

Mr Chris Olsen  
Head of STB Policy & Legislation,  
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2/19, Great Minster House  
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Paula Hewitt: Director Somerset County Council  
Nigel Riglar: Director Gloucestershire County Council

**On behalf of South West Local Authorities.**

19 June 2018

Dear Chris

### **Sub-National Transport Bodies for the South West**

Local Authorities across the South West Region are embracing the need to put in place sub-national transport bodies (STBs) to provide the ability to speak with one voice about the challenges and investment needs of our area. We believe such bodies will provide a unique opportunity for unprecedented access to Government and a key role in advising on use of the new national roads fund and other infrastructure investment processes.

The Authorities are now well progressed in setting up two STBs, Western Gateway and South West Peninsula, to cover the South West Region; and are on-track to establish shadow bodies as informal partnerships by September 2018 whilst longer-term discussions about statutory body status take place.

We believe this will swiftly put in place a clear mechanism for Government to engage formally with us on strategic transport investment matters.

Our rationale for following this approach, including our broad assessment of the benefits and opportunities that two sub-national bodies will offer is attached to this letter.

Individual letters will be coming to you shortly from each of the two shadow bodies, setting out the growth challenges and the governance being put in place to enable sub-national transport working arrangements.

We look forward to discussing these matters with you in more detail in due course.

Yours Sincerely

**Paula Hewitt:** Lead Director Economic and Community Infrastructure, Somerset County Council

On behalf of: **SW Peninsula STB:** Somerset County Council, Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council, Devon County Council and Dorset County Council.

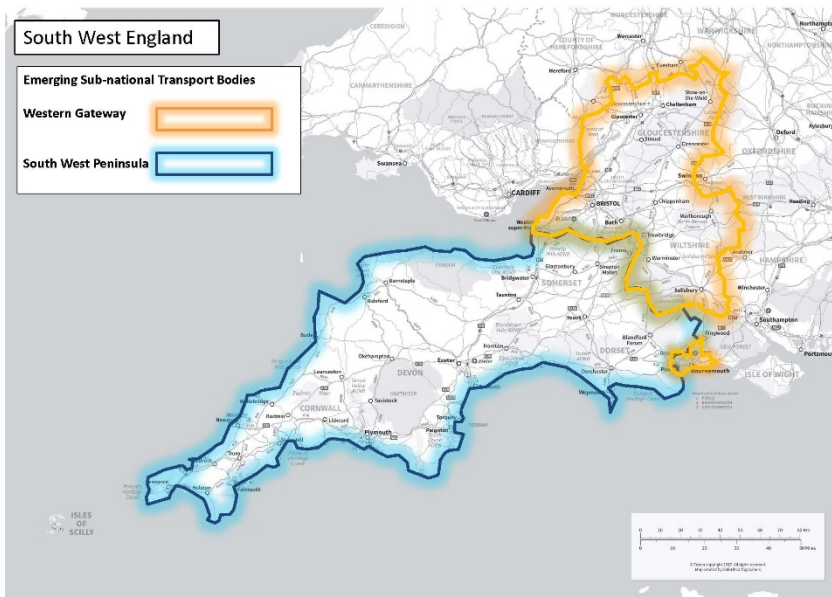
**Nigel Riglar:** Commissioning Director Communities and Infrastructure, Gloucestershire County Council

On behalf of: **Western Gateway STB:** Gloucestershire County Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Borough of Poole Council, Bournemouth Borough Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Wiltshire Council and West of England Combined Authority

## Rationale for South West Sub National Transport Bodies.

Government is clear that future strategic transport investment priorities will be established in discussion with sub-national transport bodies; groupings of local authorities and relevant partners covering a broad geography who will be able to speak with one voice about the challenges and strategic investment needs of their area.

The English Regions are the highest tier of sub-national division in England, but Government is open to sub-national transport bodies forming across more functional economic geographies rather than being constrained by historic administrative boundaries.



There is firm consensus across the South West Region that given its huge geographic scope and diversity the formulation of two sub-national bodies is the most effective way of delivering infrastructure at a pace that meets expectations for improved productivity, housing and economic growth.

In recent years two distinct sub-national groupings have emerged in relation to particular economic

challenges and functional geographies, and already have a clear understanding of the strategic investment needs in their area:

- The Western Gateway has the well-established West of England (WOE) city region at its core and is already jointly planned on a statutory basis. Shadow Authorities for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and Dorset have recently been established with the exciting prospect of new and strategic authorities being formed from April 2019. Both STBs shall benefit from this further devolution being in a stronger position to deliver North-South strategic links within and between STB areas and southwards into Europe via Bournemouth Airport and the Port of Poole.
- The South West Peninsula has well-established joint planning arrangements for strategic rail investment in the form of the Peninsula Rail Task Force.
- Corridor alliances such as those formed around the A303 corridor and the Bristol South West Economic Link are a strong feature of joint working and will remain a key mechanism for joint working between the sub-national bodies.
- The collaborative development and management of STBs will continue to be monitored and managed by Senior Officers attending the South West ADEPT Board.

We believe that the benefits of developing two sub-national bodies are broadly as follows:

- Well-established governance arrangements which are already being built-on for this purpose.
- Existing collaborative working which has already enabled effective dialogue with Government on important strategic transport investment matters in the two areas.
- Groupings of authorities who already work efficiently and effectively together and who can make swift and timely recommendations on investment priorities.
- Existing corridor alliances which deal with strategic connectivity between the two areas.
- Groupings of authorities who understand the distinct economic challenges in their area and who can clearly set out priority investment needs and the nature & sequencing of investment needed to overcome those challenges.
- Focused and effective dialogue with Government.

The distinct economic challenges within the sub-national areas can be broadly described as follows:

- Western Gateway is on the axis of a number of routes into the Bristol city region area and the Bournemouth/Poole city region area. Investment needs are expected to focus on metropolitan transit solutions and strengthening core routes to manage growth of the two city-regions.
- The Peninsula challenge is to exploit opportunities to enable peripheral areas to become more productive and reduce journey times on key strategic routes connecting with other economic hubs. There is a dispersed set of place based growth challenges including city growth, rural communities, and maximising the economic potential of the Region's natural assets.

Risks of seeking to form one body:

- Pace of progress would be likely to slow significantly to form the necessary governance arrangements.
- Lack of natural consensus on priorities and sequencing of investment.
- Risk of extended dialogue seeking to prioritise between investment needs which are not inter-related and cannot be logically sequenced (e.g. seeking to prioritise a rapid transit route into a city region against a major road improvement in a rural County such as Cornwall).
- A greater sense of 'competing for investment' within a larger pool of authorities with greatly different priorities rather than jointly working on a long-term programme.
- Risk of spreading the available investment too thinly to gain agreement to a programme and a risk of debating more localised priorities rather than the core strategic investment needs.