

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

PLANNING, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 16th January, 2018

Present:- Councillors Will Sandry (Chair), Barry Macrae (Vice-Chair), Rob Appleyard, Colin Blackburn, Lisa O'Brien, David Veale and Liz Richardson

Also in attendance: Louise Fradd (Strategic Director - Place), John Wilkinson (Divisional Director - Community Regeneration) and Sarah Chodkiewicz (Finance Manager)

35 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

36 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Barry Macrae declared an other interest with regard to agenda item 10 (Bristol Airport Masterplan) as he had previously been a member of Wessex Flying Club.

39 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

40 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

41 MINUTES - 7TH NOVEMBER 2017

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

42 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Paul Myers, Cabinet Member for Economic and Community Regeneration addressed the Panel, a summary of his update is set out below.

Housing

He said that a 10 week consultation would commence in February 2018 regarding the future of the Council's Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs.

72 Extra Care Homes would be available from Spring 2019 on the Ensleigh site.

Bath Enterprise Zone

The land acquisition from BMT of Bath Quays South is complete and work should commence on site within the next two months.

An outline planning application has been submitted for the development of Bath Quays North, following public consultation towards the end of last year.

Broadband connection voucher scheme

522 vouchers have been issued as part of the Government trial to improve broadband speeds in homes in Bath & North East Somerset.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked where the majority of the vouchers had been issued.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that it was the Chew Valley area that had received the vast majority of the vouchers.

Heritage

The Roman Baths had 1.2m visitors in 2017.

The Fashion Museum and Assembly Rooms were among the 2017 Sandford Award winners. The Sandford Award is an independently judged, quality assured assessment of education programmes at heritage sites, museums, archives and collections across the British Isles.

He informed the Panel 2018 was the 200th anniversary of the publication of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Mary Shelley had lived at 5 Abbey Churchyard.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked if there was an update on the Newark Works element of Bath Quays South.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that a lockout agreement had been signed with TCN and that site enabling works are due to commence.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked how feedback on the Keynsham High Street trial would be gathered.

Councillor Myers replied that there would be an online consultation and work would take place with particular groups to enable the most feedback.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration added that on street questionnaires would also be undertaken alongside visits to shops on the High Street and meeting with Keynsham Town Council.

Councillor Rob Appleyard asked if there was a particular focus for the incoming funds from WECA for housing.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that there were four areas of focus across the Council in terms of WECA housing support, these were Whitchurch, Keynsham, BWR, Bath Quays.

The Chairman asked if it were true that only 22% of jobs created within the Quays would be at salary levels that enable those people to afford to live in B&NES.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that a housing assessment has been carried out which aimed to support the delivery of housing that meets the needs of future workers.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Myers for his update on behalf of the Panel.

Councillor Bob Goodman, Cabinet Member for Development and Neighbourhoods addressed the Panel, a summary of his update is set out below.

Article 4 – Office to Residential

The Leader of the Council has decided to make an Article 4 direction and give notice of the direction. It has been necessary to do this to prevent the unprecedented change from office to residential in the last few years, resulting in the loss of business space.

It does not prevent the change of use but would mean consent would be necessary. Cabinet will decide whether to confirm, abandon or amend the Direction following the public consultation and public representations are considered.

I have declared a pecuniary interest and have not been involved in the decision making process.

Planning Fees

Planning Fees will rise by 20% on Wednesday 17th Jan.

The fee will apply to all applications validated on or after that date.

This is a government offer to the authority and must be 'ring fenced' to employ additional resources within the planning department to ensure a more efficient service and will be monitored.

Budget Changes

- There is to be a permitted development right to allow commercial building to be demolished and replace with home.
- Measures to try and ensure that planning permission (housing) are built out faster.
- Land being 'banked and not being built on by developers (for commercial – rather than technical reasons) could be subject to expanded power of compulsory purchases. Secretary of State is also bring in powers to direct LA to produce Joint Statutory plans as we have in the JSP in the WoE:

J.S.P

Consultation has been concluded and will be submitted for examination. No dates yet for the examination (possibly June) will update.

Local Plan

The consultation here has also closed; good engagement has been made across the region at various events.

Again I will update at the next PHED meeting with dates etc.

Foxhill

I understand the Foxhill Residents Association has issued proceedings in respect to the planning consent for Foxhill Demolition & Regeneration.

This will take the normal legal path.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Goodman for his update on behalf of the Panel.

43 COUNCIL OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Strategic Director for Place introduced this item to the Panel. She explained that the plan has a 2 year focus, aligned with the budget planning process, although it does reference the Council's longer term (years 3 – 5) direction of travel.

She said that the plan was structured by Cabinet Portfolios in line with the budget structure and identifies the key changes in service delivery over 2018-19 and 2019-20 where appropriate. She added that it also outlines the individual budget proposals.

She stated that the plan contains a greater level of detail for the coming year and that the detail for the following years will continue to develop as Council policy evolves and the plan will be updated annually.

She informed them that this edition of the plan would be considered by all Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels in January 2018, having been developed on behalf of the Cabinet, and will inform the 2018/19 budget setting process.

She said that in 2015 the Council started a rigorous review of spending aimed at cutting waste and increasing efficiency. We've also been growing our income opportunities by investing in property, housing and the economy and capitalising on Bath's heritage and tourism assets - activities that will become even more important in the coming years.

She stated that since 2016 we have saved £27 million primarily through re-designing services, social care efficiencies, reducing our estate, and improving our technology and capital financing arrangements. She added that this work has had minimal impact on front line services, and we continue to be regarded as a good authority by independent inspectors. In addition to the £27 million already saved to 2018, we have committed further savings of £15 million to 2020.

She spoke of the Council's good track record of winning bids for Government grants that attract investment into the area and raise money which help to fund projects that people care about. She added that the decision to support an elected regional Mayor for the West of England and become part of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) with South Gloucestershire and Bristol Council means that we are benefiting from a share of £1 billion investment in adult skills development and transport infrastructure, including major roads and rail networks, as well as cycling and walking routes.

She addressed the key changes that the Council is proposing, explaining the plan doesn't intend to capture every activity that the Council carries out, but focuses on the key changes over the coming years and highlights key projects that will help achieve our vision for the future.

Councillor Barry Macrae advised a note of caution relating to Digital by Choice and the members of the public that do not regularly use IT.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked if the Council's work regarding further education and employment dovetailed with that of WECA.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that the Council was working with WECA regarding the skills agenda.

Councillor Rob Appleyard asked if the pension deficit in relation to Bath Tourism Plus has been addressed.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that this was addressed when the service was brought in house.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked how the Disabled Facilities Grant was funded.

The Finance Manager replied that the funding stream had changed and that it is now supplied by the Better Care Fund from the Government and a contribution from Curo.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration added that this was a demand driven programme to support people to stay in their own homes.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked if any comment could be made on the future use of Lewis House.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that if staff numbers were to reduce it might be the case that the Council will not occupy all of the available floors on the site.

The Chairman thanked her for presenting the plan to the Panel.

The Panel **RESOLVED** that at this stage there were no specific areas of feedback that they would like to refer to the relevant Cabinet Member for further consideration as part of the operational planning and budget development process.

44 BRISTOL AIRPORT MASTER PLAN

Simon Earles, Planning and Sustainability Director and James Gore, Head of Government and Stakeholder Relations gave a presentation to the Panel on this item. A copy of the presentation can be found on the Panel's Minute Book and online as an appendix to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

Preparing our new Master Plan

- 2003 'Future of Air Transport' White Paper required airports to produce Master Plans.
- First Master Plan published in 2006, including detailed development proposals to accommodate growth to 2015, with indicative plans showing how the airport might expand to handle 12.5 million passengers by 2030.
- Planning permission granted in 2011 for development of facilities to handle 10 million passengers per annum (mppa). Major elements of this development are nearing completion and passenger numbers have passed 8mppa.
- Content should include infrastructure proposals; safeguarding and land/property take; impact on people and the natural environment; and proposals to minimise and mitigate impacts.
- This consultation will seek feedback on our priorities and initial concepts. Feedback will help shape our Draft Master Plan.

Celebrating 60 years

1957 - Bristol Airport opens on the site of a former WWII experimental fighter station called RAF Lulsgate Bottom.

1960s/70s - The world's first supersonic jet, Concorde, was developed at Filton and first flew from there on April 9 1969.

2000 - New terminal opens and passenger numbers hit two million a year.

2003-2006 - Government White Paper on the future of air transport prompts first Bristol Airport Master plan.

2016 - Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling MP, opens a second major terminal extension.

2017 - Passenger numbers reach eight million a year.

Estimated present and future economic impact of Bristol Airport

2017 – 8 million passengers / £1.3bn+ generated in the South West & South Wales / 15,000+ regional jobs.

2030s – 15 million passengers / £2.9bn+ generated in the South West & South Wales / 21,000+ regional jobs.

2040s - 20 million passengers / £3.9bn+ generated in the South West & South Wales / 25,000+ regional jobs.

Our five pillars

A world leading regional airport

Delivering easy and convenient access, excellent on-time performance, friendly and efficient customer service, a great range of destinations, state-of-the-art facilities and a distinctive sense of place that reflects the unique part of the world we serve.

Employment and supporting economic growth

Creating employment and supporting economic growth by connecting the South West of England and South Wales to new markets, talent and tourists.

At the heart of an integrated transport network

Making Bristol Airport an integrated transport hub by bringing together different modes of transport, not just for our passengers and staff, but also for people travelling within, to and through the region.

Sustainable approach

Seeking to reduce and mitigate our effect on communities and the environment, locally and globally, as well as finding opportunities to deliver enhancements.

Deliverability

Developing proposals which are flexible enough to be delivered in phases to meet demand, and which represent value for money for passengers, airlines and other stakeholders.

Design Considerations

Three example scenarios were shown to the Panel.

Next steps

- Analyse feedback from initial consultation.
- Prepare Draft Master Plan for consultation in spring.
- Publish final Master Plan next winter.

- Application for planning and other consents.

Councillor Barry Macrae said that he welcomed the positive developments and felt there were issues to address through public sector involvement through WECA. He asked how many direct jobs were linked to the airport.

James Gore replied that it was just under 3,500.

Simon Earles added that it was plain to see that surface access needs improvement and that partnerships were being developed to identify transport schemes. He said that he was confident that WECA recognises the benefits of development at the airport. He said that he was delighted with the co-operation with B&NES so far.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked how many of the 8 million passengers would be deemed frequent flyers.

James Gore replied that there were a high proportion of frequent flyers, including 16% being business passengers. He added that a survey of business passengers found that 24% were flying 20 or more times a year from Bristol Airport.

Councillor Rob Appleyard commented that with the projected passenger increase that access to the airport was a key issue.

Simon Earles replied that a Surface Access Strategy would be developed. He said that this would be bus and coach based initially, but options would include heavy rail, underground and metro bus. He added that 12 new double decker buses would soon be available to use on current routes and that the airport were investing £0.5m into a regional transport study.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked from what radius employees at the airport came from.

James Gore gave the Panel the following breakdown of employees from the local area:

10% - Bath and North East Somerset
22% - Bristol
39% - North Somerset
11% - Somerset
10% - South Gloucestershire
5% - South Wales
3% - Other

Councillor Liz Richardson asked if there were plans to increase the size of the runway.

Simon Earles replied that this was not in their current plans.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones commented that he was delighted to see the airport was upping their game in terms of sustainability. He asked if the number of night flights over Bath would be addressed in the Master Plan.

Simon Earles replied that restrictions on night movements do exist and that he understood that it was an issue. He added that it would be addressed within the Master Plan.

The Chairman thanked Simon and James for their attendance and presentation to the Panel and invited them to return at a future stage of the Master Plan process.

45 THE ROLE OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY (WECA)

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration gave a presentation to the Panel on this item. A copy of the presentation can be found on the Panel's Minute Book and online as an appendix to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

Background

- Established in February 2017
- Chaired by Tim Bowles, West of England Mayor
- Facilitates more decision-making on a local level on transport, housing and skills
- Has potential to bring more than £1 billion investment to the region over thirty years.

Interface with the LEP

Staff employed by WECA service both the LEP and the Combined Authority which are linked through their governance arrangements.

West of England Structure

LEP Board

WECA Board

Joint WoE Committee

Beneath the WECA Board and the Joint WoE Committee are the Skills Advisory Board, Business Advisory Board and the Infrastructure Advisory Board.

Funding Streams

LEP Funding

- Local Growth Fund
- Revolving Infrastructure Fund
- Economic Development Fund
- Sustainable Transport Package

WECA Funding

- Gain Share Funding
- Housing Infrastructure Fund
- Housing Deal

Details regarding the Housing Infrastructure Fund and Housing Deal are still to be confirmed.

B&NES Priorities

- A strong economy and growth
- A focus on prevention
- A new relationship with customers and communities
- An efficient business

WECA Priorities

Delivering economic growth for all, under three pillars:

- Businesses that succeed
- World class skills for employment
- Infrastructure fit for the future

WECA-Funded Projects

- Joint Transport Study Highway Infrastructure
- A37 to A362 Improvements
- Hicks Gate Roundabout
- Employment Support Innovation Pilot

LEP-Funded Projects

- Innovation Quay
- Bath Flood Mitigation
- Bath City Centre Transport Package
- Metro West Phase 1

Expected Outcomes

- Safe, public spaces
- Improved infrastructure
- Upgraded connectivity
- Better transport links
- Modern Office Space
- New homes

Future Opportunities

We anticipate that more funding will become available over the coming months as WECA matures.

B&NES will continue to bid for opportunities where they allow us to progress economic growth in the region.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked if the non-involvement of North Somerset in WECA would put extra pressure on B&NES, Bristol and South Gloucestershire in terms of housing delivery.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that feasibility studies were due to be carried out on this issue.

The Chairman thanked the Divisional Director for Community Regeneration for his presentation.

46 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel, he explained that two reports were currently due for March:

HMO Additional Licensing

Review of KPIs - Housing Performance Reports

He said that he would enquire whether the Panel could see the Housing Assessment document referred to earlier with regard to employment at Bath Quays.

Councillor Rob Appleyard suggested a future report for the Panel on the economic development status of Southgate.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the matters raised.

The meeting ended at 5.10 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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Your airport: your views a world of opportunities



Preparing a new Master Plan: Public consultation

Planning, Housing and Economic Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

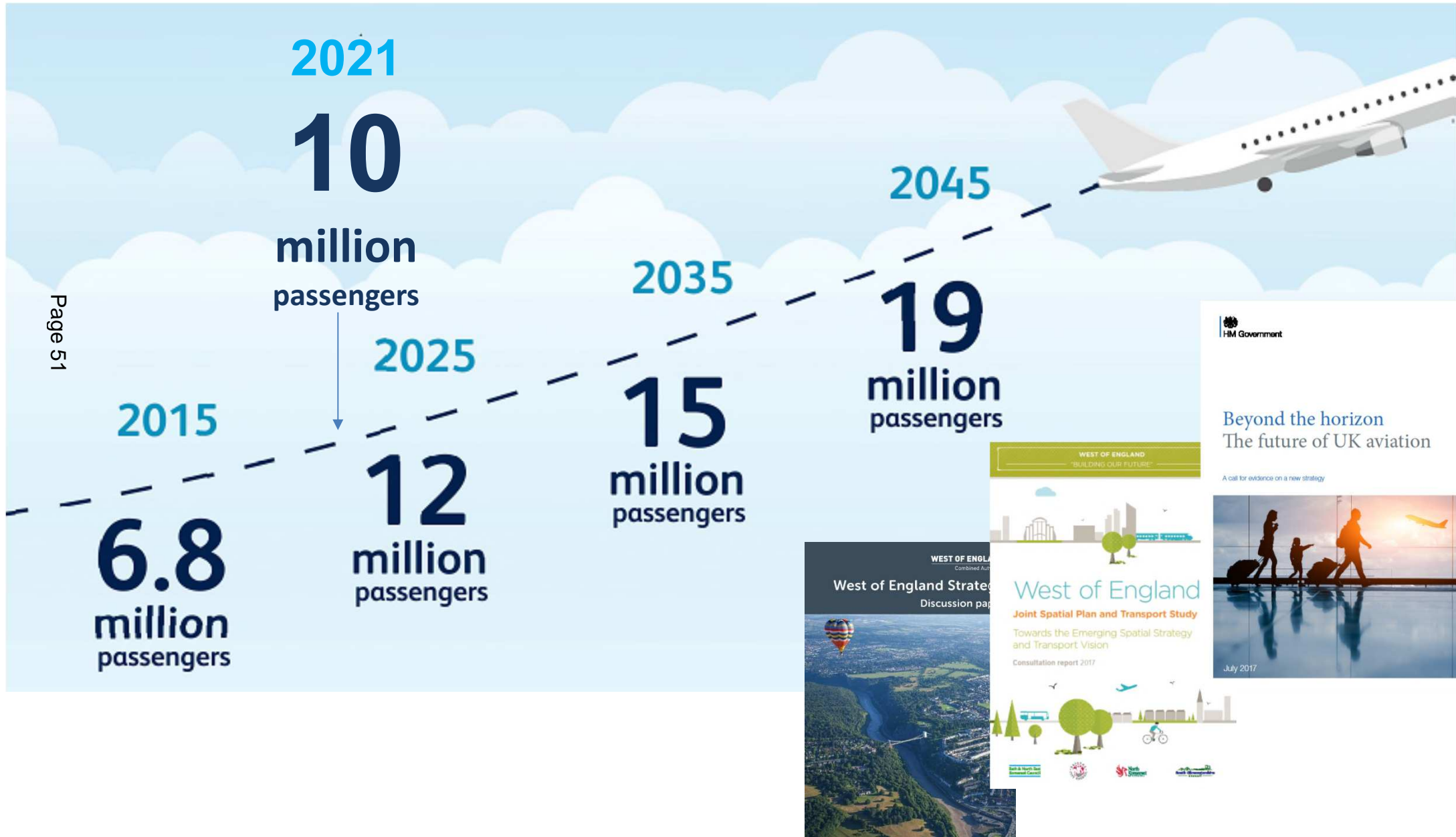
Bath & North East Somerset Council

16 January 2018

Preparing our new Master Plan

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- First Master Plan published in 2006, including detailed development proposals to accommodate growth to 2015, with indicative plans showing how the airport might expand to handle 12.5 million passengers by 2030.
- Planning permission granted in 2011 for development of facilities to handle 10 million passengers per annum (mppa). Major elements of this development are nearing completion and passenger numbers have passed 8mppa.
- Purpose of Master Plans is *"to provide a clear statement of intent on the part of an airport operator enable future development...to be given due consideration in local planning processes."*
- Content should include infrastructure proposals; safeguarding and land/property take; impact on people and the natural environment; and proposals to minimise and mitigate impacts.
- This consultation will seek feedback on our priorities and initial concepts. Feedback will help shape our Draft Master Plan.

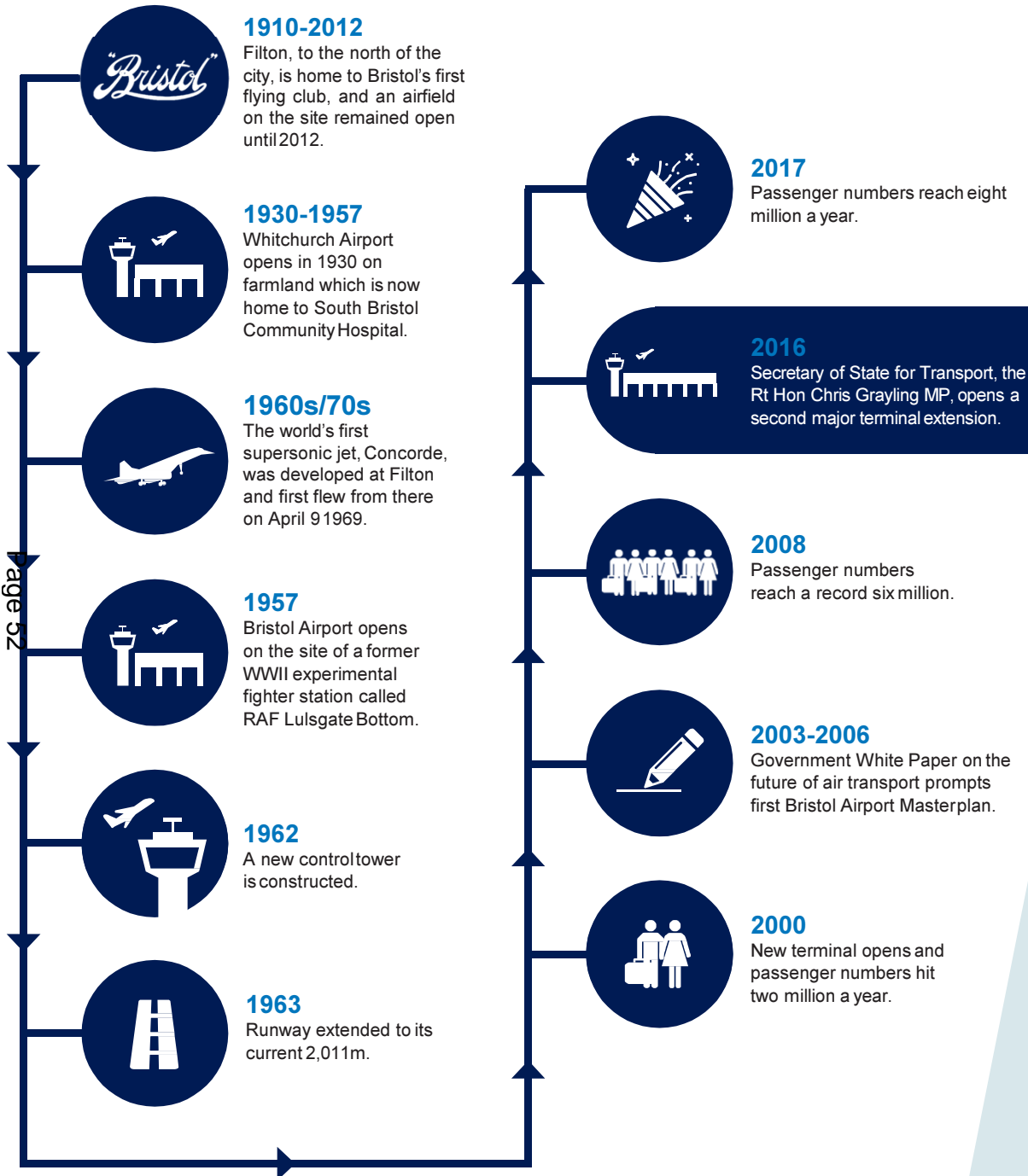
Regional and national context



Bristol Airport

Past | Present | Future

Page 52



Celebrating 60 years

Our story: **Where we are**

now

**Connecting the world:
Bristol Airport's direct route
network 2017**

Page 53

...over 20% of our business comes from overseas and, in particular, from the USA and other European countries. The successful development of Bristol Airport and its route network to key markets has made a significant contribution to this growth...

Peter Rollins
Director of Marketing & Communications
Thermae Bath Spa

Increasing regional connectivity boosts growth from tourism domestically and internationally, making it easier for visitors to see more of Britain and spreading the economic benefits of tourism across the nations.

Sally Balcombe
Chief Executive, Visit Britain

Our story: Looking ahead

Bristol Airport
Past | Present | Future



51%

of people identifying
as 'global citizens'
(BBC World Service poll, 2016)



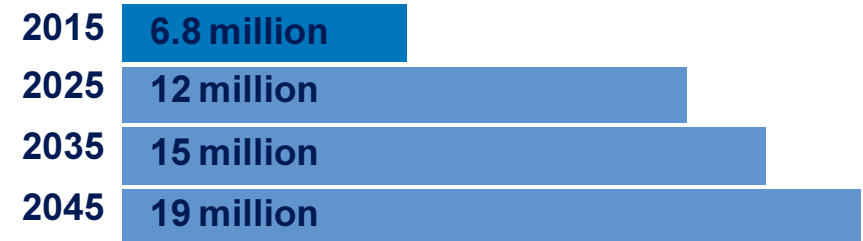
50 billion

connected devices by 2020
(Cisco)

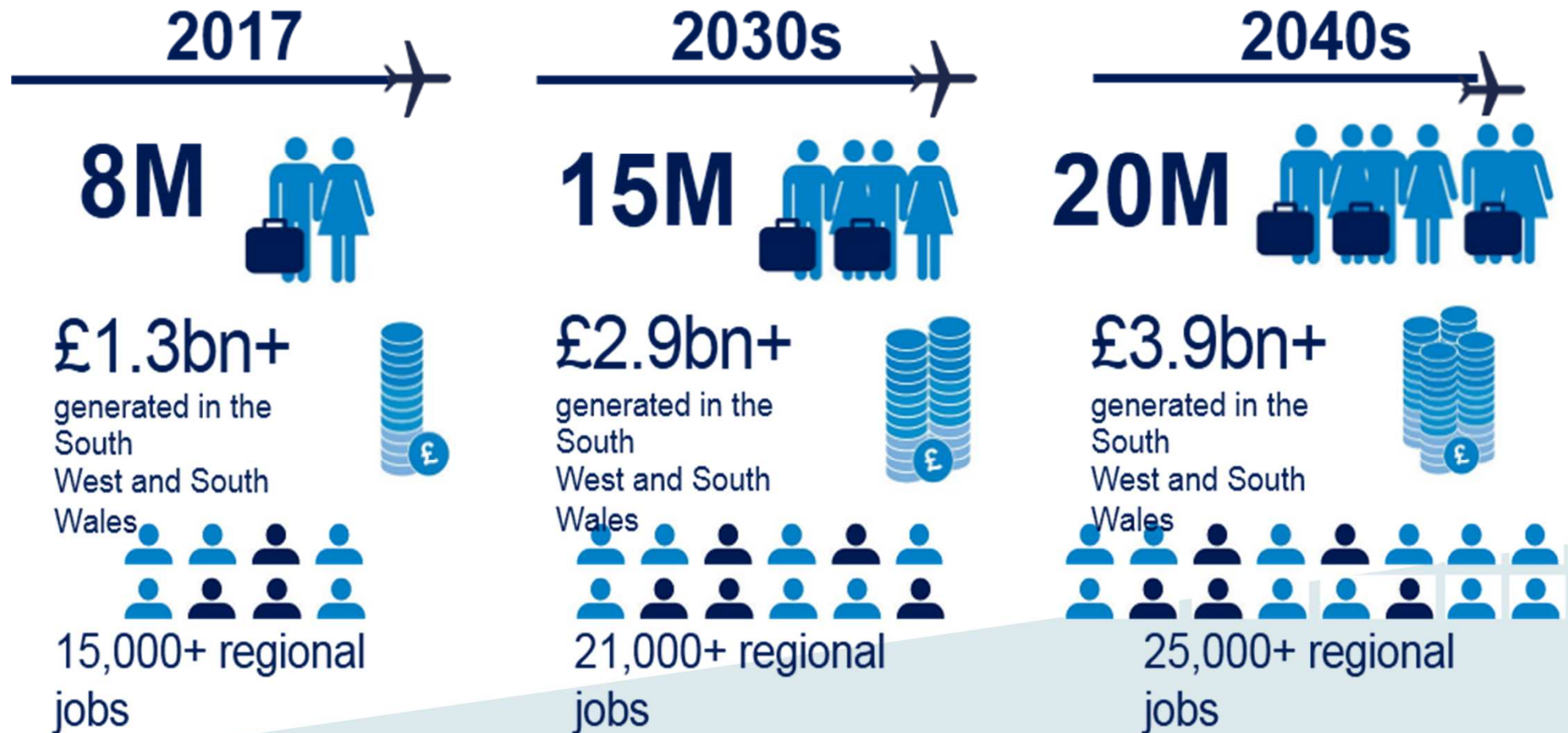
Aircraft today are **75%** quieter
than they were 50 years ago



Passenger forecast (millions per year)



Estimated present and future economic impact of Bristol Airport ²⁴



Our five pillars

To make sure we get the best possible outcome for our passengers, neighbours and the region as a whole, our new Master Plan will be guided by five pillars.

A world leading regional airport

Delivering easy and convenient access, excellent on-time performance, friendly and efficient customer service, a great range of destinations, state-of-the-art facilities and a distinctive sense of place that reflects the unique part of the world we serve.

Employment and supporting economic growth

Creating employment and supporting economic growth by connecting the South West of England and South Wales to new markets, talent and tourists.

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Sustainable approach

Seeking to reduce and mitigate our effect on communities and the environment, locally and globally, as well as finding opportunities to deliver enhancements.

Deliverability

Developing proposals which are flexible enough to be delivered in phases to meet demand, and which represent value for money for passengers, airlines and other stakeholders.

Design considerations: supporting the five pillars

Key land use issues influencing airport layout

Access off the A38

Employment & related development

Fuel provision

Green Belt

Land acquisition

Mass transit and car parking

Place and locality

Sustainability & green infrastructure

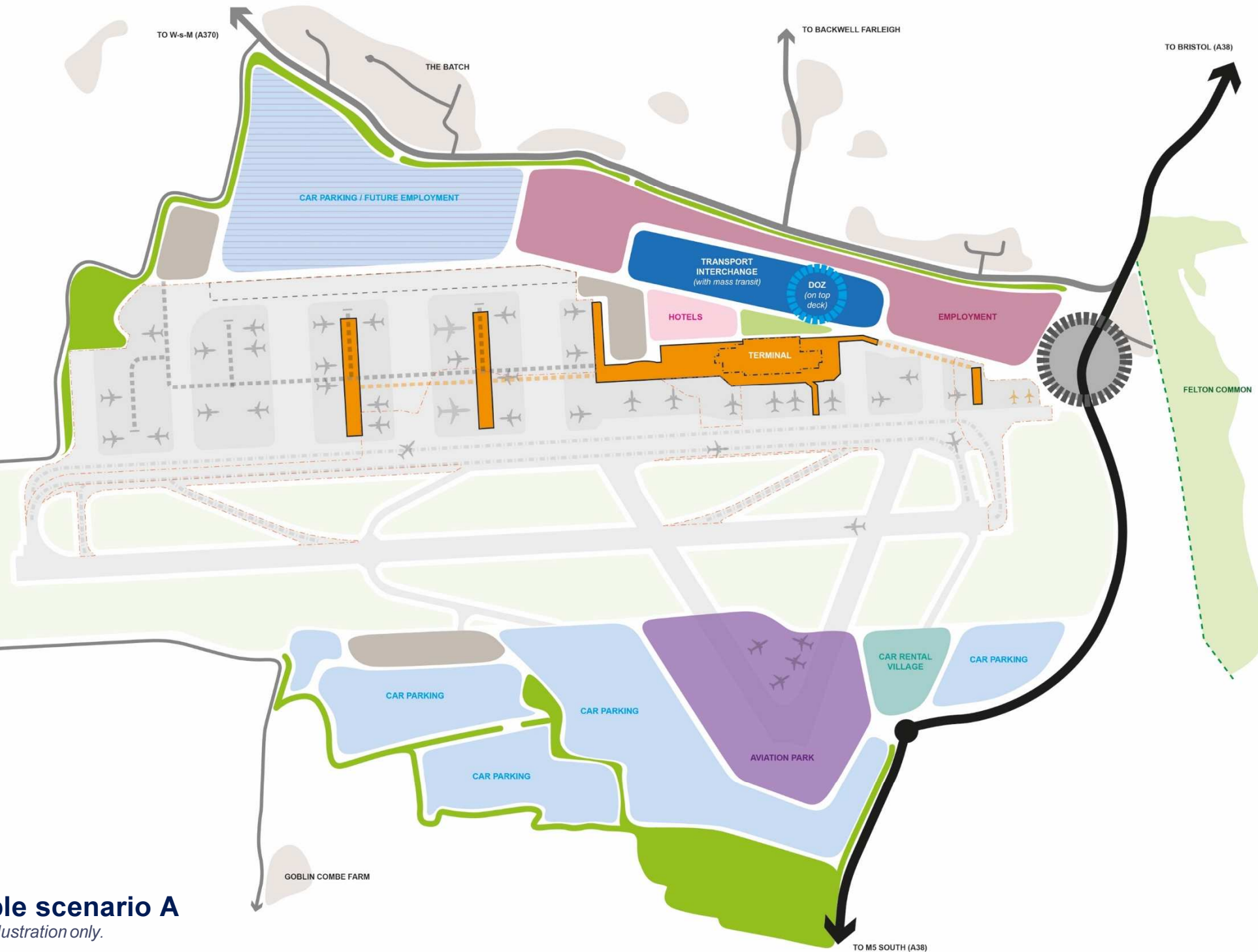
Terminals

Topography and visibility

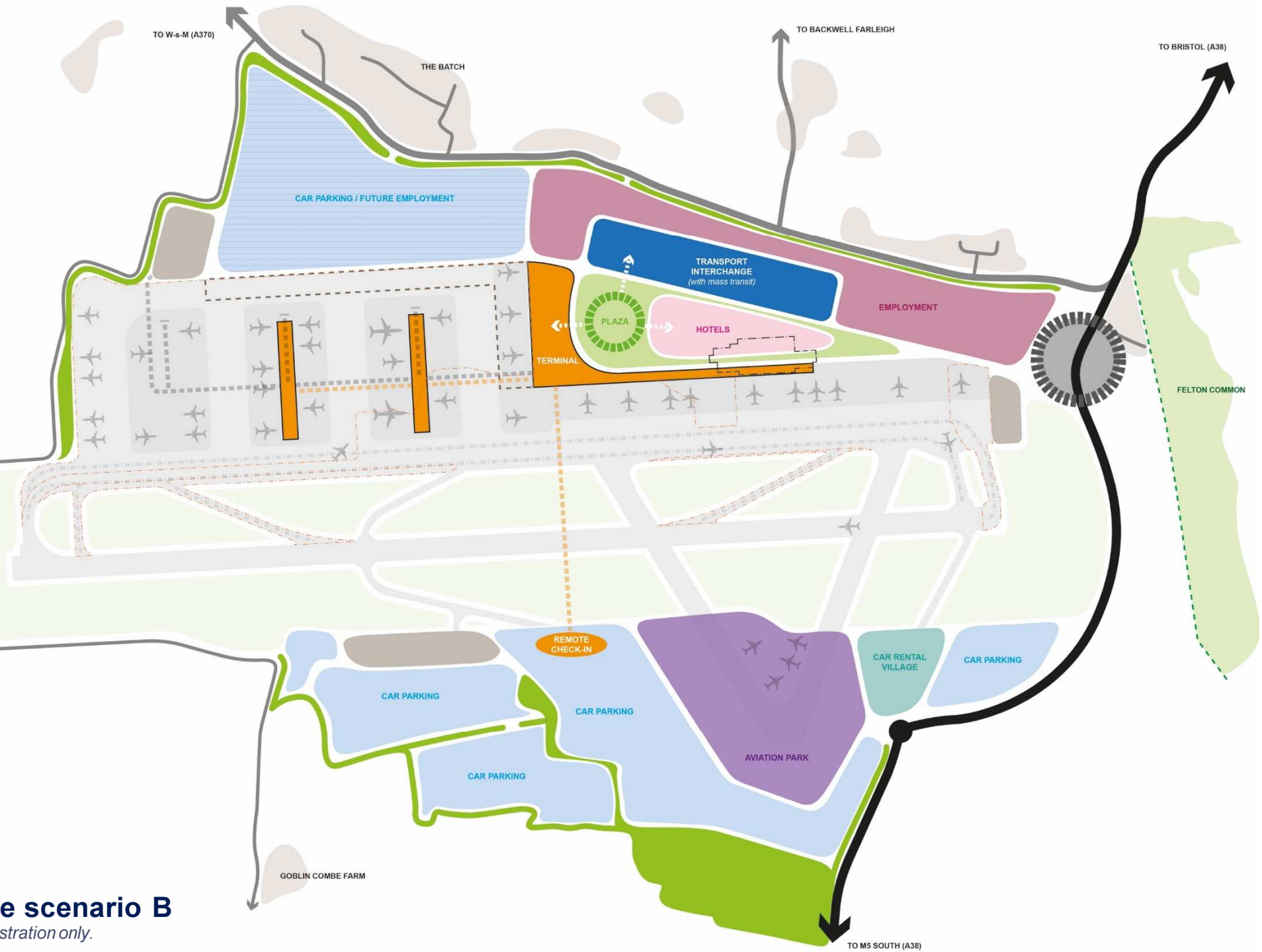




Current planning approval layout



Example scenario A
Indicative illustration only.

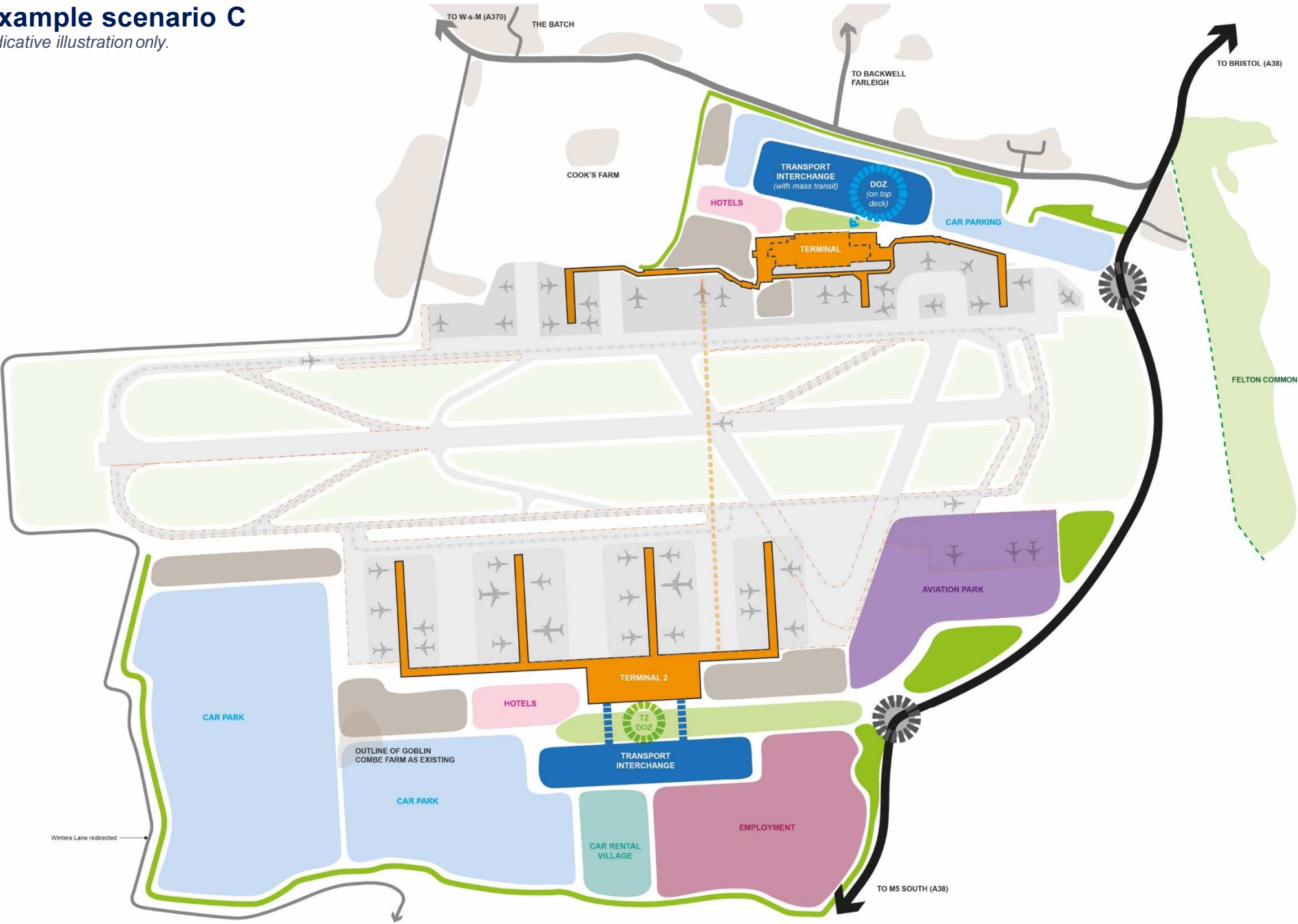


Example scenario B

Indicative illustration only.

Example scenario C

Indicative illustration only.



Consultation – 16 November to 26 January

Venue	Date	Time
Hampton by Hilton Hotel (Bristol Airport)	Tuesday 28 November	3 pm–8pm
Hans Price, Conference Centre (Weston-super-Mare)	Thursday 30 November	11am-2pm
Wroughton Memorial Hall (Wroughton)	Friday 1 December	3pm–7pm
Felton Village Hall (Felton)	Tuesday 5 December	11pm –2pm
Engine Shed (Bristol)	Thursday 7 December	11am-2pm
Bristol and Bath Science Park (South Gloucestershire)	Thursday 14 December	11am–2pm
Cleeve Village Hall (Cleeve)	Tuesday 9 January	2pm–5pm
Hangstones Pavilion (Yatton)	Wednesday 10 January	4pm–8pm
Guildhall, Bath	Thursday 11 January	11am–2pm
Backwell Village Hall (Backwell)	Monday 15 January	12pm–3pm
Fear Hall (Keynsham)	Thursday 18 January	11am–2pm
The Old Schoolroom (Chew Magna)	Friday 19 January	4pm–8pm
Hampton by Hilton Hotel (Bristol Airport)	Saturday 20 January	11am–4 pm

Next steps

- Analyse feedback from initial consultation.
- Prepare Draft Master Plan for consultation in spring.
- Publish final Master Plan next winter.
- Application for planning and other consents.

Your airport: your views a world of opportunities



Preparing a new Master Plan: Public consultation

Planning, Housing and Economic Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Bath & North East Somerset Council

16 January 2018

The Role of the West of England Combined Authority

Louise Fradd & John Wilkinson

Background

- » Established in February 2017
- » Chaired by Tim Bowles, West of England Mayor
- » Facilitates more decision-making on a local level on transport, housing and skills
- » Has potential to bring more than £1 billion investment to the region over thirty years.



Interface with the LEP

West of England Combined Authority

B&NES

Bristol

South Gloucestershire

Local Enterprise Partnership

B&NES

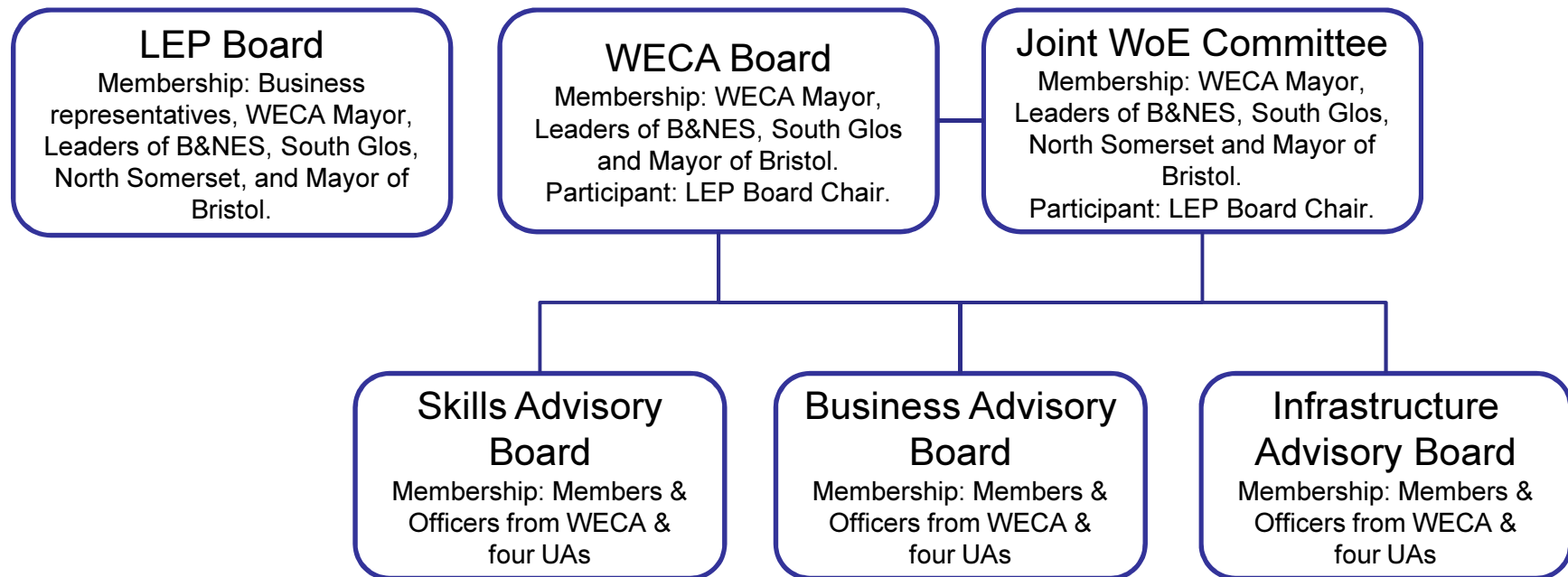
Bristol

South Gloucestershire

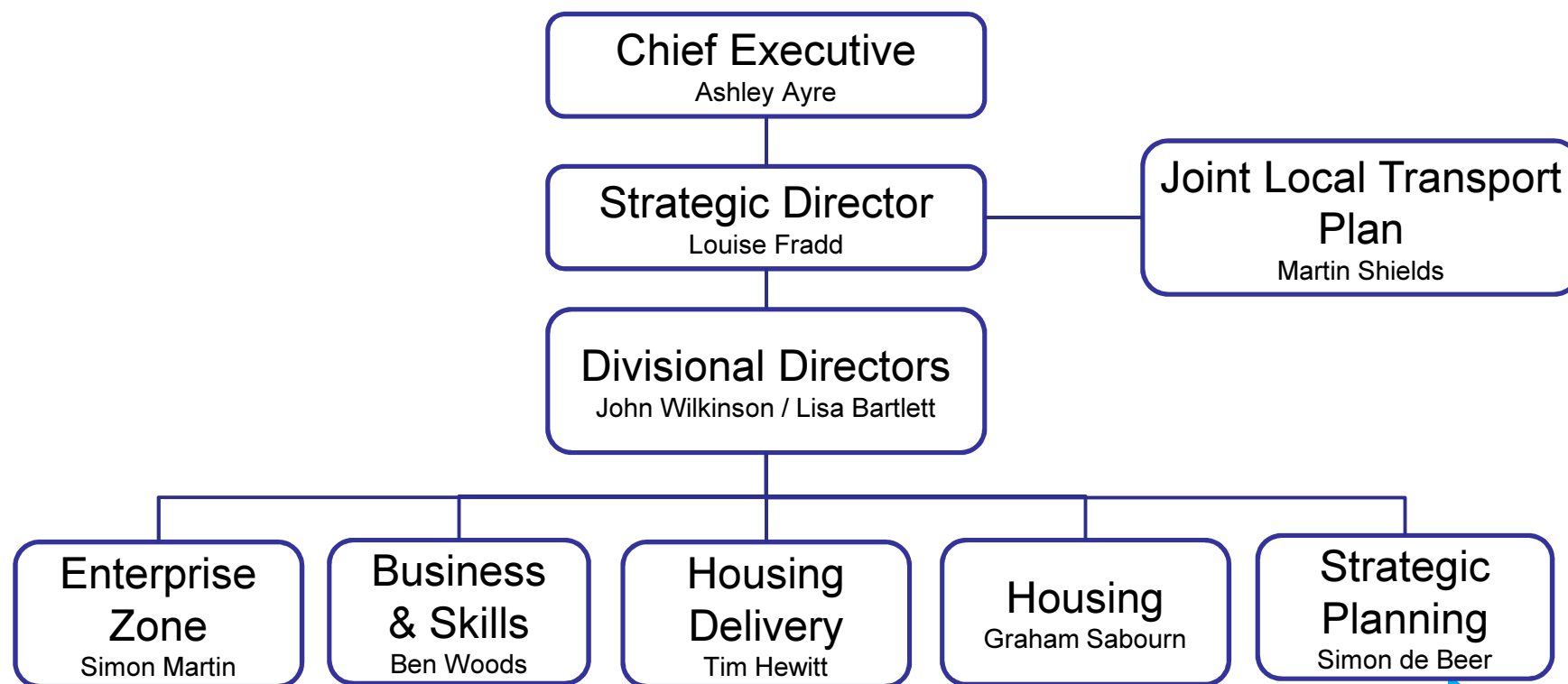
North Somerset

Staff employed by WECA service both the LEP and the Combined Authority which are linked through their governance arrangements.

West of England Structure



B&NES Structure



This organogram covers only the Place Directorate. Other Directorates provide input, such as Resources and Legal.

Bath and North East Somerset – *The place to live, work and visit*

Funding Streams

LEP Funding

Local Growth Fund

Grant money given to benefit local area and economy

Revolving Infrastructure Fund
A loan enabling delivery of infrastructure required for economic and/or housing growth

Economic Development Fund

Borrowing based on the uplift in business rates

Sustainable Transport Package
For funding improved walking/cycling routes, and public transport improvements.

WECA Funding

Gain Share Funding

For improving transport infrastructure

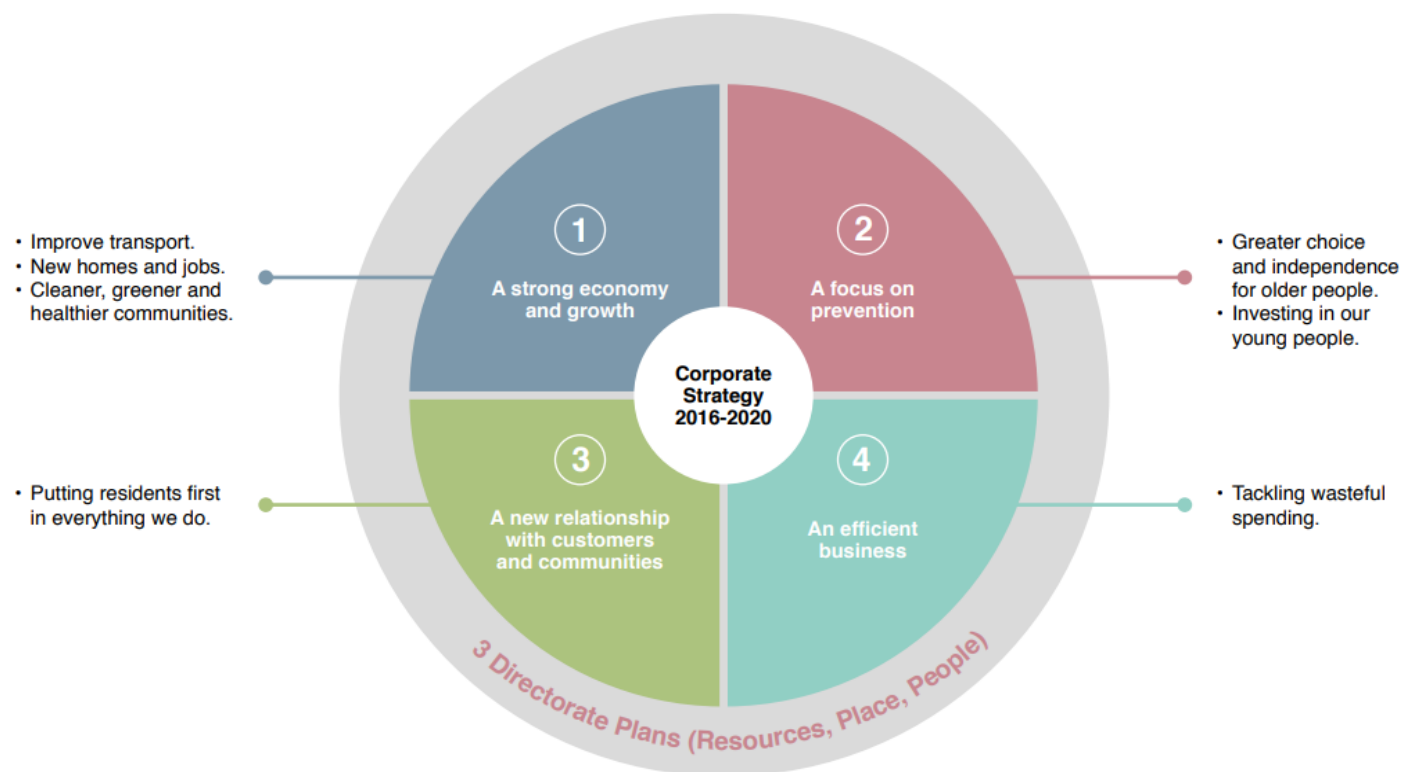
Housing Infrastructure Fund

Grant funding for new infrastructure
(Details to be confirmed)

Housing Deal

To fund infrastructure to enable housing growth in the region
(Details to be confirmed)

B&NES Priorities



Bath and North East Somerset – *The place to live, work and visit*

WECA Priorities

Delivering economic growth for all, under three pillars:

- » Businesses that succeed
- » World class skills for employment
- » Infrastructure fit for the future

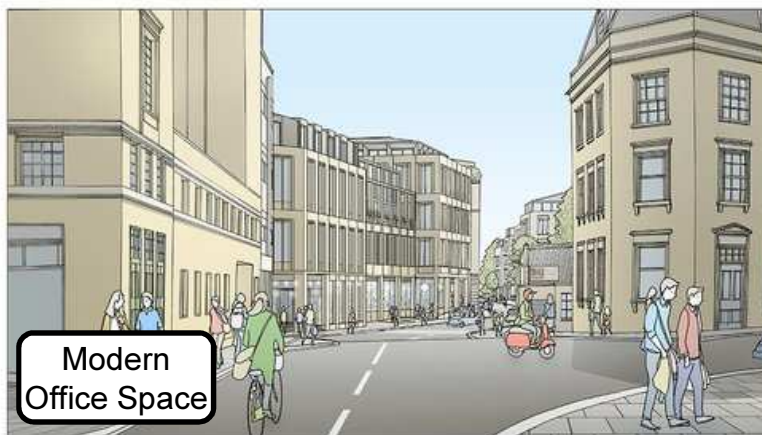
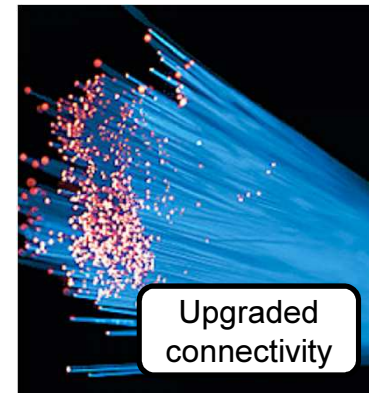
WECA-Funded Projects

	Title	Description
1	Joint Transport Study Highway Infrastructure.	Developing options for the highway infrastructure required to support strategic housing developments in Keynsham North and Whitchurch.
2	East of Bath Link	To carry out a strategic study in collaboration with Highways England.
3	A37 to A362 Improvements	Will enable the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone to be delivered without further offsite improvements.
4	Hicks Gate Roundabout	Provision of a link from the A4174 to the A4 removing traffic from the roundabout.
5	Freezing Hill Lane Junction	We will undertake a feasibility study to assess options for access improvements from the A420 to Lansdown Park and Ride and Bath.
6	Employment Support Innovation Pilot	Funding to support residents to progress into work.

LEP-Funded Projects

	Title	Description
1	Superfast Broadband	Supports delivery of superfast broadband. Possible future bid available to enhance provision.
2	Innovation Quay	Enabling works to deliver a new central business and commercial district.
3	Bath Innovation	Business incubation facility offering high quality leases on flexible terms for high-growth businesses.
4	Bath Quays Bridge	Infrastructure to link Bath Quays North and South, providing a vehicle-free route direct into the city.
5	Bath Flood Mitigation	Vital flood defence infrastructure to protect properties along the river. Also creates a new public park.
6	Bath Western Riverside	Decommission of Gas Station to enable future phases of Bath Western Riverside development.
7	Destructor Bridge	Provision of a new two-way bridge, replacing existing Destructor Bridge to make way for new development.
8	Saw Close	New public place linked to Casino development and Theatre Royal in Bath.
9	Bath City Centre Transport Package	To support development of key employment sites in the city centre.
10	Sustainable Transport Fund	Provision of mixed use and cycling schemes in Weston Village, Keynsham, and Midsomer Norton.
11	Metro West Phase 1	Will provide improved linkages from Severn Beach to Bath

Expected Outcomes



Bath and North East Somerset – *The place to live, work and visit*

Future Opportunities

We anticipate that more funding will become available over the coming months as WECA matures.

B&NES will continue to bid for opportunities where they allow us to progress economic growth in the region.