Regional Transport Strategy;

1 Ev 128 [Institution of Civil Engineers], Ev 247 [Neill Mitchell]

2 Qq 11 – 12. See also Ev 49 [GOSW]

3 Ev 55

4 Ev 247 [Neill Mitchell]

- What the costs of these improvements would be and whether the region can afford them;
- Whether the current arrangements for prioritising, approving and funding infrastructure projects are effective and appropriate;
- Whether the region is doing enough to promote environmentally friendly transport;
- The role and effectiveness of regional bodies, such as the Regional Development Agency and South West Councils, in identifying and addressing transport issues;
- The role and effectiveness of the Government Office for the South West in delivering national transport policy within the region; and
- The ability of the Government to influence private sector transport providers.

6. The deadline for evidence was Thursday 16 July. By the time of our final evidence session in December the Committee had received just under 100 submissions, by far the largest response so far to an inquiry held by any of the regional committees. We would like to put on record our gratitude to all the organisations and individuals who sent in written evidence. We took oral evidence at three public meetings. In Bristol we took evidence from the Institute of Directors, Travel Watch South West, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, Friends of the Earth, West of England Partnership, Plymouth City Council, Campaign for Better Transport Bristol & Bath Travel to Work Area, UK Bus First, Sustrans, and the Regional Director for Public Health.

7. In Taunton we took evidence from the RAC Foundation, the South West Regional Ports Association, Exeter Airport, First Great Western Trains, Passenger Focus, National Express, St. Germans Rail Users Group, Devon and Cornwall Business Council, Exmoor National Park Authority, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Dorset County Council, and Cornwall Council.

8. In Westminster we took evidence from Network Rail and the Highways Agency, SW Councils and the South West Regional Development Agency, and from Jim Knight MP, Regional Minister for the South West, Chris Mole MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport, and the Government Office for the South West.

2 National and regional transport

9. Responsibility for transport policy in the region is complex. The Department for Transport retains overall responsibility for transport policy in England. They have a presence in the region through the Government Office. There are also a number of public agencies, such as the Highways Agency, with remits in the region. The Strategic Leaders' Board (SLB) is the executive branch of SW Councils and the planning body for the region.⁵ The SWRDA are responsible for regeneration and stimulating the economy. Together the SLB and the SWRDA are responsible for producing strategies on behalf of the South West region. Transport provision on the ground is commonly provided by local authorities through subsidising bus routes or the maintenance of local roads.

National Policy: Delivering a Sustainable Transport System

10. Current Government transport policy is expressed in the document *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System* (DaSTS) published in November 2008. It sets out the following five aims for transport:

- support economic growth,
- tackle climate change;
- contribute to better safety, security and health;
- promote greater equality of opportunity;
- improve quality of life.

11. DaSTS followed *Towards a Sustainable Transport System*, published in October 2007, which represented the Government's response to the Eddington Report⁶ and the Stern Review.⁷

12. The DaSTS consultation recognised that, of the five aims, the biggest tension lay in how to maintain economic growth while at the same time reducing carbon emissions. To this end it welcomed schemes that contribute to 'modal shift', or changing the behaviour of transport users to reduce congestion and carbon emissions.⁸ It also advocated gathering evidence to support decisions on national priorities for investment and inform transport priorities in the Regional Funding Advice (see para 21 below).

5 The Strategic Leaders' Board is comprised of 20 council leaders drawn from the 41 local authorities in the region. See www.swcouncils.org.uk

6 HM Treasury and DfT, *The Eddington Transport Study*, December 2006. The report forecast a 30% increase in congestion on the roads and if unchecked, a cost to businesses and freight by over £10 billion a year.⁶ The first three headline recommendations were: 1) to improve the performance of the existing network, 2) that the strategic economic priority for transport policy should be congested and growing urban areas and their catchments; key inter-urban corridors and key international gateways, and 3) that Government should adopt a sophisticated policy mix to meet both economic and environmental goals.

7 The Stern Review, *The Economics of Climate Change*, October 2006. The Review advocated moving to a lower carbon economy, including moving to lower carbon technologies for transport, and gave weight to the view that there will be a considerable economic price if climate change is not addressed.

8 Department for Transport, *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System*, November 2008, para 6

Draft Regional Transport Strategy

13. The draft Regional Transport Strategy was originally prepared and agreed as part of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The draft Regional Spatial Strategy sets out the overarching strategy for growth and development in the region, including aspects such as housing, transport and waste. The current draft Strategy was drawn up by the now disbanded Regional Assembly,⁹ a body replaced by the Strategic Leaders' Board, and submitted to the Government for approval.

14. The Government have said the infrastructure projects proposed in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy did not have clear evidence of their criticality to delivering economic and housing growth, or evidence of prioritising between the projects; or fully articulate the desired transport outcomes to be implemented at a local level by local authorities and regional partners.¹⁰ The Government have decided to postpone publication of their revised Regional Spatial Strategy, following legal challenges to the Sustainability Appraisal of the Regional Spatial Strategy in the East of England.¹¹

15. Consequently some witnesses, who previously had been part of the Assembly, were left with the feeling that Whitehall was not very interested in devolving decision making on such priorities to the region. Rather, they saw the draft Regional Spatial Strategy as a tool used by central Government to impose their will on local authorities, whilst things that the regional stakeholders agreed upon, such as the standards of new development in the region, were sidelined.¹² In addition, those areas identified for new housing expansion did not have the necessary facilities near enough to be accessed by walking or cycling.¹³ Not all our submissions supported the draft Regional Spatial Strategy: Natural England felt it "fails to deliver a strong vision and a framework which ensures that there is a step change in regional transport priorities to deliver new and innovative schemes".¹⁴

16. The next Transport Strategy will be part of the Single Regional Strategy, to be drawn up together by the SWRDA and the Strategic Leaders' Board, combining the areas previously covered by the Regional Economic Strategy and the Spatial Strategy. It will be based on the evidence created as part of the Regional Funding Advice and DaSTS submissions and other documentation.¹⁵

17. One of the initiatives SWRDA and the Leaders' Board have taken to improve their close working is the formation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board, created to advise the Strategic Leaders' Board on major transport schemes, the allocation of funding, and the region's city and regional network programme under DaSTS. It has a membership drawn

9 The Regional Assembly was made up of local authorities, regional development agency and third sector groups such as the trade unions, environmental and social organisations and business bodies.

10 Ev 49, para 2.2

11 Government Office for the South West, Press Notice, *Further Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West*, 25 September 2009

12 Q 15 [Mike Birkin]

13 Q 31 [Jenny Raggett]

14 Ev 100

15 Ev 55 [SWRDA]

from local authorities, the SWRDA, passenger groups, transport industry providers and regional agencies.

18. We support the move to a Single Regional Strategy. We think this should make it easier to demonstrate the inter-connections between housing, infrastructure and the economic needs of the region. It is essential that the evidence gathered as part of Regional Funding Advice and Delivering a Sustainable Transport System processes be fed into the Single Regional Strategy.

19. We note that, with the loss of the Regional Assembly, the region lost one route for interested parties and the public to input into drawing up the Regional Spatial Strategy. It is important that the process for drawing up the Single Regional Strategy should engage widely with interested parties and the wider public, not only to ensure the resulting strategy does indeed reflect the priorities of the region, but also to build confidence that central Government is willing to listen to the priorities as expressed by the region. Central Government will also need to be convinced that the priorities expressed by the region are coherent.

20. We welcome the creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board and believe it will help transport planning and delivery in the region.

Regional Funding Advice

21. In July 2005, the Government invited the regions to submit their priorities in the areas of transport, housing, regeneration, and economic development. This formed the Regional Funding Advice (RFA) to Government from the region for the period 2006 to 2016. This exercise was repeated in July 2008 with proposals for projects in the ten years 2009 to 2019.

22. The Strategic Leaders' Board and the Regional Development Agency jointly prepared the RFA. The first submission, known as RFA1, was submitted in January 2006, the second, RFA2, was submitted to Government in February 2009. On 22 July 2009, the Department for Transport wrote to SWRDA and South West Councils telling them it was "generally content with your transport advice and can accept the priorities you have identified. [...] As a general assumption all schemes that were accepted in the RFA and remain in your RFA2 advice will continue to be progressed as planned through the system."¹⁶

23. The total RFA2 capital expenditure for the ten year period from 2009 to 2019 is £1.2 billion. The RFA2 includes a 20% over-programming element and still could not include schemes proposed by local authorities.¹⁷

24. Some evidence to the Committee supported the RFA process in principle,¹⁸ and represented an improvement on the previous 'first come, first served' system which had no strategic overview.¹⁹ Others admitted that while the process for drawing up the RFA in the

16 Letter from the Regional and Local Transport Policy Directorate to SWRDA and SW Councils, 22 July 2009

17 Ev 55 [SWRDA]

18 Ev 211 [South West Stakeholders]

19 Q 32 [Barbara Davies]

South West might be flawed, the concept was sound.²⁰ RFA2 was seen as an improvement on RFA1.²¹ However, we received many submissions highlighting problems with the RFA.

25. We support the principle of inviting the appropriate bodies in the region to set out the priorities for investment expressed in the Regional Funding Advice process, and recognise that RFA2 was a significant advance on RFA1. However, there is still much that could be improved.

26. The Regional Funding Advice process has been criticised nationally as being limited in scope and rushed. It has been argued that local authorities put forward sub-par cases, whilst the advice includes little indication of how the Department for Transport would proceed or what would happen if one large scheme swallowed up the entire allowance.²² The Institute of Directors said that while it might make sense to make distinctions between national and regional projects for administrative reasons, the framework should not make transport policy or funding decisions differently because they fall either side of the line.²³ The Institute of Civil Engineers said the RFA process was not visionary, but only a method for prioritising emerging transport schemes.²⁴

27. We are concerned that the RFA process appears to lack strategic vision and an awareness of the regional picture.

Objectivity and transparency

28. We received a substantial amount of evidence saying that the way the schemes were put forward for inclusion in the RFA lacked objectivity and transparency.²⁵ This led to accusations that the resulting list was decided in private, containing ‘pet projects’ from particular local authorities and dominated by road schemes, rather than schemes that would otherwise be said to be regional priorities.²⁶ Greater transparency would improve engagement with the wider public, facilitate debate that might identify problems earlier rather than later and enhance the democratic accountability of the regional bodies.²⁷

29. There was also a suggestion that the main aim of the process was only to initiate a broad political consensus, rather than expect the disparate authorities to immediately develop an objective appraisal system for choosing projects.²⁸ Chris Mole MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, said he hoped that the creation of the Leaders’ Board would enable greater scrutiny of what the region was putting forward in

20 Q 10 [Mike Birkin]

21 Q 5 [Chris Irwin]

22 House of Commons Library Standard Note, *Local and regional transport policy in England*, SN/BT/4351

23 Ev 125

24 Ev 128

25 Ev 165 [A36/A350 Corridor Alliance] Ev 206 [Sustrans]

26 Q 5 [Chris Irwin]

27 Q 15 [Chris Irwin]

28 Q 4 [Chris Irwin]

this regard.²⁹ Certainly, we would expect greater transparency to encourage more strategic thinking on behalf of those involved.

30. We heard that certain schemes included in the RFA had been in preparation for a considerable period of time, sometimes significant sums of money had been invested in them already, and the rationale behind their inception remained—such as to reduce congestion on a part of the road network. Nick Bye, Mayor of Torbay and Joint Chair of the Transport and Investment Board, said it was not possible to instantly turn around and say “Let’s go in a completely different direction”. He felt that while RFA1 had been “overwhelmingly road”, RFA2 was not. It now included the Swindon to Kemble rail scheme, and road schemes that would reduce congestion on bus routes.³⁰

31. There appears to be a substantial discrepancy between the priorities put forward by the groups and individuals that submitted evidence to the Committee and the priorities put forward within the Regional Funding Advice from the region. We conclude that the RFA process would be improved, and garner greater support in the region, if the process whereby the schemes chosen for the RFA was open to wider scrutiny. We recommend that the regional partners, and in particular the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board, find ways to increase the transparency of the process whereby schemes are chosen in future RFA rounds.

Engagement

32. Whilst the RFA process was seen as an improvement on the previous mechanism for deciding transport priorities, it is important that any process that purports to represent the priorities of a region should engage with the wider community from the start rather than at the end. The process for establishing transport priorities in the South West region needs to engage fully with interested parties, including the third sector, as part of a more transparent structure. The wider impact of transport policy requires a broader conversation than just among transport planners, and a set of priorities drawn up without that debate might be counter-productive.³¹

33. One of our local authority witnesses, the West of England Partnership, said they recognised that at the sub-regional level they had to improve the engagement as part of the preparation for their joint local transport plan, due in March 2011. As part of this, they have set up a joint transport executive committee, made up of the executive members responsible for transport in the four authorities, which now meets in public.³²

34. Transparency and engagement go hand in hand. We recommend that the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board develop a method to consult the public at the earliest possible stage and allow their views to contribute to the options put forward. Engagement must not only be done, it must also be seen to be done.

29 Q 189 [Chris Mole]

30 Q 163

31 Q 36 [Jenny Raggett] See also Ev 100 [Natural England]

32 Q 36

Regional Infrastructure Fund

35. The RFA submission includes a Regional Infrastructure Fund to support transport delivery and to improve the ability of local authorities and regional partners to deliver infrastructure projects more quickly. The RFA1 and RFA2 combined have included £50 million to the Regional Infrastructure Fund to 'forward fund' infrastructure and unlock developments. The monies are then clawed back from the private sector via developer contributions through Section 106 contributions.³³

36. Members of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board pointed out that this has been valuable in managing the risk of private developers being reticent with contributions, for example as a result of the economic downturn. The regional infrastructure fund was being considered to help fund the road link to Bournemouth airport.³⁴

37. We support the use of the regional infrastructure fund to act as a facility to ensure projects do not stall because private sector developers unable to provide cash in the short term. However, it is important that the region can demonstrate that outstanding private funds are eventually paid in full.

Community Infrastructure Fund

38. The Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF), originally introduced in 2004, is jointly administered by the Department for Transport and the Department for Communities and Local Government. The £200 million fund is a complement to mainstream transport funding, aimed at ensuring that housing developments are not slowed by necessary transport infrastructure improvements. CIF funding depends on partnership arrangements between Government agencies and those local authorities that have acquired Growth Point status.³⁵ The region has secured funding through the Community Infrastructure Fund for:

- Improvements to junction 30 on the M5 at Exeter;
- Segregated crossing on the M5 at Exeter;
- Plymouth East End community transport improvements;
- Wichelstowe pedestrian and cycle bridge in Swindon;
- A30 Chiverton Cross junction improvements in Cornwall; and
- Teignbridge-Newton Abbot infrastructure package.

39. There are concerns within the region as to the ability of the region's transport network to meet the housing expansion identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. We

33 Ev 55 [SWRDA]. Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation with a landowner in association with the granting of planning permission. They can be used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, such as highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing.

34 Q 174 [Ian Piper]

35 Growth Points in the South West are: West of England Partnership, Swindon, Exeter and East Devon, Plymouth, Truro, Poole, Torbay, Taunton, Kerrier and Restormel, Teignbridge

support the use of the Community Infrastructure Fund as a complementary source of funding to help alleviate congestion as a result of development schemes.

Time delays

40. The process for identifying, agreeing and delivering improvements in transport infrastructure takes a long time. South West Councils told us it takes 3–5 years from the time a major scheme business case is submitted to the Department for Transport.³⁶ Public funding streams are available at different levels according to the size of investment necessary and delays can happen because schemes do not seem to fit in within the definitions of national, regional and local.³⁷ Business groups expressed concern to us that delays in developing schemes increased their cost and deterred business investment.³⁸ First Group told us:

The main issues with regard to infrastructure projects revolve around the time taken to get from problem identification to delivery of the solution. Time scales to implement solutions can prove to be slow, and at worst can be overtaken by changes in demand patterns.³⁹

41. In addition, after the region submitted RFA2, it was then asked by the Department for Transport to “reconsider and reprioritise their advice for the medium to long term in the light of new options that are developed through the DaSTS study work over the next two years”. The Department apologised for the further procedure but hoped that the region would “understand that we are seeking to develop constructively with each region the most prudent way forward.”⁴⁰

42. The Department for Transport told us they try to engage with developers early on in an effort to avoid incomplete or un-coordinated applications, and they have improved their modelling capacity to provide more effective analysis of proposals. In addition, the Regional Minister thought that more schemes were being processed through the planning approval and the Department for Transport approval process at the same time rather than sequentially, and that this was helping to speed things up.⁴¹

Funding

43. We received evidence, notably those from bodies involved in drawing up the RFA (e.g. South West Councils and SWRDA) explaining that the transport schemes put forward in the RFA represented the bare minimum necessary to keep transport moving and improve economic productivity.⁴² We found there was an acceptance that funds were limited, and would be further limited for the foreseeable future. The region has been asked by the

36 Ev 61

37 Q 4 [Simon Face]

38 Ev 121 [CBI South West], Ev 184 [GWE Business West]

39 Ev 148

40 Letter from the Regional and Local Transport Policy Directorate to SWRDA and SW Councils, 22 July 2009

41 Q 194

42 Ev 61, para 6 [South West Councils], Ev 55, para 4.2 [SWRDA] See also Ev 72 [Devon County Council]

Regional Minister and the Department for Transport to update advice to Government taking into account changed circumstances.⁴³

44. Underspend of funds under the Regional Funding Advice is a concern.⁴⁴ We were told that the region underspent against the RFA commitments in 2007–08 by £31 million, and in 2008–09 by £33 million. The Department said that addressing this underspend was important to avoid the region losing funds in the future. The Government said that they were taking steps to improve the governance in the region to ensure that schemes were coordinated, and based on good evidence.⁴⁵ The common example given to us of when this did not happen was the Westbury by-pass, which was submitted as a priority for the region, but then failed when it was subject to independent scrutiny at a public inquiry in 2008. As one witness told us:

The persistent attempts by Wiltshire County Council to develop inappropriate road schemes has cost the taxpayers of Wiltshire dearly in the past decade. At 31 March 2009 £7.5 million had been spent on the following road schemes which have now been abandoned.⁴⁶

45. It is important for the region for transport planning and investment to be as efficient as possible, to ensure good value for the tax payer but also to ensure the region benefits from an efficiently delivered infrastructure. There was a risk that the funds committed to Westbury (£4.4 million) would have been lost to the region.⁴⁷

46. We recognise that in the current economic climate there are likely to be fewer funds available for the foreseeable future. The Government and the regional bodies have to be honest about the level of resources available and the degree of flexibility that will be given to the region if they adhere to the criteria given through Developing a Sustainable Transport System.

47. The region has to improve the costing and delivery of projects. In a tight fiscal environment it cannot afford to underspend its budget when there is such an obvious demand in the region for improving the transport infrastructure. It is imperative that the region acquires and retains the necessary resource to be able to develop, implement and deliver transport schemes to budget and deadline.

48. We welcome measures taken, such as the creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board, to improve the alignment of regional priorities so that projects and programmes can be initiated with increased confidence that they will be delivered, and closer working between the regional partners, local authorities and the Department for Transport.

43 Letter from Nick Bye, Jt Chair, Transport and Infrastructure Board, to Strategic Leaders' Board Members, 16 November 2009

44 Ev 121 [CBI South West]

45 Qq 197-199

46 Ev 197 [Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport]. The four schemes were: Brunel Link/ Harnham Relief Road, Salisbury A36 Wyllye Valley Relief Rd, A36 Codford Heytesbury Improvement, A350 Westbury Eastern Bypass

47 Letter from Nick Bye, Jt Chair, Transport and Infrastructure Board, to Strategic Leaders' Board Members, 16 November 2009

Capacity and skills

49. There was broad agreement on the need to encourage, retain and exchange project management skills throughout the region. We were told repeatedly that there was a shortage of competent transport planning staff throughout the region. Chris Irwin said there were two transport officers within the RDA and four at the Government Office, the latter have to represent the region's views to London and translate the views from London back to the region, on top of monitoring and mentoring local authorities. He argued that this had led to an imbalance in favour of the Environment Directors in certain local authorities, and that this absence of transport planning skills in the region had contributed to poor delivery of transport schemes,⁴⁸ and expressed doubt that the creation of the Leaders' Board would necessarily improve this situation because they did not have a large resource of technical support.⁴⁹ Overall, he felt that the capacity in the region compares poorly with places like Germany, France, Netherlands or Belgium.⁵⁰

50. Other witnesses agreed there was a need for more skilled staff. Jim Russell from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport said there was no competence in assessing the carbon impact of neither schemes nor the evidence base to inform balanced decisions.⁵¹ The Campaign for Better Public Transport said there were not enough resource going into financing the infrastructure, conceiving, analysis and delivery of schemes.⁵² It was felt that some local authorities, particularly the smaller ones, did not have the ability to develop complex integrated public transport schemes.⁵³ The consequence was poorly thought out proposals that occupied time and money but were not seen through to fruition. The ability to deliver a scheme should be a key driver in the identification of those prioritized.⁵⁴ The letter from the Secretary of State endorsing the findings of the public inquiry into the Westbury bypass was referred to in evidence:

There are significant technical concerns about the traffic modelling and cost-benefit appraisal. Evidence from the work done to date implies that the benefits of the scheme are highly sensitive to quite small increases in traffic, and this adds to concerns on the robustness of the traffic modelling and the errors that have been found in the cost benefit appraisal.⁵⁵

51. Nick Buckland, Joint Chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Board, told us the RDA was "lean and mean these days in terms of its head count" but that they could call on experts and experience within the agency, and had an infrastructure advisory group that included the business community and other players in the transport arena.⁵⁶

48 Q 5 [Chris Irwin]

49 Q 12 [Chris Irwin]

50 Q 13 [Chris Irwin]

51 Q 13, Q 5

52 Q 32

53 Q 10 [Mike Birkin]

54 Ev 82 [Swindon Borough Council]

55 Ev 94 [Friends of the Earth]

56 Q 164

Capacity fund

52. The RFA states that to design, develop and deliver the investments needed to realise the region's ambitions meant that, "transport authorities—particularly those smaller unitary authorities where we are focussing investment—require a boost to expertise and resource if we are to recover our current under-spend and deliver the package of public transport interventions that support future urban growth."⁵⁷ To this end, the RFA proposed a resource of £10 million to create a Regional Capacity Fund for the period 2009–2014, managed regionally, for the use of those authorities with the greatest need, where the fund could be used most effectively, encouraging authorities to work across administrative boundaries, and using pooled resource where appropriate. The Department for Transport initially said it would not agree arguing that the RFA is for capital spend only, but that they would support discussions with 'other parties' to try to secure funding.⁵⁸

53. The Regional Minister made it clear that the region performed badly at programme management of its schemes and risked not maximising expenditure.⁵⁹ In November 2009, the Transport and Infrastructure Board meeting decided to retain the request specifically to build up the capacity to develop schemes within the region, particularly in some of the smaller authorities.⁶⁰ Such project management expertise would be best placed at the regional level of government rather than local authorities, possibly within the ambit of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Investment Board.⁶¹

54. We are concerned that the region has not always managed transport programmes effectively and risked losing investment from the Department for Transport as a consequence. There is an urgent need for increased transport planning and programme management resource in the region.

55. We were told there are only six people within the RDA and the Government Office for the South West with responsibility for co-ordinating transport on a regional basis. Capacity is clearly limited. We support the Regional Capacity Fund request within the RFA to provide a pooled resource of staff available to assist the regional bodies and those smaller local authorities that might need assistance, and urge the Government to find a way whereby it can be included within the RFA.

56. The lack of competence in measuring the carbon impact of transport schemes is extremely concerning. If the potential for investment is related to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, it is essential that the region can demonstrate it is doing all it can to secure such investment.

57. The Government initially refused funding for the Capacity Fund because it required revenue funding and the RFA can only be used for capital expenditure. We also note that the Department for Transport said it would encourage a 'package approach' from regions where they have identified a problem, but not a specific scheme to address it, and might

57 South West Regional Funding Advice, 2009-2019, para 5.8

58 Letter from the Regional and Local Transport Policy Directorate to SWRDA and SW Councils, 22 July 2009

59 Letter from the Regional Minister to SW Strategic Leaders' Board, 6 October 2009

60 Q 195 [Hilary Neal]

61 Q 199 [Hilary Neal]

want to consider “a combination of traditional major schemes and other policy measures.”⁶² **We ask the Government to explain the extent to which there is flexibility within the RFA process to enable the region to put forward proposals that entail a revenue stream.**

Delivering a Sustainable Transport System

58. One of the planks of DaSTS is distinguishing between national transport corridors and regional transport corridors. National corridors remain the responsibility of the Department for Transport and consequently, the Department for Transport retain the decision making on prioritisation and investment on those corridors. In the South West this includes the M4 and M5 road routes, and the Great Western Main Line (London to South Wales via Bristol) and Cross Country rail route (Exeter to Birmingham via Bristol). Notably, the national network stops at Exeter. The South West Regional Partners, SWRDA and SW Councils, retain responsibility for recognising the priorities for the urban areas and regional network.

59. In response to DaSTS, the regional partners commissioned a study to examine the strength of the existing regional evidence base, to identify the most urgent challenges, and to support the key principles identified in the RFA2 programme.⁶³ This and further studies are aimed at strengthening the evidence base for transport investment in the region, and will contribute to a future White Paper on Transport Investment expected in 2012.⁶⁴

60. We received considerable evidence supportive of the aims of DaSTS,⁶⁵ with several recognising that the goals are not necessarily compatible. Dr Scally, the Regional Director for Public Health said:

I think that the five goals that are set nationally for building a sustainable transport system are absolutely excellent. Getting a better balance on climate change, safety, health and economy is absolutely vital, so I am very happy with the overall strategic goals.⁶⁶

61. Bill Billington from the RAC Foundation told us he did not think DaSTS in itself was a significant shift in transport policy, but rather it depended on what was done to implement the strategy. He said it was unrealistic to consider a future without expanding car use, and that experience shows it is extremely difficult to reduce car journeys.⁶⁷ Network Rail told us that they think DaSTS will help things dovetail together and provide a clear steer.⁶⁸

62. Witnesses welcomed the inclusion of issues such as reducing carbon emissions, but also the inclusion of those not always considered to be transport priorities, such as security,

62 RFA Transport Advice Supplementary Note, see www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/strategy/rfa/rfaround2/RFA supplementarynote1.pdf

63 South West Regional Partners, *DaSTS Stage 1 Study*, June 2009

64 Ev 55 [SWRDA]

65 For example, see Ev 95 [CPRE]. Q9 [Friends of the Earth]

66 Q 36

67 Qq 41-42

68 Q 150

safety, health, an ageing population and increasing levels of obesity.⁶⁹ Meeting the DaSTS goals, and bringing about a more sustainable transport system in the region, is more likely if the investment put into infrastructure schemes could be invested in schemes aimed at enabling a more active lifestyle,⁷⁰ and the analysis of proposals took account of the benefits of not using the private car.⁷¹

63. Many of our witnesses felt strongly that the RFA needed to find a better way of taking into account social and environmental factors, such as the needs of the elderly and those without access to the car.⁷² Friends of the Earth said national policy recognised the need to encourage people to switch from using the private car but:

[...] only about four of the schemes submitted to the RFA would unequivocally have that outcome. With the great majority, it was much more difficult to determine whether they would have that outcome; and several of them would unequivocally go the other way.⁷³

64. An organisation called South West Sustainable Transport Roundtable (SWTAR) carried out an analysis of the RFA schemes against a list of policy objectives drawn from national Department for Transport guidance, the draft regional transport strategy and the regional sustainable development framework.

65. SW Councils told us that formulating RFA2 involved extensive engagement and consultation, a Regional Transport Forum and stakeholder workshops, and the feedback they received as a result was for low carbon, sustainable solutions such as public transport schemes.⁷⁴ But the SWTAR analysis said the policies least addressed by the RFA were those around managing demand for travel, charging for parking or road use, the use of rail infrastructure, and the need to estimate the potential changes in CO₂ emissions.⁷⁵ It also suggested that local authorities included road schemes and advertised them as an integrated transport scheme because they partly featured a bus route.⁷⁶ They concluded that there needed to be a change in the schemes proposed, and that the outcomes should be aimed at delivering the policy rather than satisfying individual schemes.⁷⁷ They conceded that their work might not have been the most in depth and extensive analysis, but were not aware that any other similar analysis had been done.

Relationship with national policy

66. It was put to the Committee that there is a mismatch between national transport policy and the schemes put forward to achieve them from the region. Transport planning was not

69 Q 29 [Dr Scally]. See also Ev 204 [Sustainability SW]

70 Q 19 [Adrian Roper]

71 Q 125 [Dan James] See also Ev 100 [Natural England]

72 For example, see Q 125 [Alan Cousins]

73 Q 5 [Mike Birkin]

74 Ev 61 [SW Councils]

75 Ev 261 [CPRE]

76 Q 5 [Mike Birkin]

77 Q 124 [Isobel Mack]

just about enabling economic growth and reducing the carbon impact of transport, it also included broader policy goals such as health and equality of opportunity. This required wider thinking, beyond conventional policy silos, and this was not taking place in the region and in the local authorities.⁷⁸ Particular concerns were raised about an apparent mismatch between the sustainability goals of DaSTS and the projects put forward in the RFA. The Regional Minister told us he felt this was just part of the negotiation between central, regional and local government, to deliver policy through strategies and local plans, because there was always going to be a discrepancy between their respective priorities.⁷⁹

67. The region has to be able to justify the transport schemes presented in the RFA. Securing agreement and funding from central Government is more likely to happen with a set of programmes that agree more fully with the aims of Delivering a Sustainable Transport System. The RFA should include a clear statement of how the schemes put forward by the region aim to meet the aims of Delivering a Sustainable Transport System.

68. We note that Delivering a Sustainable Transport System touches on areas beyond what are traditional Department for Transport responsibilities. Bringing together goals such as climate change; economic development; equality of opportunity; safety, security and health; and quality of life; will require considerable work with other Departments. Meeting this challenge will require strong leadership within central Government, regional agencies and local authorities.

Local Transport Plans

69. The Transport Act 2000 requires most local transport authorities to produce and maintain a Local Transport Plan (LTP) lasting five years. The first round of Local Transport Plans covered 2001–2006, the second 2006–2011, and the third round are due in Spring 2011. They are used to monitor progress on the operation of local transport, and in the negotiation with central Government as to funding schemes. Local Transport Plans should dovetail with Regional Transport Strategies, although again we received doubts as to how well national policy was being delivered via local authorities at local level,⁸⁰ and that the upcoming round of LTPs was important.⁸¹

70. A Local Transport Plan that advocates a scheme requiring more than £5 million capital spending (a ‘Major Scheme’) would be expected to secure funding through the RFA process. Any scheme requiring less than £5 million capital funding should be identified in the Local Transport Plan and allocated in what is called the Integrated Transport Block. Substantial road schemes commonly require investment above £5 million. Adrian Welsh from Cornwall Council pointed out that because the RFA was for schemes over £5 million, they were bigger schemes, and such schemes tended to be aimed at improving connectivity, i.e. road connections between urban areas. Other schemes, more associated with building sustainable communities, might be under £5 million and so be funded from

78 Q 35 [Adrian Roper]

79 Q 203

80 Q 35 [Adrian Roper], see also Ev 100 [Natural England]

81 Q 36 [Dr Scally]

an alternative source, i.e. the integrated transport block. He argued that the extent to which RFA can help that process became more questionable when smaller areas were being discussed, and suggested to us that increasing the integrated transport package allocation might enable a better mix of public transport schemes across the region.⁸²

71. Other witnesses had different thoughts on the RFA and where the emphasis lay. Dorset agreed that the emphasis on sustainable transport was not high in local areas.⁸³ Plymouth City Council pointed out that it was natural for a local authority to want to improve their connectivity to the national network to enable their economy to be competitive with the rest of the UK.⁸⁴

72. However, the RFA does include some schemes aimed at increasing public transport in the city. Plymouth City has a bid for a public transport system to be put in place as part of the eastern expansion of the city. Bristol also has a public transport scheme, the Greater Bristol Bus Network, in the RFA.⁸⁵

73. The £5 million boundary between local and regional funding streams may affect the type of schemes presented as local or regional priorities.

74. Local Transport Plans are fundamentally important to how transport is delivered to the average person in the street. This places a great importance on Local Transport Plans being in synchronicity with regional strategies, and being clear as to how they meet national policy.

Integrated Transport Authorities

75. Several witnesses supported the creation of an Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) in the sub region around Bristol.⁸⁶ ITAs are bodies that can be created under the Local Transport Act 2008, commonly in urban conurbations, to facilitate neighbouring local authorities that share transport issues to work together and to allow greater flexibility in how the ITA acts as a whole across the individual authorities. For example, they would produce a single Local Transport Plan for the ITA.

76. Dr Scally drew parallels with some European cities, such as Freiburg, where they benefited from integrated transport systems. He recognised such integrated schemes would need a large initial subsidy but that the transport schemes would subsequently start paying for themselves.⁸⁷ The West of England Partnership have not moved to a ITA but have rather set up a joint working agreement between the local authorities, and wish to establish

82 Q 125

83 Q 125 [Andy Shaw] See also Q 170 [Ian Piper]

84 Q 20 [Clive Perkin]

85 South West Regional Funding Advice, 2009-2019

86 Ev 170 [Bristol Civic Society] Ev 171 [Bristol Visual and Environmental Group] Ev 181 [Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways] Ev 222 [Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance] Ev 265 [Robert Craig]. The West of England Partnership involves the four local authorities of Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council

87 Q 24

how far they can go to meet their needs without moving to a fully fledged ITA,⁸⁸ and have a Multi Area Agreement that incorporates transport issues.⁸⁹

77. We asked Mike Gallop from Network Rail, if he felt the Bristol sub-region would benefit from having an ITA with regard to rail improvements and he said:

Absolutely. My patch also covers the Centro area in Birmingham. The approach of Centro in Birmingham is markedly different to that taken in Bristol, and the success of Centro in attracting funding and bringing in the socio-economic case—the wider benefits of rail travel—are marked.⁹⁰

78. The RDA said while it was enthusiastic supporter of integrated transport, it recognised there was more than one model of integrating transport and, while they could demonstrate the evidence from models elsewhere in the UK, it was for local authorities to decide their method.⁹¹

79. We received considerable evidence urging greater integration of public transport, which has been shown to be advantageous in urban areas elsewhere in the country. The creation of Integrated Transport Authorities was suggested to us in evidence as a positive step in this direction, and we urge local authorities to set up such Authorities.

88 Qq 37-38 [Barbara Davies]

89 Q 21 [Barbara Davies]

90 Q 153

91 Q 180 [Ian Piper]

3 Transport between SSCTs and inter-regional transport

80. In any developed country, people's ability to travel quickly and conveniently between major towns and cities is extremely important. In the United Kingdom, the ease with which people can access London and the South East is crucial.⁹² The transport infrastructure that supports such travel enables economic development, as well as guaranteeing citizens' access to key services.

81. In the South West—the largest English region, parts of which are located very far from the geographical centre of England—providing such infrastructure presents particular challenges to central and local government, as well as to the private sector operators of many modes of transport. The government recognises 23 Strategically Significant Cities and Towns, or SSCTs, in the region.⁹³

82. We received evidence from many sources about the difficulties that people face as they travel around the region and beyond its limits. These include weaknesses in infrastructure, high costs and lack of choice. Whilst we did hear some encouraging news about improvements, it is clear that these can only go some way to resolving the problems. Meanwhile, the pressure to make all modes of transport less polluting will only increase. This chapter examines these issues and makes recommendations to improve regional transportation within the South West, and between it and other parts of the country.

Issues across all forms of transport

Resilience

83. By its very nature, extreme weather is rare and unpredictable. Nonetheless, a consensus is emerging—which the cold and icy weather of this winter has done nothing to alter—that, with climate change, instances of extreme weather are likely to occur more frequently than before. The South West region has already suffered more than most in recent years: for instance, the Boscastle floods of 2004, and those in Gloucestershire in 2007.

84. In almost all cases, one of the first aspects of life to be affected is transport. Roads, such as the M5 at Somerset Levels, are suddenly closed, sometimes even washed away; railway lines, famously at the Dawlish sea wall but in other places too, become impassable; and flights are delayed or cancelled. In short, moving between cities and towns can quickly

92 According to data from the Office of National Statistics in December 2009, the Gross Value Added (GVA) of London and the South East, a key measure of economic strength, accounted for 35.4% of the UK total (compared to 7.8% for the South West), indicating their centrality to the overall United Kingdom economy (Office of National Statistics, *Regional, sub-regional and local gross value added 2009*)

93 The Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs) are: Barnstaple, Bath, Bournemouth, Bridgwater, Bristol, Cambourne/Pool/Redruth, Cheltenham, Chippenham, Dorchester, Exeter, Falmouth/Penryn, Gloucester, Newton Abbot, Plymouth, Poole, Salisbury, Swindon, Taunton, Torbay, Trowbridge, Truro, Weston-super-Mare, Weymouth and Yeovil

become impossible. Cornwall County Council told us that “the far south west [is] susceptible to being cut off from the rest of the country”.⁹⁴

85. If the worst predictions of global warming come to pass, the South West will be affected by rising sea levels. We heard from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in the South West region that “important links within the South West are at risk of disruption or destruction by flooding and this risk will increase substantially in coming decades”.⁹⁵ Some of the most important coast roads and rail lines may become unusable. The Institute of Civil Engineers South West told us how recent studies predict “an inundation of the Somerset levels within the next 50 years that could see significant damage or even severance of the M5 and the mainline railway”.⁹⁶ As Cornwall Council told us, these are issues for central government, as much as for those who live in the locality: “Local authorities currently do not have a resource to meet these demands and national financial support is needed to adapt to the implications of climate change.”⁹⁷

86. On certain issues, we heard that the government and other stakeholders had specific plans for the future. Network Rail told us that the range of solutions they have in place at Dawlish, which includes a special weather station at nearby Teignmouth, will be effective for the next twenty years.⁹⁸ On the M5, the Highways Agency said, there were just under fifty structures—culverts and bridges—that needed work in order to manage the increasing flood risk.⁹⁹

87. However, in both cases we are concerned that this does not go far enough. Network Rail does not yet know which solution it will need to implement at Dawlish in twenty years’ time, even though planning and funding cycles are such that a decision on any major work—for instance, the construction of an inland route—will need to be taken in the next two or three years. Having identified the weakness on the M5, the Highways Agency is proposing to address them only as ‘opportunities present themselves’, which seems to us an unduly casual approach, given the seriousness of the risk.¹⁰⁰ In both cases, the ultimate threat is that the region south of Bristol and west of Exeter becomes regularly cut off from the rest of the country for short periods of time.

88. More generally, the increased threat posed by the weather provides a compelling incentive to government, both locally and nationally, and the private sector to make transport more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Even if some of the changes attributable to carbon emissions are no longer avoidable, we need to act now to ensure that the situation does not continue to deteriorate. As we were reminded by Dr Gabriel Scally, the stakes are high:

94 Ev 68, Summary

95 Ev 134, Summary, para. 2

96 Ev 128, para. 5.3.4 [Institution of Civil Engineers]

97 Ev 68, Summary

98 Q 159

99 Q 137

100 Q 137 [David Wright]

Transport is one of the leading sources of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases which are widely acknowledged to be affecting our climate. Climate change is likely to lead to increases in deaths and illness associated with heat waves, winter gales and floods, food poisoning, skin cancer and other conditions. Climate change has been described as the biggest global health threat for the 21st century.¹⁰¹

89. The region is particularly vulnerable to extreme weather because of its geography and a lack of alternative routes. This is an issue that needs to be addressed with much more urgency than at present. It also provides a major incentive for the region to invest in sustainable transport.

Connectivity

90. Due to the dispersed nature of its population, the South West needs good intercity transport links in order to operate effectively. The region extends over more than 200 miles, from the southern tip of Cornwall to the north-east of Gloucestershire. Like everywhere else in the United Kingdom, its economic success is also substantially dependent on the quality of its connections to London and the South East, which are both key marketplaces and gateways to the rest of the world.

91. There are three principal ways into and out of the South West, which are also the main means for moving between most towns and cities within the region:

- a) By road: the main routes here being the M4 and M5 motorways, and the A303, A38 and A30 trunk roads.
- b) By rail: from London Paddington to Bristol and on to Penzance, from London Waterloo to Plymouth, and the cross-country service from Penzance to Birmingham, the North and Scotland.
- c) By air: from a growing number of different local airports, the busiest being Bristol, Exeter and Plymouth.

92. We have had submissions relating to all these modes of transport and have questioned government ministers and representatives of public and private bodies about them. Before examining some specific problems, it is worth considering a few general concerns that we have.

93. In the evidence we received, there is a broad consensus that the South West needs to be better connected to the rest of the United Kingdom. Neill Mitchell, an independent transport analyst, was typical of many, writing that what was required was ‘coherent, prioritised, sustained and ring-fenced public investment in upgrading [the South West’s] inter-regional arterial transport infrastructure’.¹⁰² The South West Regional Development Agency said that ‘addressing issues of connectivity, access to markets and network resilience are key to economic success’.¹⁰³

101 Ev 107 para. 1.16

102 Ev 247 para. 5

103 Ev 55, Summary, para. 2

94. Views differ on which modes of transport or areas of infrastructure should be the focus of attention. All our witnesses were, however, worried that in future years the nationwide need for fiscal restraint will mean that such developments do not happen. Development that brings investment and jobs often repays itself very quickly in terms of avoided benefit payments and other social costs. However, central government and the private sector are unlikely to be convinced by mere aspirations. Robust research is urgently required to show which improvements to transport infrastructure would bring the greatest economic benefit to the South West. Armed with this evidence, the region will be much better placed to argue its case.

95. Better connections to the rest of the UK could substantially improve the South West's economic performance and lead to overall benefits for public finances. The region needs to come up with hard evidence to convince decision makers that this is the case.

96. Tourism is a cornerstone of the South West's economy, contributing £9.3 billion to regional GDP in 2007 alone.¹⁰⁴ For tourists, travel is not necessarily only a means to an end, but an end in itself. Whether by car, on trains or buses, or cycling and walking, leisure travellers expect to have an enjoyable time and not to suffer from unnecessary crowding or delays. The reduction in foreign travel occasioned by the economic downturn meant many tourists holidayed in the South West for the first time in 2009.

97. Summer surges of visitors put strain on already busy transport networks and infrastructure. In particular, roads become heavily congested in July and August with cars carrying tourists. This is also not environmentally friendly and many submissions called for measures to encourage tourists to travel more sustainably. We were glad to hear that some key public transport providers have already started doing more to expand seasonal capacity. We heard, for instance, how longer trains run to Weymouth in the summer months. Ivybridge Town Council commented favourably on the seasonal St Ives train line that has been enjoying record passenger numbers in recent years.¹⁰⁵

^{98.} Nonetheless, there are limits to what can be done within existing infrastructure, which is, in many places, stretched even on normal days. Moreover, it is important to act in a way that does not harm the economic prospects of the region. As Jeremy Filmer-Bennett of Devon and Cornwall Business Council said, tourists "will use public transport if it is going to work for them, but if you look at the models most of the people come, to be honest, from middle class backgrounds with those sort of earnings and so they will drive".¹⁰⁶ Evidence from the Temple to Bodmin A30 Action Group rightly stated that, for most people, "even popular activity holidays such as cycling and walking still require the motor car."¹⁰⁷

99. To improve the experience of tourists and to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment, local and regional government, and other stakeholders, should do

104 www.swtourism.org.uk/news/q/date/2009/04/21/visitor-related-spend-worth-9-3-billion-to-south-west/, accessed 20 January 2010.

105 Ev 91, para. 3.1

106 Q 100

107 Ev 218, para. 10

more to inform tourists about, and encourage them to take, public transport when they are in the South West.

100. Connectivity is also about helping people to move between different modes of transport in order to facilitate complex journeys between places that are not on the same train line or bus route. This is something that travellers find difficult everywhere in the United Kingdom, with the exception of London, where co-ticketing across all public transport and, in recent years, the Oyster card system, have made hopping off buses and into the tube or onto a tram part of everyday life.

101. We were told in oral evidence of a regional study into the possibility of using such smartcard technology in the South West in the near future. The Regional Development Agency has detailed plans to bid for money to allow it to develop a smartcard back office.¹⁰⁸ Adrian Welsh of Cornwall County Council told us that they hoped to run a pilot project in the relatively near future.¹⁰⁹ This is welcome news. As South West Stakeholders put it, “a cross-modal, universally recognised smart card would be tangible evidence of a commitment to making public transport easier to use”.¹¹⁰

102. Lord Adonis has said that the Department for Transport is consulting on a “smart and integrated ticketing strategy” and that he “intend to publish final plans shortly with further significant incentives to spread the smart ticketing approach to other cities.”¹¹¹

103. We welcome moves towards cross-ticketing within the South West. We recommend that the regional bodies watch local pilots closely, and monitor work being done nationally, with a view to rolling out successful models in parts of the region.

Issues with different types of transport

Road

104. Despite a small decrease between 2007 and 2008, the use of all modes of motorised road transport (public and private), throughout Great Britain, has increased by some 9% since 2000 and some 350% since 1960.¹¹² 10% of all motorised road travel occurs in the South West.¹¹³

105. One of the most significant questions facing planners in the region over the past quarter of a century has been the status of the A303 and connecting roads further west (the A358). For many local stakeholders, it has become important that this route should be upgraded to dual carriageway (‘dualling’) to become a Second Strategic Route into the South West. This, they argue, would increase resilience and boost the regional economy. Bill Billington of the RAC told us:

108 Ev 55, para. 6.3

109 Q 105

110 Ev 224, para. 25

111 HL Deb, 24 November 2009, Col 263

112 Department for Transport, *Road Statistics 2008: Traffic, Speeds and Congestion*, p. 20

113 *Ibid.*, p. 22

On the A303, which is a big concern of ours, you have dual carriageway, single carriageway, dual carriageway, single carriageway; that is not satisfactory for the basic operation of the road. You can manage with it as long as the flows are not high, but on main roads such as the A303, which are alternatives to the motorways and a basic link for traffic originating in the south-east corner—Kent, Dover, and traffic coming across the channel—will always be under quite a bit of pressure, and that pressure builds up. Then, the change in standard has considerable effects on flow. That should be rectified, and the only practical way of rectifying it is to dual.¹¹⁴

106. The issue is closely linked with measures to protect Stonehenge, which the A303 runs near to. The need for an innovative solution around the World Heritage Site inflates the cost of an already expensive project. The Highways Agency told us that dualling the route from Stonehenge down to Exeter, at current prices, would cost some £2 billion, and the Regional Minister said that £500 million of which would need to be spent at Stonehenge specifically.¹¹⁵ A scheme to build a road tunnel under the monument was developed by the Highways Agency but abandoned on the grounds of cost in December 2007.¹¹⁶

107. No further improvements are now planned as a single project, because the road does not have national status, it is not deemed to be a priority by central government. It is no longer a priority in the recent Regional Funding Advice, and is, therefore, unlikely to happen in the next fifteen years. Chris Jones of the Highways Agency told us:

it is difficult to see it being a national route, because it does not meet the criteria that have been set for national routes to be national routes in terms of, say, serving the main centres of population, ports and airports. So it is a difficult one. If it were a national route, there would still be the question of how it would be prioritised against other national priorities.¹¹⁷

108. Along with many of the people and groups that submitted evidence to this study, we accept that other transport projects in the South West—for instance, the electrification of the train line London Paddington to Swansea—can make a greater contribution to reducing carbon emissions than the expansion of the A303. This does not change the fact that a solution is urgently required for the road around Stonehenge to protect the monument from the incremental damage caused by 30,000 cars passing every day.¹¹⁸ UNESCO expressed official regret when the tunnel scheme was cancelled because of concerns about the impact of traffic on the area.¹¹⁹ In January 2010, the site was placed on a list of Threatened Wonders of the World by *Wanderlust* magazine specifically because of the traffic problems.¹²⁰

114 Q 50

115 Q 135 [David Wright] Q 204 [Jim Knight]

116 www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/network/strategic/programme/decisionletters/stonehenge2/, accessed 20 January 2010

117 Q 134

118 Q 136 [Chris Jones]

119 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/400/>, accessed 20 January 2010

120 www.wanderlust.co.uk

109. **The cost of resolving the traffic situation regarding Stonehenge is beyond the resources of the region. The Department for Transport should accept that solving the traffic problems around Stonehenge is a national responsibility, whatever decision it takes about improvements to the A303.**

110. **We received a considerable amount of evidence in support of improvements to the A303 and the A358. We note that the Government have said these roads do not satisfy the criteria to be a national route. We recommend that the Department for Transport, in its preparations of the National Policy Statement on the strategic highway, consider the value of the A303 in terms of the resilience it provides for the region as the only major alternative to the M4.**¹²¹

111. We acknowledge that national and regional government are investing in projects to improve road conditions in other parts of the South West in the coming years, and welcome this investment. The Transport Statistics Bulletin 2009 shows that the region's roads were the fourth best of England's nine regions in 2008–09, up from eighth the previous year.¹²² In particular, we welcome the £100 million that the Highways Agency will spend on the Managed Motorway Scheme to improve traffic flow at the interchange of the M4 and M5 near Bristol.¹²³ This may include bringing the hard shoulder into use at peak times, a move that National Express told us could be used to give priority to coaches and other forms of mass transport:

We do not believe that there is a need for widespread road building but that greater use must be made of the existing system, especially now that funding is likely to be reduced. Instead, we believe that the road network needs to give preference to modes of transport which move the most people rather the most vehicles. Priority measures may include hard shoulder running and Active Traffic Management.¹²⁴

112. **As the Highways Agency implements its solution at the M4/M5 interchange, it should investigate the possibilities for introducing measures that prioritise multi-occupancy forms of transport.**

Rail

113. Britain's railway is busier than it has been for sixty years, a fact which brings both advantages and disadvantages. Fundamentally, the trend is encouraging, as it shows that more travellers are prepared to use public transport.

114. We welcome news of the project to electrify the mainline from London to Swansea, which will make rail services to the South West more attractive in future. At an estimated

121 The Planning Act 2008 introduced a new system for nationally significant infrastructure including, railways, ports, major roads, and airports. A national policy framework will be set out in a series of National Policy Statements (NPSs). The NPS for ports was published in November 2009, and similar NPSs for road, rail and airports are expected in 2010.

122 Department for Transport, *Road Conditions in England 2009*, p. 7. Road Quality is defined as being in a condition that does not require work to bring it up to standard.

123 See Qq 126-128 [Chris Jones] and Q 205 [Chris Mole]

124 Ev 142, para. 2.2

cost of £1 billion,¹²⁵ this will be the largest transport project to be undertaken in the South West region in the coming decade. It will bring great benefits to passengers in the South West, through improved reliability, speed and comfort.¹²⁶ The Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics were sceptical about the short-term environmental impact of the scheme.¹²⁷ However, we do not believe such concerns would override the other benefits. We received evidence asking that electrification be continued from Bristol to Exeter or Plymouth.¹²⁸

115. Aside from electrification, other important issues remain. On a network where the ability to expand capacity is extremely limited, however, there are risks: first of overcrowding, and second that high demand is matched with high ticket prices. We received evidence of both problems.

116. The Federation of Small Businesses South West wrote to us that the “cost and experience of rail travel has to be improved if usage is to be increased”.¹²⁹ Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership told us that the old rolling stock operating rural and commuter services in and out of Exeter “offer a very poor passenger environment” and “the image they create for potential passengers is a substantial handicap in the battle to promote the shift from road to rail.”¹³⁰ Ivybridge Town Council told us that “overcrowding with regard to both passenger and luggage facilities is by no means restricted to South West services to and from London, particularly with the shorter Cross Country sets operating from the Midlands and further afield”.¹³¹ We also heard of overcrowding issues on services in and out of Weymouth.¹³²

117. It is sometimes possible to relieve overcrowding by providing more services, for example, there are now there are now two per hour between Weymouth and London Waterloo, and an hourly service between Exeter St David’s and London Waterloo.¹³³ But First Great Western told us that overcrowding is worst on mainline services to Bristol and Exeter and that they are looking for additional rolling stock.¹³⁴

118. However, plans to increase the amount of rolling stock in the South West now look to be in jeopardy because of the electrification of the Paddington to Swansea line. The Government had been in the process of purchasing 200 new diesel multiple-unit vehicles, 100 of which would likely have been for use on mainline services to the West and South West.¹³⁵ The introduction of these new vehicles would, in turn, have released old stock for use on other local lines. First Great Western Trains told us that the intention had been to

125 Q 204 [Jim Knight]

126 Q 7 [Chris Irwin]

127 Q 7 [Jim Russell] See also Ev 256

128 Q 185 [Ian Piper], Ev 230 [Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership]

129 Ev 123, para. 6

130 Ev 230

131 Ev 91, para. 4 [Ivybridge Town Council]

132 Q 40 [Jenny Raggett, Adrian Roper], Ev 209 [Sherborne Transport Action Group]

133 Ev 266 [South West Trains]

134 Qq 59-60

135 Q 56 [Julian Crow]

use them to “enable a major upgrade to the Cardiff to Portsmouth services and a cascade of vehicles across the rest of our local lines”.¹³⁶

119. Electrification means that diesel trains will be of no use on the mainline in the long-term and the order has now been mothballed. No new strategy has been announced, which means that commuters can expect no early improvement to overcrowded or otherwise substandard carriages. The cascade of diesel carriages into areas such as Exeter now seems likely to commence only after the completion of electrification, currently scheduled for 2017–18.¹³⁷ Julian Crow told us:

there is a capacity gap at the moment, and the extent of that gap depends to some extent on economic conditions and the degree of growth that we see continuing over the next few years. I see a risk of capacity up to the point at which electrification is completed in the Thames valley and units can move across into the Bristol and Exeter areas.¹³⁸

120. The Government have admitted there is an issue with the switch from diesel to electric trains, and have said that as a consequence they will publish a new rolling stock plan in the autumn of 2009 setting out a revised strategy.¹³⁹

121. We welcome the electrification of the main line between London Paddington and Bristol. We recommend that the Department for Transport and Network Rail tell us what feasibility work they have done to extend electrification from Bristol further into the region, first to Exeter and secondly to Plymouth.

122. Whilst welcoming electrification, we note that the programme is estimated not to be completed before 2017. We also note that the resulting capacity gap in rolling stock is likely to hinder efforts to reduce overcrowding across the South West. We recognise that the Government was addressing the issue of insufficient rolling stock before the announcement to electrify the mainline, but since then the situation appears to have become mired in review. The paying public would be rightly aggrieved if they had to wait until 2017 for new rolling stock. Waiting longer in the event that electrification is delayed by unforeseen events would be untenable. We urge the Government to finalise its new rolling stock plan as soon as possible.

123. In terms of cost, it seems that the small reduction in the price of regulated fares this year has been more than offset by hefty increases to unregulated ones.¹⁴⁰ The most obvious evidence of this is the fact that, according to Travel Watch SW, some rail fares between Swindon and London—a distance of 77 miles—are the highest for a comparable distance of anywhere in Europe.¹⁴¹ The cost of a standard-class Anytime Single is £54.50, which rises to £89.50 in first class.¹⁴² This is compounded by the ability of the train operating

136 Q 56 See also Ev 145 [First Great Western]

137 www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/rail-electrification.pdf, accessed 20 January 2010

138 Q 65

139 HC Deb, 24 Nov 2009, Col 63W

140 www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/press-release.asp?dsid=3463, accessed 20 January 2010

141 Q 12 [Chris Irwin]

142 Analysis conducted on www.thetrainline.com on 19 January 2010

companies to determine when peak and off-peak tickets are valid. First Great Western described the use of expensive ticketing to control congestion as market pricing.¹⁴³ In its submission, Swindon Borough Council told us, “the cost of travel must also be reviewed as a priority; from Swindon the cost of travel to London is significantly hindering economic investment”.¹⁴⁴ In surveys of passenger satisfaction, gaining value for money is the first priority of passengers in the South West.¹⁴⁵

124. At more than 70p a mile, the cost of travelling from Swindon to London at short notice is already the highest in Europe. 2010 has seen further increases in unregulated fares, despite low inflation over the previous year. In addition, train companies in the region have, during the last year, put further restrictions on the validity of off-peak tickets. We recommend that the Regional Minister investigate the impact of these fares on the region and take up the issue with the Department for Transport and the train operating company.

Air

125. One of the biggest developments in regional transport in the past decade has been the growth of local airports. They have done more than any other form of transport to reduce travel times between remote parts of the South West and national and international hubs and marketplaces. CBI South West told us:

A thriving and growing regional airport is perceived by business to be essential to [...] retain innovative high technology employers in the region and attractive inward investment.¹⁴⁶

126. The benefits are felt most acutely in the far South West, currently served by Newquay and Plymouth airports. The proposed Strategic National Corridors identified in DaSTS stop at Exeter. Therefore Devon and Cornwall are unlikely to receive substantial investment into road or rail beyond Exeter. There are no plans to improve rail or road beyond Exeter that will make a substantial impact on journey times into west Devon and Cornwall. Although we received evidence from dissenting voices and the carbon emissions associated with air travel are substantial, air travel is likely to remain an important means of connecting these places.

127. In recent years, the number of passengers at South West airports has steadily increased: by 4.5% between 2006 and 2007, against an increase across the whole of England of just 2.1%.¹⁴⁷ Specific locations have seen even faster growth, with Plymouth City Airport handling 27% more passengers in 2008.¹⁴⁸ Flybe told us that thriving regional airports

143 Qq 77-78 [Julian Crow]

144 Ev 82, para. 2

145 Ev 188, para 2.5 [Passenger Focus]

146 Ev 121, para. 13

147 Ev 49, Summary [GOSW]

148 Ev 210 [Sutton Harbour Group]

reduce the number of travellers driving across southern England to use Heathrow or Gatwick.¹⁴⁹

128. We believe, however, that airports could do more to enhance their sustainability without harming business operations. In particular, improving public transport connections would reduce emissions by encouraging air passengers to leave their cars at home. Jamie Christon of Exeter Airport told us:

at the present time about 80% [of passengers] come by private car. What we are trying to do through our master plan is to reduce that to around 60% between now and 2030. We do not believe that we are going to get any lower than that, again because of the very geography of where we are, but we are starting work to reduce the number of car journeys.¹⁵⁰

129. The Regional Development Agency has now said that it will only support development at airports that can be shown to be 'green' and specifically mentions improvements in "surface access to public transport" in its submission to us.¹⁵¹ Better bus and rail links would have the added benefit of opening up access to regional airports to the large number of people who, though regular fliers, are not car owners and are currently obliged to take taxis.

130. We support the airports of the South West and recognise the contribution they can make to the economic wellbeing of the region. We recognise that without investment in alternatives that are quick and reliable, many people will choose to fly.

131. However, we believe that the regional airports should be much more ambitious than they have been to date in improving public transport links and we encourage the Regional Development Agency to enforce its new rules on 'green' development robustly.

Access to Heathrow

132. In January 2009, the Government said it would support a third runway at Heathrow. The House of Commons Transport Committee Report into *The future of aviation* endorsed the Government's decision to support a third runway and an additional terminal at Heathrow.¹⁵² Exeter airport told us that expanding the access of regional airports into Heathrow would help to cut the amount of passengers travelling to Heathrow by car.¹⁵³

133. The SWRDA have said that one of their priorities for the economy of the South West is to secure direct rail access to Heathrow from the west, either using Airtrack, Crossrail or

149 Ev 152

150 Q 85

151 Ev 55, para. 1.15

152 First Report from the Transport Committee, Session 2009-10, *The future of aviation*, HC 125-I

153 Ev 159

High Speed Rail.¹⁵⁴ Chris Mole said that, following the announcement to electrify the mainline, it would be easier to look into direct rail access to Heathrow.¹⁵⁵

134. It is of economic importance for the region to gain direct access to Heathrow from the west. We recommend that, if the third runway goes ahead, part of the extra capacity at Heathrow is reserved for regional airports.

135. We support the Regional Development Agency's campaign to improve direct rail access to Heathrow from the South West. If High Speed Rail connects the Midlands and North West regions to Heathrow, there is a risk that the South West may fall further behind the rest of England in relative journey times and access to markets. We further recommend that the Department for Transport and Network Rail actively proceed with existing plans to facilitate access to Heathrow from the west by rail.

Ports

136. The South West is a largely coastal region, bounded by the Bristol Channel, the Atlantic Ocean and the English Channel. In the past, its history and economic success have been indissolubly linked with the sea. Although shipping has declined in recent times, it still remains an important part of the regional economy. According to the Department for Transport, the South West has four of the United Kingdom's major ports: Bristol, Plymouth and Poole, which engage in a wide range of commercial activities, and Fowey, which exports china clay to the Far East for use in the manufacture of porcelain.¹⁵⁶ Bristol is far and away the most significant port in the region and the only international gateway.¹⁵⁷ Many other smaller ports, such as Penzance in Cornwall and Sharpness in Gloucester, can have roles to play.¹⁵⁸

137. Marine business in the South West provides jobs for more than 32,000 people and has an annual turnover of some £1.3 billion.¹⁵⁹ As a result of the economic downturn, however, the amount of goods moving through the country's ports has decreased significantly. Provisional data for the July to September 2009 show that traffic has fallen to levels last seen in the year 2000.¹⁶⁰ Against a 9% decrease in tonnage nationally, the ports of the South West have seen even greater declines of 11% in Bristol; 19% at Fowey; 21% in Plymouth; and 22% in Poole.¹⁶¹

138. Although this trend is largely beyond the control of government, it makes us all the more concerned about other issues affecting the ports in the region. Tim Charlesworth of the South West Regional Ports Association told us that staff at the Regional Development Agency "struggle to understand what facilities we can offer and what services we can

154 Ev 55

155 Q 212

156 Department for Transport, *Provisional Quarterly Port Statistics Q3 2009*, Table 1.3

157 Department for Transport, *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System*, November 2009, p 31-32 and Ev 55 [SWRDA]

158 For example see Ev 238 [Roger Lowrie]

159 Ev 160, para. 4 [South West Regional Ports Association]

160 *Provisional Quarterly Port Statistics Q3 2009*, Figure 2

161 *Provisional Quarterly Port Statistics Q3 2009*, Table 1.3

provide around the coast”.¹⁶² He added: ‘I wonder whether the body should have a maritime person in there’.¹⁶³ Similarly, Falmouth Harbour Commissioners wrote saying:

the consideration of ports’ potential in the Regional Spatial Strategy is cursory and does little to encourage diversification of transport despite the obvious potential benefits. It is particularly baffling why Falmouth with its major ship repair and ship fuelling operations which are economically significant within the region and its significant potential for cruise ships has been removed in the latest version of the Regional Spatial Strategy (despite a mention in the draft document).¹⁶⁴

139. A particular source of frustration for large and small ports was the slowness of the Department for Transport in processing plans and giving approval for projects. Again, this was seen to stem from a lack of interest in the sector. At the Port of Bristol, a major project to create a new deep-water harbour and container port has been stalled because of bureaucratic cycles of review and public consultation.¹⁶⁵ This would give the port a competitive edge over rivals elsewhere in the country and, thus, protect local employment in the medium to long term. The plan was for work to start in 2010 and to be completed by 2014, but this is now at risk. The Regional Minister for the South West told us that he had written to the Department for Transport “to encourage along the process as best we can”.¹⁶⁶

140. The Regional Development Agency and South West Councils Leaders’ Board should pay more attention to the issues affecting ports in the region, including by appointing subject-matter experts to help them achieve this.

141. We urge the Regional Minister to do his utmost to ensure that the Port of Bristol project now proceeds as planned and without any further delays.

162 Q 88 [Tim Charlesworth]

163 Q 95

164 Ev 163, para. 3

165 Ev 165 [Bristol Port Association] dsct.bristolport.co.uk, accessed 20 January 2010

166 Q 207 [Jim Knight]

4 Urban transport

142. Although the South West is the least urbanised of any English region, some two-thirds of its population still live in major towns and cities.¹⁶⁷ A large, and growing, number of others commute daily to these urban areas for work or school. Bristol is by far the largest city in the region: the Bristol Urban Area has a population of some 600,000 and is the ninth largest conurbation in England. Bournemouth, including Poole and Christchurch, is also a significant city, with around 400,000 inhabitants. Plymouth (population: 250,000), Swindon (population: 160,000) and Exeter (population: 120,000), though smaller, play equally important roles within the wider communities that they serve.

143. As places where business and social life are concentrated, cities need to be able to meet the varying transport needs of their large populations efficiently and effectively. Too often, in the past, this has not happened in the South West. Inadequate road infrastructure and poor traffic management have led to bad congestion. Patchy or otherwise substandard local bus and rail networks have made public transport a Cinderella service, avoided by those with cars and insufficient to meet the reasonable needs of those who must use it.

144. Where urban transport infrastructure is not up to scratch, however, economic and social life suffers. The cost of shipping goods increases because transit times are longer and less predictable. Businesses are less likely to invest in cities which are difficult to move around or get in and out of. People in socially disadvantaged areas are less likely to find work the harder it is to reach other parts of a city.

145. This chapter examines the problems facing commuters and other travellers in the cities and major towns of the South West and recommends improvements. In addition to looking at the match between existing transport infrastructure and travellers' needs, it also addresses health concerns: not just the threat from pollution, but also the risks posed by the sedentary lifestyles that car use encourages.

Issues with different types of transport

Road

146. The vast majority of journeys into and out of towns and cities in the South West are still made in private cars. The region is more reliant on the car than average, owning 2.7 million, 9.5%, of Great Britain's 28.4 million private cars: despite having only 8.6% of the national population.¹⁶⁸

147. These cars make up the vast majority of vehicles on the region's roads at any given time and are, as such, the main cause of congestion, including in towns and cities. Heavy goods vehicles and buses also make a significant contribution. According to research published by the AA and Trafficmaster in April 2008, Bristol had the slowest average road

¹⁶⁷ South West Region: Key Facts, www.gos.gov.uk

¹⁶⁸ Department for Transport, *Vehicle Licensing Statistics: 2008*, Table 6

traffic speed—16.8 miles per hour—of any of Britain’s major cities, London included.¹⁶⁹ In nearby Cardiff, by comparison, the average speed was 21.8 miles per hour. CBI South West told us:

Bristol, the economic heart of the region, is severely affect by road traffic congestion and is the only city in the United Kingdom where congestion is projected by the Department for Transport’s own figures to increase despite improvements already planned.¹⁷⁰

The West of England Partnership estimates the cost of congestion in Great Bristol at £350 million per annum, which will rise to £600 million by 2016 if current trends continue.¹⁷¹

148. Many of the region’s smaller conurbations also suffer from slow-moving traffic, as was described by many of the people and organisations that sent us evidence. For instance, Penzance Harbour Users told us that “Penzance has massive problems with traffic congestion both summer and winter due to the constraints caused by the entrance to the town.”¹⁷² Urban congestion, if not properly controlled, can easily spill onto national routes, where they come close to city and town centres, and the Government admits that this is a significant risk for the South West region:

There are congestion hotspots within the region and [average speeds on] some key routes may fall below the national average in future. Analysis by DfT and the Highways Agency highlights parts of the M4/M5 around the West of England sub-region, Exeter, Taunton, Swindon, Gloucester and Cheltenham experience weekday congestion particularly at junctions. This congestion is often attributable to journeys by local commuters and capacity restraints at junctions.¹⁷³

149. By the same token, improvements to national routes often have knock-on benefits to travellers in urban areas. The pre-eminent example of this is the Managed Motorway Scheme on the M4 and M5 near Bristol. Other solutions that have had some success in recent years include the expansion of Park and Ride facilities at the entrance points to towns and cities. There are now Park and Ride schemes across the South West, including at Long Ashton and Portway for Bristol commuters, and on the way into Bath, Exeter, Plymouth, Swindon, Taunton and Truro.

150. However, we also received evidence from a number of sources that such initiatives can have unforeseen negative consequences. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England told us that these can include encouraging car owners to drive from rural to urban environments, rather than making use of public transport, and encroaching on green space at the edge of urban settlements.¹⁷⁴

169 Ev 224, para. 3 [Travel Watch South West]; http://www.theaa.com/motoring_advice/news/aa-patrols-on-motorbikes-in-london.html, accessed 21 January 2010

170 Ev 121, para. 7

171 Ev 181, para. 2.1 [Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways]

172 Ev 238 [Roger Lowrie]

173 Ev 49, para. 1.4 [GOSW]

174 Ev 95, para. 1.5

151. Park and Ride is, thus, only ever likely to offer a partial solution. Clive Perkin, of Plymouth City Council, told us that they try to plan such schemes with the wider public transport infrastructure in mind:

Our belief is that you can't look at park and ride in isolation. It's also trying to link it with your existing network and existing users, hence our eastern corridor scheme. It's picking up existing commuters but also working with a new 6,000-house settlement to try and make that more cost-effective and more reliable for all users of the service.¹⁷⁵

152. Many specific proposals for improvements to urban travel in the South West are described in the sections on public transport that follow, but, in general, we believe that there needs to be more support for this from regional bodies. The twin pressures of climate change and oil prices—lower than in recent years but expected to increase again—mean that solutions to congestion that only redistribute car use are likely to have limited, or only temporary, success. More committed efforts to improve and, where necessary, expand public transport, to encourage its use, and to discourage unnecessary or discretionary car use will be needed too.

153. As they take forward the challenge of reducing congestion in the towns and cities of the South West, all local and regional bodies should work on the assumption that the majority of their transport investment will go into reducing car use and supporting public transport.

Buses

154. In the South West, the number of journeys made on local buses has increased markedly in recent years. In 2006–07—the latest period for which data are available—some 206 million journeys were made by bus in the region, an increase of 12% over the previous year.¹⁷⁶ According to the Department for Transport's Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey for 200–09, passengers' overall levels of satisfaction are good, at 85%.¹⁷⁷ The score for value for money is notably less impressive: at 68% it is the lowest of any region in the country.

155. At oral evidence sessions, we questioned Nick Vane, a representative of one of the largest local bus companies, First Group, about how they see bus travel developing in the region and about their response to passengers' opinions. He told us that slow-moving inner-city roads had a direct effect on ticket costs:

The key thing is to improve the highway network to allow bus journeys to be an attractive alternative to the car, with journey times that are comparable if not better. One of the key problems in Bristol, as many people have said, is the incredibly slow travel speeds. We know that not only from our own records [...] but equally in terms of what was reported by the AA back in 2008. It is a very slow travel speed, which

175 Q 28

176 Department for Transport, *Public Transport Statistics Bulletin GB: 2009 Edition*, p. 12

177 *Ibid.*, p. 24

knocks on to our cost base. It becomes much more expensive to operate buses when journey times are significantly longer.¹⁷⁸

156. In this context, the Greater Bristol Bus Network is a very positive development. Funded partly by the Department for Transport, who have put in £43 million, it will improve bus services into the city along ten corridors through a combination of bus lanes, priority at junctions, improved bus stop information and new vehicles.¹⁷⁹ Ideally, it would improve public transport access to Bristol Airport.¹⁸⁰ First Group told us that they were investing £20 million in the project on a fleet of new vehicles.¹⁸¹

157. Barbara Davies, representing the West of England Partnership, told us that, now the project was actually happening, it would be important for all the stakeholders to agree what it should achieve:

We now need to move on to some of the more thorny issues around the reliability and punctuality of those services. That's why, together, as part of the project, we're exploring some form of statutory quality bus partnership to see whether there's a way to say, "We've invested £40 million, First have invested £20 million, and what's the output for the passengers in terms of reliability of services and frequency?"¹⁸²

158. Contributors to the Greater Bristol Bus Network, and other similar initiatives, should agree what outcomes they expect the project to achieve, should express these in terms of improvements to travellers and should make them available publicly to increase accountability and as an incentive to deliver.

159. Other improvements for bus services that have been planned in the Regional Funding Allocation include the Bath Public Transport Package, which will receive £49 million of central funds, and will include 1.4 kilometres of bus rapid transit routes.¹⁸³ There are many towns and cities in the region where bus services appear to have received little attention from planners, leaving the operating companies with convenient excuses for poor reliability and punctuality.

160. As they seek to address problems with their road networks, planners in the South West should have as a key concern the impact on existing public transport services and the potential for new or expanded routes.

Rail

161. Urban and suburban rail services vary greatly across the South West. We received a number of submissions from members of the public and campaign groups keen to see

178 Q 22

179 Ev 49, para. 2.10 [GOSW]

180 Ev 156 [Bristol International Airport]

181 Q 26

182 Q 28

183 *South West Regional Funding Advice, 2009-19*, p. 29;
<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/transportandstreets/transportpolicy/plansandstrategies/bathpackage/>, accessed 21 January 2010

existing services expanded or pieces of disused track brought back into use.¹⁸⁴ However, with the exception of some work in Greater Bristol and the redoubling of the line between Swindon and Kemble, which will help commuters around Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud, very little new development is planned.

162. According to evidence we heard from Mike Gallop of Network Rail, the Greater Bristol area is particularly poorly served by suburban rail:

Bristol has the lowest proportion of public transport per head of the population of any major urban area in the UK. It is woefully under-provided with rail services, mainly because of an accident of history in the way that the Victorians laid out the suburban railway network in Bristol.¹⁸⁵

163. Specific projects being taken forward in and around the city over the next few years are, therefore, very welcome. By 2011, according to the West of England Partnership Joint Local Transport Plan, there will be half-hourly services between Bristol and Avonmouth, and increased capacity on the line to Weston-super-Mare and Yate.¹⁸⁶ Beyond 2011, Network Rail will look at the possibility of reopening passenger services to Portishead, where major new housing developments are anticipated.¹⁸⁷ On the Portishead proposal, Network Rail said:

We have a long way to go on that. Is it technically feasible? Yes. Is it going to cost a lot of money? Yes. Is there a business case that can monetarise the benefits, and make them greater than the costs? That is for others to do—that is what the local authority, as promoter for that scheme, can do. But can it be done, and should funding be available? Yes, it can be done.¹⁸⁸

164. These measures, however, fall far short of the aspiration for a Greater Bristol Metro, which has been pursued by campaigners and local government alike for many years.¹⁸⁹ Work on that project is now not expected to begin before 2017–18.¹⁹⁰ The Friends of Suburban Bristol Railway wrote to us saying:

if local and regional government were committed to rail (and public transport) then rail schemes such as the Greater Bristol Metro could be delivered quickly.¹⁹¹

165. The enhancement of the railway line between Swindon and Kemble by increasing the number of tracks so that two trains can use the route simultaneously will make a positive difference to inter-city, intra-regional and suburban travellers. Currently, a major

184 See Ev 236 [David Wood], Ev 243 [Stephen Howard], Ev 170 [Bristol Civic Society], Ev 251 [Jacqueline Gilbert], Ev 222 [Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance], Ev 181 [Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways], Ev 165 A36/A350 Corridor Alliance], and Ev 209 [Sherborne Transport Action Group]

185 Q 152

186 www.westofengland.org/transport/joint-local-transport-plan/final-joint-local-transport-plan-200607-201011, accessed 20 January 2010.

187 http://www.westofengland.org/media/62741/transport_jltp_13-08-08_jltpmain-ch5.pdf, accessed 21 January 2010.

188 Q 154 [Mike Gallop]

189 www.westofengland.org/transport/rail/greater-bristol-metro-rail, accessed 20 January 2010.

190 *Ibid.*,

191 Ev 181, para. 6.3 [FOSBR]

engineering study is underway to establish definitively that the project is viable and how it should be done.¹⁹² The most recent estimate put the cost of the project at around £50 million and we welcome the fact that part of the funding is likely to come from spending previously earmarked for road building.¹⁹³ Subject to a positive outcome, work could begin on laying the tracks during 2010.¹⁹⁴

166. As the major enhancement to rail in the South West over the next few years, the redoubling of the line between Swindon and Kemble is a good example. The Department for Transport and regional bodies should do everything possible to ensure that the project suffers no further delays, so that it can be completed on time and budget.

167. In all of the cases described above, the enthusiasm and commitment of groups of local people—often over the course of decades—have been key to making change happen. In evidence, we encountered public campaigns of varying sizes and at varying stages of maturity to reopen the Henbury and Thornbury loops and the line to Swanage, to extend the Torbay line closer to Brixham and to reopen stations at Long Ashton, Somerton and Langport.

168. Mike Gallop of Network Rail told us that many projects advocated by campaign groups would never get off the ground. He cited the absence of funding as the main reason:

Our postbag is constantly full of letters from people saying, “Why don’t you reopen the railway to Much-Diddly-in-the-Marsh? It would cost 3 shillings and sixpence and it’s easy to do.” That is not what we consider. We consider proposals that have a consensus throughout the regional bodies, have a business case that someone is willing to fund, and that are deliverable and map into the rail network’s strategic objectives.¹⁹⁵

169. We heard of schemes that appeared to be making progress, such as connecting Swanage to the network,¹⁹⁶ and those that were at an earlier stage of being discussed, such as Bere Alston to Tavistock, and from St Austell to Newquay. The latter being linked to areas of possible housing expansion.¹⁹⁷

170. We also heard of excellent work in the region by the Devon and Cornwall Community Rail Partnership,¹⁹⁸ and work by organisations such as St Germans Rail Users Group. Such organisations have invested considerable time and effort into publicising what services are available in the local area and have seen usage increase as a result.¹⁹⁹

192 HC Deb, 27 October 2009, 51WH

193 HC Deb, 27 October 2009, 49WH. Letter from Nick Bye, Jt Chair, Transport and Infrastructure Board, to Strategic Leaders’ Board Members, 16 November 2009

194 cheltenham4u.blogspot.com, accessed 20 January 2010.

195 Q 149

196 Q 121 [Andy Shaw]

197 Ev 230 [Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership]

198 A non-profit partnership between the rail industry, local authorities, and the University of Plymouth.

199 See Ev 202 [St Germans] and Ev 230 [Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership]

171. **Local campaigns for transport improvements deserve to be taken seriously. Whilst we recognise that many schemes proposed in this way may be unachievable, there are cases of local campaigns eventually succeeding in their goals and achieving tangible improvements as a result. A greater willingness on the part of transport decision makers to engage with such groups would be welcome.**

Cycling and walking

172. Cycling and walking are the most healthy and sustainable modes of transport. Whilst it is often not practical to use either, it is also the case that much urban planning in the past fifty years has made both activities more dangerous and less attractive.

173. In the South West, as elsewhere, local councils and regional bodies have been increasingly required to encourage both cycling and pedestrianism in their transport plans. In part this is a response to mounting concerns about public health. We heard from Dr Gabriel Scally about the significance of these issues in the South West:

My major concerns are the 16% of Year 6 children in the South West who are obese, and a toll of death from inactive lifestyles in the South West running at probably about 9,000 a year. So what I want to see is an active and substantial modal shift in transport. I want to see people much more active [...] In Bristol, 22% of primary school children who live within 800 metres of their school travel by car, and in Plymouth the figure is 16%. There is an enormous number of car journeys that could be easily substituted by walking and cycling, provided parents and children felt comfortable and able to do so.²⁰⁰

174. Dr Scally went on to describe the scale of change that he believes is required to address this problem:

In order to make that happen, I think we need major transformatory schemes, which will require a level of funding equivalent to that of some of the major road schemes that we now see in the regional funding allocation.²⁰¹

175. At present, the only project of this scale and level of ambition is in Bristol, which was named England's first Cycling City in 2008.²⁰² The status comes with £23 million of investment.²⁰³ The targeted outcomes of the project by 2010–11 are:

- Doubling cycling to work;
- Doubling cycling to school;
- Doubling cycle flows counted on existing cordons and screenlines;
- Doubling the provision of on-street cycle parking; and

200 Q 19

201 Q 19

202 Bristol City Council, *Greater Bristol Cycling City – Delivery Strategy 2008-2011*

203 Ev 49, para. 2.10 [GOSW]

- Doubling the number of people who see cycling as a realistic travel option in Greater Bristol.²⁰⁴

176. In oral evidence, Hilary Neal of the Department for Transport told us that robust measures were being developed to demonstrate the effect of the unprecedented level of spending. She also told us that there were early signs of a shift to bicycles:

One of the dimensions of Bristol Cycling City is its roll-out within south Gloucestershire [...] as one of the benefits already emerging from that scheme, the Bradley Stoke community school is already seeing 40% cycling to school in that area. That is absolutely extraordinary and is a very creditable response to various initiatives that have already been taken.²⁰⁵

177. Elsewhere in the region, initiatives on cycling and walking are less advanced, and we received a large number of evidence submissions calling for support for healthy modes of transport to be increased.²⁰⁶ Sustainability South West advocates funding for:

investment into networks of walking and cycling routes, maximising the potential to develop the supporting green infrastructure (in a way that contributes to the widest range of benefits—including health and well being; biodiversity; play/leisure space; sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation and adaptation).²⁰⁷

178. We heard in evidence about the well-known difficulties with transporting bicycles on trains. Many services allow no bicycles, and others permit only two or three. This makes it unattractive for commuters to use a combination of bicycle and public transport to get to work. We welcomed, therefore, the words of the Regional Minister for the South West, who said that the Secretary of State for Transport is looking closely at this issue:

On cycling and trains first, I know from a couple of conversations with Andrew Adonis how strongly he agrees that we need to make better provision in railway stations for bikes. I think he was struck by a visit to the Netherlands, and by what a contrast there is between its provision and ours.²⁰⁸

179. Building on the good practice in Greater Bristol and other places, local and regional bodies should take more active steps to encourage cycling and other health modes of transport. In particular, public transport needs to be made more cycling friendly, with space on trains a pressing concern. The progress of Bristol as a cycling city should be monitored closely, with successful innovations spread more widely.

Informed choices

180. Members of the public can only choose to switch to a mode of transport if they know that it exists, that it will meet their travel needs and that it will be affordable. We heard

204 Bristol City Council, *Greater Bristol Cycling City – Delivery Strategy 2008-2011*

205 Q 217

206 Ev 197 [Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport] ; Ev 246 [Lynne Nicholls]; Ev 95 [CPRE]; Ev 87 [Taunton Deane Borough Council]

207 Ev 204, para. 4.5

208 Q 216

interesting evidence that suggests that many travellers do not know about the options available to them in their local area and, thus, do not consider switching. Alan Cousins of St Germans Rail Users Group told us that one of the key challenges was: the need to promote and raise awareness of public transport, and the services that are, and could be, available.²⁰⁹

181. We took evidence from Sustrans, one of a number of companies that provide a bespoke information service in local areas. Adrian Roper explained how their Travel Smart scheme worked:

Individuals in a neighbourhood will receive information or be asked how they travel, how they would like to travel and where they travel at the moment. Based on that we get individualised information that suits their particular needs. That includes a local travel plan with bus routes, walking routes, cycling routes and so on, and it provides people with information on how they might change their journeys.²¹⁰

182. When they receive the information, Mr Roper told us, the average result is a 10 to 14% reduction in car journeys in that neighbourhood. Such initiatives can be very cost-effective. A recent example in Taunton, where Mr Roper said such a reduction in car use had been achieved, had cost £500,000.²¹¹

183. Although the car will always have an important part to play, local and regional bodies should consider doing more to inform citizens about the full range of travel options open to them. The value of better information being provided direct to the people who can use it can vastly exceed the costs incurred in providing it.

209 Q 97

210 Q 30

211 Q 31

5 Rural transport

184. The South West is England's most rural and least densely populated region. In terms of tourism, this is a distinct asset as there are many areas of outstanding natural beauty. However, in travel terms, it presents real challenges. The region has the greatest proportion of non-principal roads, covering more than 11,000 miles, and, although sometimes used by only small numbers of people, this network must be maintained.²¹² At the same time, a large number of people in villages and the countryside, many of them elderly, live far from vital services and do not drive. For them, as well as for those who want to travel more sustainably, public transport options are rare or even non-existent.

185. We received many submissions on the transport problems facing rural dwellers. There is a perception among some that policy makers in Whitehall, and even sometimes in regional government, turn a blind eye to rural issues. In this chapter we examine how some of these issues could be addressed.

Issues with different types of transport

Public Transport

186. The problems facing travellers in the rural South West can be summed up in one phrase: lack of choice. With notable exceptions, some of which give great cause for hope and are described below, most people who need to travel in rural areas have to use a car. However, as Isobel Mack of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England told us that more than 20% of households in the South West do not have a car.²¹³ This leads to isolation, particularly when shops and other vital services close down in small villages and consolidate in large towns and cities. Adrian Welsh of Cornwall County Council told us how:

over the last 20 years, rural services have been eroded in many ways. There has been a centralisation of many public bodies, such as health bodies. Things such as parental choice also create difficulties for getting people to where they need to be. There are also issues of safety, health and ensuring there is good well-being for people living in rural areas. One final concern is that most policies nationally and regionally have put more emphasis on urban issues. I understand the reasons for that, but it has presented particular challenges.²¹⁴

187. These difficulties can be exacerbated further by the unforeseen consequences of urban-centric government policies. In urban areas, competition amongst operators is designed to keep prices down; in rural areas the bus operators avoid cooperation on aspects such as ticketing for fear of infringing the same competition rules.²¹⁵ Jeremy Filmer-Bennett of Devon and Cornwall Business Council point to the fact:

212 Department for Transport, *Road Conditions in England: 2009*, p. 12.

213 Q 97

214 Q 89

215 Ev 209 [Sherborne Transport Action Group]

on the existing 14 to 19 Government agenda for young people, it is not unusual for a young person to go to school in one town, go to college in another and live in a third. Not surprisingly, the public transport system is not built around that contingency. That is a major problem which has a direct impact on the economy because of our skills shortages, which are exacerbated in the rural areas, and because of the problems of getting people and customers around.²¹⁶

188. Reducing the need for travel can help to a certain extent. This can include bringing services to remote communities on a regular basis, as well as the spread of broadband internet technology. Jeremy Filmer-Bennett said that “there is certainly a lot of evidence that, if you can get people to work from home and you make it comfortable and safe to do so [...] it works for much better local economies.”²¹⁷ Nonetheless, this cannot remove the need for travel entirely and will be of no help at all to many people who are not computer literate.

189. Both rail and bus services in the rural South West have been reduced over the past half-century. The rural rail network contracted markedly after the Beeching Reports in the 1960s and has declined more gradually since then. Between 1963 and 1970 some 4,000 miles of British railway was closed, most of it loss-making. With the rural bus network, reduction has happened slowly and steadily, but, in 1960, there were over 12 million journeys by local bus across Great Britain: more than twice as many as there were in 2008–09.²¹⁸

190. Senior rural users of public transport benefit in the same way as other senior citizens from free off-peak travel, and other forms of government investment are in evidence.

Rural bus services

191. At present, bus services are subsidised to a small extent through central government’s Rural Bus Subsidy Grant. The Department for Transport told us that in the current financial year (2009–10) it had supported rural bus services in the South West with £11.4 million.²¹⁹ This is complemented by local government funding. Adrian Welsh of Cornwall County Council told us:

Certainly, the rural bus subsidy is important to Cornwall. We have maximised opportunities to benefit from it in the past. It is now part of the local area grant process, which is something that we utilise, but the biggest element of funding comes directly from the coffers of Cornwall council.²²⁰

192. The support that exists brings tangible benefits to local communities. The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England acknowledges that “there have been welcome attempts to improve some rural bus services” but says that “they still lack the publicity and

216 Q 97

217 Q 116

218 *Public Transport Statistics Bulletin GB: 2009 Edition*, p. 45

219 Ev 49, para. 3.10 [GOSW]

220 Q 113

promotion necessary to make them an economic success”.²²¹ Many submissions to the Committee told us of infrequent services, use of old vehicles,²²² relatively high prices per mile travelled,²²³ and little apparent control over routes.²²⁴

193. Through the Local Transport Act 2000, and the Local Transport Act 2008, the Government have sought to improve bus services using quality contracts and quality partnerships. These powers have been unused by some local authorities.²²⁵ Making them work may require a local authority to take the lead and demonstrate they can be useful. Dorset County Council said they might use quality contracts and quality partnerships, “but their history in the UK so far suggests that other mechanisms may also have the same or better effect.”²²⁶

194. Despite the real assistance provided by central and local government we received a substantial amount of evidence on the paucity of decent rural bus services. We recognise that operating a bus service to a dispersed population in a rural area is difficult. However, we are concerned that the powers introduced by the Government to improve bus services do not seem to be embraced by local authorities. We recommend that the Strategic Leaders’ Board work with local authorities to see if they could be making more use of the powers at their disposal.

Rural rail services

195. Rural rail services are supported by the overall Department for Transport subsidy to the railways, while train operating companies’ contracts specify which routes they have to run and, in some cases, how frequently. In the current spending period, the overall level of rail subsidy is being reduced every year. In 2009–10, the subsidy was worth some £3.2 billion across the entire network.²²⁷

196. First Great Western Trains told us:

We have been able to use high-speed trains and local trains to improve services at local stations and branch lines. We are now in the position where the community rail lines in Devon and Cornwall have the best service they have ever had. That is a result of integrating services together to make better use of the rolling stock, so that is one positive from it.²²⁸

197. This point was corroborated by evidence from Ivybridge Town Council, which said:

221 Ev 95, para. 1.1 [CPRE]

222 Ev 209 [Sherborne Transport Action Group]

223 Ev 72 [Devon County Council]

224 Ev 87 [Taunton Deane Borough Council]

225 Ev 222 [Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance]

226 Ev 77

227 Transport Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2007-08, *Delivering a sustainable railway: a 30-year strategy for the railways*, HC 219, 2007-08, p. 38

228 Q 66

It is acknowledged that the branch lines of Devon and Cornwall currently are enjoying the most intensive passenger services in their history and First Great Western should be congratulated on this. In particular reference should be made to the joint venture with Cornwall County Council for the doubling of a section of the Falmouth branch giving a much enhanced service between Truro and Falmouth.²²⁹

198. Even where there have been improvements in specific routes, the timetabling and sequencing of those services with other modes of transport can remain a problem. Alan Cousins of St Germans Rail Users Group explained that there is:

the need for more integrated transport systems between buses and trains, so that buses do not run at the same time as trains and one can connect from a bus to a train and so on.²³⁰

199. First Great Western Trains told us that they had made real efforts to improve the connections between national and local rail services in recent years:

As far as integration with other modes is concerned, I would refer back to the draft route utilisation strategy that Network Rail has just published, which assumes in future a more even interval timetable of services across the region, so that trains run on each route at the same minutes past the hour, which makes integration with branch lines, buses and everything else so much simpler.²³¹

In order to achieve the latter goal of trains running at the same minutes past every hour, however, Mr Crow told us that a small amount of additional rolling stock would be required.

200. We strongly urge the government, Network Rail and First Great Western to work together to make available sufficient rolling stock to allow trains to run to the South West at the same minutes past the hour to facilitate onward connections with local public transport.

201. The improvements described above, though welcome, will not be enough on their own to achieve modal shift from cars to public transport. Indeed, they will leave many small communities that do not have rail or regular bus services untouched.

202. We believe that regional bodies—the Regional Development Agency and South West Councils—should conduct work to identify which communities are the most isolated and at greatest risk of being cut off, and should use this to prioritise improvements to rural public transport in the future.

Road

203. Given the lack of choice, it is hardly surprising that rural dwellers who have cars tend to use them and expect the road network to be maintained to a high standard. We received many submissions that called for improvements to be made to specific stretches of rural

229 Ev 91, para. 3.1

230 Q 97

231 Q 66

roads that become congested at peak times, as well as requests for bypasses around small towns, whose main streets are frequently clogged with traffic. Mike Birkin of Friends of the Earth, whilst asserting that priorities going forward should be different, accepted the central role played by cars at present:

For the rural areas we have to accept that there is, for the foreseeable future, a large degree of dependence on private cars. There's nothing we can do to change that so we have to look at smart ways to make it possible for people to do the journeys that they need to do and get the access that they need without always having recourse to the car, accepting that that will be a major part of the rural transport scene for the foreseeable future.²³²

204. A typical view of the kind of development that is seen by some as urgently needed was that expressed by the Federation of Small Businesses South West about road travel in west Dorset:

West of Poole, [the A31/A35] is single carriageway for most of its length, passing through a number of villages. At the very least this road needs to bypass the villages. Ideally it should be dualled for its whole length, but that is unlikely so an increase in passing places would be very helpful. The local view including the County Council, is that the current poor transport infrastructure is a limiting factor in the raising the economic performance of rural Dorset. As the rail links are so poor, road has to carry freight as well.²³³

205. Car use is not an absolute barrier to making travel more sustainable. Car clubs and other local taxi schemes can be used to increase the number of passengers carried in a single vehicle. Evidence from Stop the Expansion of Bristol Airport recommended "car clubs and 'grand taxi' arrangements [which] would improve access and reduce emissions in rural areas where regular scheduled bus and rail services cannot succeed".²³⁴ The St Germans Rail Users Group agreed, and called for more research into the feasibility of such schemes.²³⁵

206. Better facilities for car users at railway stations may also encourage them to use public transport for the bulk of their journey. We heard that expanding car parking facilities at a number of stations in the South West would encourage more commuters and other travellers to use public transport for at least part of their journeys. Where improvements to car parking at stations are made, these should be made in parallel with improvements to alternatives to the car. In particular, provision to make choosing the bus for the next part of the journey easier and more welcoming, and for secure bicycle storage.

207. Using the Barnstaple railway line as an example of good practice, Julian Crow of First Great Western Trains said:

232 Q 16

233 Ev 123, para. 5

234 Ev 242

235 Ev 202, para. 4 [St Germans]

In a rural area like this, integration means car parks to a large extent, be they car parks for current petrol cars or future electric cars. We need provision to integrate whatever form of transport is available in rural areas into the rail network. Part of our strategy on the Barnstaple line, which feeds a lot of travel-to-work journeys into Exeter, is to work closely with Devon County Council, which is very co-operative and is keen to work with us, to acquire land for car parks at stations that are rural railheads where there is currently no car parking.²³⁶

208. Where improvements to the rural road infrastructure are essential, regional and local bodies should consider funding these in parallel with investment to encourage the more sustainable use of cars.

209. Nonetheless, in the medium and long term, there is plenty of evidence that tweaking car use and seeking to reduce it incrementally will not be good enough. First, the region, like the rest of the country, may soon be required to achieve much more stretching reductions in carbon emissions. Secondly, car travellers rely more heavily on affordable supplies of oil-based fuels. However, recent history and the predicted increase in the mismatch between global supply and demand mean that oil prices are likely to go up in the near future. Dorset County Council Officers summed this up in their submission as follows:

there is no evidence of the region giving consideration to the risks of the planned continued reliance on oil-based fuel sources for our road, water and air based transport modes. This is relevant given the vulnerability of the Region's transport systems to potentially rising oil prices and increased risk of price shocks in face of increased demand for oil and predictions for oil supply to plateau or decline within the next decade.²³⁷

210. The South West should be in a good position to contribute to the national and international development of more sustainable modes of transport, having been designated the United Kingdom's first Low Carbon Economic Area in 2009.²³⁸

211. The South West region, like everywhere else, needs to plan for a future in which car use must be greatly reduced. It should make the best use possible of its status as a Low Carbon Economic Area to contribute to national and international measures to revolutionise travel.

236 Q 68

237 Ev 77, para. 5.5

238 South West designated as UK's first Low Carbon Economic Area, 14 July 2009 www.southwestuk.eu

6 Looking ahead

212. Public funds will be limited for the foreseeable future and the region will have to draw up the Single Regional Strategy in a period of economic pressure. There will be an imperative to generate jobs and improve economic opportunities.

213. At the same time there is increasing awareness of how climate change is affecting the way we live. The price of oil may continue to rise. That, and the need to reduce carbon emissions may change people's behaviour, but it will happen sooner if we improve the choice of transport available.

214. We are becoming a more mobile society: car use has increased with disposable income, nearly a third of households in Great Britain have access to two cars and the costs of driving have remained relatively stable compared to rising real costs of public transport fares. Rail travel has increased by over 60% since 1980 and the number of passengers using UK airports has more than quadrupled between 1980 and 2007. At the same time the number of journeys made by walking or cycling has decreased.²³⁹

215. Delivering a Sustainable Transport System has moved national transport policy on. There is recognition of a need to shift significantly in the way we take transport forward.²⁴⁰ DaSTS places a greater emphasis on health, equality of opportunity and quality of life. Transport policy has become more about trying to reduce the number of journeys and less about increasing capacity to meet demand. As the Simon Face from the Institute of Directors told us, "We need to carry on getting everyone together from all the different points of view to try to find ways to reduce the need to travel, to better understand why people need to travel and then to provide the best solutions."²⁴¹

Evidence base

216. The region will need to build on the DaSTS Stage 1 study commissioned by the Regional Partners in June 2009. This requires more work on establishing an evidence base that will inform decisions in the future. The assessment of schemes will have to give greater emphasis to aspects such as access to jobs and services in the most deprived areas, reducing accidents, improving health, air quality and reducing inequality both within the region and in comparison with other parts of the UK. We asked the Government Office how they will measure the success of the cycling initiative in Bristol. Hilary Neal told us:

This will all be measured. In terms of some of the wider health benefits, although it might be quite difficult to measure cause and effect or the effectiveness of cycling in relation to obesity or other kinds of health targets, all of the local authorities are required to measure those as part of the national indicating set. So the kind of linkage that you might expect to see could be derived from monitoring those statistics.²⁴²

239 ONS, *Transport Trends 2008*

240 Q 33 [Clive Perkin]

241 Q 2

242 Q 217

217. The lack of ability for assessing the carbon impact of transport schemes is a particular concern. The CPRE told us that for the schemes put forwarding the RFA2, “Many local authorities were unable to complete the part of the form relating to CO2 levels for the schemes.”²⁴³ The region must improve how to measure these aspects in order to weigh them against each other in deciding schemes.

218. Investment priorities for transport will need to compliment regeneration and housing priorities, but also send out a wider message about what kind of region we want to have in the future.²⁴⁴ This may mean thinking more creatively about the range of projects and schemes that are included in the RFA and priorities as expressed in the Single Regional Strategy. **We support the further work being carried out to gather evidence and increase the options for providing solutions. While we recognise the greatest dilemma remains between ensuring economic growth and reducing carbon, we strongly recommend gathering evidence on the broader aspects of DaSTS including equality of opportunity, health and quality of life.**

Promoting Sustainable Travel

219. One of the purposes of DaSTS is to persuade travellers to move to more sustainable transport modes. Part of this requires gathering and presenting information to travellers so they can make an informed choice. We heard of work by various organisations in the region where this had made a positive impact.²⁴⁵ The Highways Agency told us some of their activities are aimed at, “influencing travel behaviour through providing choices and incentives that might cause people not to use their cars on the motorway network and travel by bus or rail instead.”²⁴⁶ Cornwall Council spoke of their liaison work with rail, air and tourism bodies to encourage visitors and explain how they can enjoy car free days.²⁴⁷

220. In their evidence, Devon and Cornwall Community Rail suggested the creation of a Sustainable Transport Information and Promotion post.²⁴⁸ **We accept that if DaSTS is asking for a change in traveller behaviour, this will be done by a combination of measures, including improvements in technology, but importantly it will be done by informing the traveller that an alternative exists and actively promoting the options.**²⁴⁹ **We recommend that the Strategic Leaders’ Board, and other regional bodies, explore the value of introducing a position for promoting sustainable transport on a regional basis.**

Alignment of priorities

221. Transport schemes have to gather support from a broad range of bodies; the protracted efforts to redouble the Swindon-Kemble line demonstrate this. We welcome

243 Ev 261 [CPRE]

244 Q 9 [Mike Birkin]

245 Ev 202 [St Germans] Ev 206 [Sustrans]

246 Q 129 [Chris Jones]

247 Q 104

248 Ev 230 [Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership]

249 Q 117 [St Germans]

procedures that enable such agreement, at an early stage, among the relevant bodies. This should save time and money in the long term. This process is also made easier if the Department for Transport does not introduce new criteria at an inopportune moment.

222. The creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board should help gather such support. It has a membership drawn from local authorities, the SWRDA, passenger groups, transport industry providers and regional agencies; and is to advise the South West Leaders' Board on major transport schemes, the allocation of funding, and the region's city and regional network programme under Delivering a Sustainable Transport System. It is currently going through a refresh of the priorities in the RFA identifying which schemes can proceed, and instigating the programme management programmes to ensure delivery.²⁵⁰

223. As transport in the region is provided by more than one organisation, so does investment in improving transport provision commonly come from more than one source. Where investment funds are limited, either between different transport options in the region, or between investing in the South West or elsewhere, it is vital that all the relevant bodies agree as to the need for that investment and that they will support it. Witnesses repeatedly mentioned the importance of securing this alignment of priorities among regional partners, the Department for Transport and other stakeholders.

224. Witnesses acknowledged the diversity of the region, and consequently the difficulty of then drawing up a list of priorities that everyone can agree to.²⁵¹ Mr Michael Greedy from Passenger Focus was forthright on this matter. He told us:

I think the [...] issue that comes into play here is our ability as a region to put forward a unified voice on what exactly we need. It's too fragmented at the moment. We've got Bristol—a very loud voice; we have the South West—you've got Devon with one agenda and Cornwall with another in terms of their local services.²⁵²

He compared the region to those parts of in the north of England with integrated transport bodies that were able to take a strategic view on transport in their area, and consequently better able to influence long term planning.

225. The Regional Funding Advice submission represents what the region considers to be the priorities for investment for transport, housing and regeneration from central Government. The regional partners, SWRDA and Leaders' Board are responsible for preparing that view on behalf of the region. However, there are different mechanisms for securing investment from private sector organisations.

226. For example, Mr Gallop, Route Enhancement manager from Network Rail, described their method for deciding new infrastructure via the Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) and stressed that they, "consider proposals that have a consensus throughout the regional

250 Q 162

251 Q 125 [Jeremy Filmer Bennett]

252 Q 69

bodies, have a business case that someone is willing to fund, and that are deliverable and map into the rail network's strategic objectives, as incorporated into the RUS".²⁵³

227. The region had produced a Regional Rail Prospectus that expressed the five priorities for the region.²⁵⁴ However, Network Rail said that, in the past, securing consensus from various agencies and regional bodies in the South West had been slightly fragmented. They welcomed the creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board as a way of bringing about that consensus and offering a joined up view on behalf of the region.²⁵⁵

228. First Great Western is one of three Train Operating Companies in the region. We asked Julian Crow, First Great Western's General Manager for the West of England, if he understood the strategic process for improving rail services. He said:

I think it comes from two directions. [...] one is clearly from the Department for Transport with the strategic decisions made about the network and rolling stock. In that respect, electrification and new rolling stock go closely hand in hand with the replacement of the high-speed trains. The other element is that which is pursued in the region.²⁵⁶

He agreed that:

[...] different elements of the region have very different priorities and economic circumstances. The way that we would approach this is to look for some sort of commonality of interest across the region and produce a groundswell of support for particular schemes.

He described securing such agreement as a challenge.²⁵⁷

229. Major transport investment decisions are made at a national level, for example electrification of Paddington to Swansea. Competing for such investment requires the region to be able to argue its case convincingly. To do so, it is important that the region has an efficient method for agreeing what its priorities are, and is able to present a single voice expressing those priorities. The South West is a disparate region, and the sub-regions have different priorities. Securing agreement is not simple and an effective, regional-level decision-making process is required. We welcome the creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board as a way of aligning regional priorities and urge all parties to work together to develop a coherent and lasting strategic vision for transport in the region.

253 Q 149

254 *Five Steps to Keeping the South West on Track* see www.swcouncils.gov.uk

255 Qq 144-147

256 Q 61

257 Q 63

Conclusions and recommendations

National and Regional Transport

Draft Regional Transport Strategy

1. We support the move to a Single Regional Strategy. We think this should make it easier to demonstrate the inter-connections between housing, infrastructure and the economic needs of the region. It is essential that the evidence gathered as part of Regional Funding Advice and Delivering a Sustainable Transport System processes be fed into the Single Regional Strategy. (Paragraph 18)
2. We note that, with the loss of the Regional Assembly, the region lost one route for interested parties and the public to input into drawing up the Regional Spatial Strategy. It is important that the process for drawing up the Single Regional Strategy should engage widely with interested parties and the wider public, not only to ensure the resulting strategy does indeed reflect the priorities of the region, but also to build confidence that central Government is willing to listen to the priorities as expressed by the region. Central Government will also need to be convinced that the priorities expressed by the region are coherent. (Paragraph 19)
3. We welcome the creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board and believe it will help transport planning and delivery in the region. (Paragraph 20)

Regional Funding Advice

4. We support the principle of inviting the appropriate bodies in the region to set out the priorities for investment expressed in the Regional Funding Advice process, and recognise that RFA2 was a significant advance on RFA1. However, there is still much that could be improved. (Paragraph 25)
5. We are concerned that the RFA process appears to lack strategic vision and an awareness of the regional picture. (Paragraph 27)

Objectivity and Transparency

6. There appears to be a substantial discrepancy between the priorities put forward by the groups and individuals that submitted evidence to the Committee and the priorities put forward within the Regional Funding Advice from the region. We conclude that the RFA process would be improved, and garner greater support in the region, if the process whereby the schemes chosen for the RFA was open to wider scrutiny. We recommend that the regional partners, and in particular the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board, find ways to increase the transparency of the process whereby schemes are chosen in future RFA rounds. (Paragraph 31)

Engagement

7. Transparency and engagement go hand in hand. We recommend that the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board develop a method to consult the public at the earliest possible stage and allow their views to contribute to the options put forward. Engagement must not only be done, it must also be seen to be done. (Paragraph 34)

Regional Infrastructure Fund

8. We support the use of the regional infrastructure fund to act as a facility to ensure projects do not stall because private sector developers unable to provide cash in the short term. However, it is important that the region can demonstrate that outstanding private funds are eventually paid in full. (Paragraph 37)

Community Infrastructure Fund

9. There are concerns within the region as to the ability of the region's transport network to meet the housing expansion identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. We support the use of the Community Infrastructure Fund as a complementary source of funding to help alleviate congestion as a result of development schemes. (Paragraph 39)

Funding

10. We recognise that in the current economic climate there are likely to be fewer funds available for the foreseeable future. The Government and the regional bodies have to be honest about the level of resources available and the degree of flexibility that will be given to the region if they adhere to the criteria given through Developing a Sustainable Transport System. (Paragraph 46)
11. The region has to improve the costing and delivery of projects. In a tight fiscal environment it cannot afford to underspend its budget when there is such an obvious demand in the region for improving the transport infrastructure. It is imperative that the region acquires and retains the necessary resource to be able to develop, implement and deliver transport schemes to budget and deadline. (Paragraph 47)
12. We welcome measures taken, such as the creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board, to improve the alignment of regional priorities so that projects and programmes can be initiated with increased confidence that they will be delivered, and closer working between the regional partners, local authorities and the Department for Transport. (Paragraph 48)

Capacity and Skills

13. We are concerned that the region has not always managed transport programmes effectively and risked losing investment from the Department for Transport as a consequence. There is an urgent need for increased transport planning and programme management resource in the region. (Paragraph 54)

14. We were told there are only six people within the RDA and the Government Office for the South West with responsibility for co-ordinating transport on a regional basis. Capacity is clearly limited. We support the Regional Capacity Fund request within the RFA to provide a pooled resource of staff available to assist the regional bodies and those smaller local authorities that might need assistance, and urge the Government to find a way whereby it can be included within the RFA. (Paragraph 55)
15. The lack of competence in measuring the carbon impact of transport schemes is extremely concerning. If the potential for investment is related to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, it is essential that the region can demonstrate it is doing all it can to secure such investment. (Paragraph 56)
16. We ask the Government to explain the extent to which there is flexibility within the RFA process to enable the region to put forward proposals that entail a revenue stream. (Paragraph 57)

Delivering a Sustainable Transport System

17. The region has to be able to justify the transport schemes presented in the RFA. Securing agreement and funding from central Government is more likely to happen with a set of programmes that agree more fully with the aims of Delivering a Sustainable Transport System. The RFA should include a clear statement of how the schemes put forward by the region aim to meet the aims of Delivering a Sustainable Transport System. (Paragraph 67)
18. We note that Delivering a Sustainable Transport System touches on areas beyond what are traditional Department for Transport responsibilities. Bringing together goals such as climate change; economic development; equality of opportunity; safety, security and health; and quality of life; will require considerable work with other Departments. Meeting this challenge will require strong leadership within central Government, regional agencies and local authorities. (Paragraph 68)

Local Transport Plans

19. The £5 million boundary between local and regional funding streams may affect the type of schemes presented as local or regional priorities. (Paragraph 73)
20. Local Transport Plans are fundamentally important to how transport is delivered to the average person in the street. This places a great importance on Local Transport Plans being in synchronicity with regional strategies, and being clear as to how they meet national policy. (Paragraph 74)

Integrated Transport Authorities

21. We received considerable evidence urging greater integration of public transport, which has been shown to be advantageous in urban areas elsewhere in the country. The creation of Integrated Transport Authorities was suggested to us in evidence as a

positive step in this direction, and we urge local authorities to set up such Authorities. (Paragraph 79)

Transport between SSCTS and inter-regional transport

Resilience

22. The region is particularly vulnerable to extreme weather because of its geography and a lack of alternative routes. This is an issue that needs to be addressed with much more urgency than at present. It also provides a major incentive for the region to invest in sustainable transport. (Paragraph 89)

Connectivity

23. Better connections to the rest of the UK could substantially improve the South West's economic performance and lead to overall benefits for public finances. The region needs to come up with hard evidence to convince decision makers that this is the case. (Paragraph 95)
24. To improve the experience of tourists and to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment, local and regional government, and other stakeholders, should do more to inform tourists about, and encourage them to take, public transport when they are in the South West. (Paragraph 99)
25. We welcome moves towards cross-ticketing within the South West. We recommend that the regional bodies watch local pilots closely, and monitor work being done nationally, with a view to rolling out successful models in parts of the region. (Paragraph 103)

Road

26. The cost of resolving the traffic situation regarding Stonehenge is beyond the resources of the region. The Department for Transport should accept that solving the traffic problems around Stonehenge is a national responsibility, whatever decision it takes about improvements to the A303. (Paragraph 109)
27. We received a considerable amount of evidence in support of improvements to the A303 and the A358. We note that the Government have said these roads do not satisfy the criteria to be a national route. We recommend that the Department for Transport, in its preparations of the National Policy Statement on the strategic highway, consider the value of the A303 in terms of the resilience it provides for the region as the only major alternative to the M4. (Paragraph 110)
28. As the Highways Agency implements its solution at the M4/M5 interchange, it should investigate the possibilities for introducing measures that prioritise multi-occupancy forms of transport. (Paragraph 112)

Rail

29. We welcome the electrification of the main line between London Paddington and Bristol. We recommend that the Department for Transport and Network Rail tell us what feasibility work they have done to extend electrification from Bristol further into the region, first to Exeter and secondly to Plymouth. (Paragraph 121)
30. Whilst welcoming electrification, we note that the programme is estimated not to be completed before 2017. We also note that the resulting capacity gap in rolling stock is likely to hinder efforts to reduce overcrowding across the South West. We recognise that the Government was addressing the issue of insufficient rolling stock before the announcement to electrify the mainline, but since then the situation appears to have become mired in review. The paying public would be rightly aggrieved if they had to wait until 2017 for new rolling stock. Waiting longer in the event that electrification is delayed by unforeseen events would be untenable. We urge the Government to finalise its new rolling stock plan as soon as possible. (Paragraph 122)
31. At more than 70p a mile, the cost of travelling from Swindon to London at short notice is already the highest in Europe. 2010 has seen further increases in unregulated fares, despite low inflation over the previous year. In addition, train companies in the region have, during the last year, put further restrictions on the validity of off-peak tickets. We recommend that the Regional Minister investigate the impact of these fares on the region and take up the issue with the Department for Transport and the train operating company. (Paragraph 124)

Air

32. We support the airports of the South West and recognise the contribution they can make to the economic wellbeing of the region. We recognise that without investment in alternatives that are quick and reliable, many people will choose to fly. (Paragraph 130)
33. However, we believe that the regional airports should be much more ambitious than they have been to date in improving public transport links and we encourage the Regional Development Agency to enforce its new rules on 'green' development robustly. (Paragraph 131)

Access to Heathrow

34. It is of economic importance for the region to gain direct access to Heathrow from the west. We recommend that, if the third runway goes ahead, part of the extra capacity at Heathrow is reserved for regional airports. (Paragraph 134)
35. We support the Regional Development Agency's campaign to improve direct rail access to Heathrow from the South West. If High Speed Rail connects the Midlands and North West regions to Heathrow, there is a risk that the South West may fall further behind the rest of England in relative journey times and access to markets. We further recommend that the Department for Transport and Network Rail

actively proceed with existing plans to facilitate access to Heathrow from the west by rail. (Paragraph 135)

Ports

36. The Regional Development Agency and South West Councils Leaders' Board should pay more attention to the issues affecting ports in the region, including by appointing subject-matter experts to help them achieve this. (Paragraph 140)
37. We urge the Regional Minister to do his utmost to ensure that the Port of Bristol project now proceeds as planned and without any further delays. (Paragraph 141)

Urban Transport

Road

38. As they take forward the challenge of reducing congestion in the towns and cities of the South West, all local and regional bodies should work on the assumption that the majority of their transport investment will go into reducing car use and supporting public transport. (Paragraph 153)
39. Contributors to the Greater Bristol Bus Network, and other similar initiatives, should agree what outcomes they expect the project to achieve, should express these in terms of improvements to travellers and should make them available publicly to increase accountability and as an incentive to deliver. (Paragraph 158)
40. As they seek to address problems with their road networks, planners in the South West should have as a key concern the impact on existing public transport services and the potential for new or expanded routes. (Paragraph 160)

Rail

41. As the major enhancement to rail in the South West over the next few years, the redoubling of the line between Swindon and Kemble is a good example. The Department for Transport and regional bodies should do everything possible to ensure that the project suffers no further delays, so that it can be completed on time and budget. (Paragraph 166)
42. Local campaigns for transport improvements deserve to be taken seriously. Whilst we recognise that many schemes proposed in this way may be unachievable, there are cases of local campaigns eventually succeeding in their goals and achieving tangible improvements as a result. A greater willingness on the part of transport decision makers to engage with such groups would be welcome. (Paragraph 171)

Cycling and walking

43. Building on the good practice in Greater Bristol and other places, local and regional bodies should take more active steps to encourage cycling and other health modes of transport. In particular, public transport needs to be made more cycling friendly, with space on trains a pressing concern. The progress of Bristol as a cycling city

should be monitored closely, with successful innovations spread more widely.
(Paragraph 179)

Informed choices

44. Although the car will always have an important part to play, local and regional bodies should consider doing more to inform citizens about the full range of travel options open to them. The value of better information being provided direct to the people who can use it can vastly exceed the costs incurred in providing it. (Paragraph 183)

Rural Transport

Buses

45. Despite the real assistance provided by central and local government we received a substantial amount of evidence on the paucity of decent rural bus services. We recognise that operating a bus service to a dispersed population in a rural area is difficult. However, we are concerned that the powers introduced by the Government to improve bus services do not seem to be embraced by local authorities. We recommend that the Strategic Leaders' Board work with local authorities to see if they could be making more use of the powers at their disposal. (Paragraph 194)

Rail

46. We strongly urge the government, Network Rail and First Great Western to work together to make available sufficient rolling stock to allow trains to run to the South West at the same minutes past the hour to facilitate onward connections with local public transport. (Paragraph 200)
47. We believe that regional bodies—the Regional Development Agency and South West Councils—should conduct work to identify which communities are the most isolated and at greatest risk of being cut off, and should use this to prioritise improvements to rural public transport in the future (Paragraph 202)

Road

48. Where improvements to the rural road infrastructure are essential, regional and local bodies should consider funding these in parallel with investment to encourage the more sustainable use of cars. (Paragraph 208)
49. The South West region, like everywhere else, needs to plan for a future in which car use must be greatly reduced. It should make the best use possible of its status as a Low Carbon Economic Area to contribute to national and international measures to revolutionise travel. (Paragraph 211)

Looking Ahead

Evidence base

50. We support the further work being carried out to gather evidence and increase the options for providing solutions. While we recognise the greatest dilemma remains between ensuring economic growth and reducing carbon, we strongly recommend gathering evidence on the broader aspects of DaSTS including equality of opportunity, health and quality of life. (Paragraph 218)

Promoting Sustainable Travel

51. We accept that if DaSTS is asking for a change in traveller behaviour, this will be done by a combination of measures, including improvements in technology, but importantly it will be done by informing the traveller that an alternative exists and actively promoting the options. We recommend that the Strategic Leaders' Board, and other regional bodies, explore the value of introducing a position for promoting sustainable transport on a regional basis. (Paragraph 220)

Alignment of Priorities

52. Major transport investment decisions are made at a national level, for example electrification of Paddington to Swansea. Competing for such investment requires the region to be able to argue its case convincingly. To do so, it is important that the region has an efficient method for agreeing what its priorities are, and is able to present a single voice expressing those priorities. The South West is a disparate region, and the sub-regions have different priorities. Securing agreement is not simple and an effective, regional-level decision-making process is required. We welcome the creation of the Joint Transport and Infrastructure Board as a way of aligning regional priorities and urge all parties to work together to develop a coherent and lasting strategic vision for transport in the region. (Paragraph 229)

Formal Minutes

2 February 2010

Members present:

Alison Seabeck, in the Chair

Roger Berry
David Drew

Dr Doug Naysmith

Draft report proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1-229 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report [, together with written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 22 October 2009].

[Adjourned to a day and time to be fixed by the Chairman.]

Witnesses

Monday 26 October 2009

Page

Mike Birkin, Friends of the Earth; **Simon Face**, Institute of Directors; **Chris Irwin**, SW Stakeholders and TravelWatch SouthWest; and **Jim Russell**, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport. Ev 1

Barbara Davies, West of England Partnership; **Clive Perkin**, Plymouth City Council; **Jenny Raggett**, Campaign for Better Transport Bristol and Bath Travel to Work Area; **Adrian Roper**, Sustrans; **Dr Gabriel Scally**, Regional Director for Public Health; and **Nick Vane**, Development Director UK Bus First. Ev 8

Monday 2 November 2009

Bill Billington, RAC Foundation; **Tim Charlesworth**, South West Regional Ports Association; **Jamie Christon**, Exeter Airport; **Julian Crow**, First Great Western Trains; **Michael Greedy**, Passenger Focus; and **Mike Lambden**, National Express. Ev 15

Alan Cousins, St Germans Rail Users Group; **Jeremy Filmer-Bennett**, Devon and Cornwall Business Council; **Dan James**, Exmoor National Park Authority; **Isobel Mack**, CPRE; **Andy Shaw**, Dorset County Council; and **Adrian Welsh**, Cornwall Council. Ev 23

Monday 7 December 2009

Chris Aldridge, Principal Route Planner, Network Rail; **Mike Gallop**, Route Enhancement Manager, **Chris Jones**, Acting Regional Director and **David Wright**, Regional Manager, Highways Agency. Ev 30

Nick Buckland, RDA Board Member and Joint Chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Board, **Nick Bye**, Mayor of Torbay and Joint Chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Board; **Chris Mitchell**, Assistant Director, Infrastructure and Procurement, Strategic Leaders' Board; and **Ian Piper**, Director of Development and Regeneration, SWRDA. Ev 35

Jim Knight MP, Regional Minister for the South West; **Chris Mole MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Transport; and **Hilary Neal**, Regional Director for Transport, Government Office of the South West. Ev 40

List of written evidence

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4	Network Rail	Ev 65
5	Cornwall Council	Ev 68
6	Devon County Council	Ev 72
7	Dorset County Council	Ev 77
8	West of England Partnership	Ev 80
9	Swindon Borough Council	Ev 82
10	Plymouth City Council	Ev 84
11	Taunton Deane Borough Council	Ev 87
12	Mid-Devon District Council	Ev 90
13	Ivybridge Town Council	Ev 91
14	Widworthy Parish Council	Ev 93
15	Whimble Parish Council	Ev 93
16	Friends of the Earth	Ev 94
17	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England South West	Ev 95
18	Natural England	Ev 100
19	Exmoor National Park Authority	Ev 104
20	Dr Gabriel Scally, Regional Director of Public Health	Ev 107
21	Public Health Directorate, Bristol Primary Care Trust	Ev 114
22	CBI South West	Ev 121
23	Federation of Small Businesses	Ev 123
24	Institute of Directors	Ev 125
25	Institution of Civil Engineers South West	Ev 128
26	South West Branch of Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport	Ev 134
27	The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)	Ev 137
28	Royal Automobile Club Foundation	Ev 140
29	National Express UK	Ev 142
30	First Great Western	Ev 145
31	First Group plc—UK Bus Division	Ev 148
32	Flybe	Ev 152
33	Bristol International Airport	Ev 156
34	Bournemouth Airport	Ev 157
35	Exeter and Devon Airport	Ev 159
36	South West Regional Ports Association	Ev 160
37	Falmouth Harbour Commissioners	Ev 163
38	Bristol Ports	Ev 165
39	A36/A350 Corridor Alliance	Ev 165
40	Bristol Civic Society	Ev 170
41	Bristol Visual & Environmental Group	Ev 171
42	Campaign for Better Transport	Ev 172

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43	Campaign for Better Transport, Bristol and Bath Travel to Work Area and South West Network	Ev 174
44	Devon and Cornwall Business Councils	Ev 177
45	Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways	Ev 181
46	GWE Business West	Ev 184
47	Plymouth Civic Society	Ev 186
48	Passenger Focus	Ev 188
49	Portishead Railway Group	Ev 194
50	Railfuture Severnside	Ev 194
51	Railfuture Devon & Cornwall Branch	Ev 196
52	Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport	Ev 197
53	Severn Link	Ev 201
54	St Germans Rail Users Group	Ev 202
55	Sustainability South West	Ev 204
56	Sustrans	Ev 206
57	Sherborne Transport Action Group	Ev 209
58	Sutton Harbour Group	Ev 210
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60	Summerfield Developments (SW) Limited	Ev 214
61	Torbay Line Rail Users Group	Ev 214
62	Temple to Bodmin A30 Action Group	Ev 218
63	Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance	Ev 222
64	TravelWatch South West	Ev 224
65	Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership	Ev 230
66	Mr Nigel May	Ev 235
67	Bernard Lane	Ev 236
68	Lavinia Archer	Ev 236
69	David Wood	Ev 236
70	Nicky Walker	Ev 237
71	Jill Elson	Ev 238
72	David Baker	Ev 238
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74	Terry A Coleman	Ev 239
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79	Bob Edwards	Ev 243
80	Stephen Howard	Ev 243
81	Andrew Turpin	Ev 243
82	David Potter	Ev 244
83	Mr Mike Friend	Ev 244
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86	Mr Ed Bonney	Ev 250

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89	Peter Robottom	Ev 251
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98	South West branch of the Chartered Institute for Logistics and Transport (CILT)	Ev 259
99	Dorset County Council	Ev 260
100	CPRE South West	Ev 261
101	Portishead Railway Group	Ev 264
102	Robert Craig	Ev 265
103	South West Trains	Ev 265
104	Association of Kennet Passengers	Ev 267

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List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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First Special Report	Impact of the economic downturn on the South West and the Government's response: Government response	HC 1092