

**South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Regional Transport
Sub-Committee**

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

2 September 2024

Chairperson: **Councillor D.Price**

Councillors: E.Thomas, A.Stevens, R.Sinnott and
W.F.Griffiths

**Officers In
Attendance** M.Wade, S.Davies, D.Thomas, D.John,
D.Griffiths, S.Aldred-Jones, K.Tillman, G.Jones,
R.Lewis and C.Plouman

External Advisors: L.White

1. **Welcome and Chairs Announcements**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests received.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Regional Transport Plan (RTP) Policy (Draft) and Consultation Update**

The Committee were provided with an update report on the progress of the Regional Transport Plan (RTP). The report also sought endorsement of the RTP Policy Framework and revised programme of work to develop and deliver the RTP.

Reference was made to the Wales Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd, 2021. It was explained that Officers had been working on

interpreting the Strategy and identifying how it related to the Southwest Wales Region; the RTP Policy Framework set out the context of how Llwybr Newydd would be implemented at a regional level.

A discussion took place in regard to the timescales of delivering the RTP. Officers had previously raised concerns in regard to the timescales due to a number of influences that impacted progress; these were listed within the circulated report. It was noted that Officers were seeking endorsement to amend the timeline, specifically, moving final submission from April 2025 to June 2025.

Members received the following updates in regard to progression of the RTP:

It was highlighted that a lot of work had been completed in terms of collecting, interpreting and understanding data; to aid the development of the RTP, a 'data book' had been produced. It was explained that the 'data book' included a quantitative analysis of various data sources including Transport for Wales (TFW) and Census travel data; as well as an assessment of accessibility by active travel, bus, rail and car to several key destinations across the region; this mapping exercise provided an overview of some of the key issues within the region. Officers mentioned that the 'data book' could be circulated to Members if they wanted to view the information in more detail.

Officers confirmed that the next step in the process was to start looking at specific schemes, specifically which schemes could be implemented in the region over the next five-year period; this time period was the primary focus of the RTP funding block that will be provided in the next few years. It was mentioned that the individual Local Authorities across the region were assisting in this step by bringing forward proposals for various schemes. Members were informed that an assessment matrix was also being developed in order to understand how to assess and prioritise the schemes.

Continuing on from the above, Officers provided an overview of how the assessment matrix would work. Firstly, it was noted that a list of schemes would be collected from various sources such as Local Authorities and TFW; the list will be subject to a review through an Officer Workshop, in which Officers will start to remove schemes that were unlikely to be delivered within the five-year period of the RTP and schemes that could not realistically be achieved. Once this had been completed, it was explained that the remaining schemes would

be subject to further detailed analysis; this will consist of a qualitative analysis and a numerical analysis. It was added that the Policy Framework will guide some of the choices regarding potential schemes.

The discussion moved on to consultation and engagement. The Committee was informed that there was a detailed engagement plan in place; the public consultation on the 'Case for Change' had ended last week, and Officers were about to start engaging with some of the technical stakeholders in the coming weeks. Following the conclusion of the public consultation, Officers had begun work on examining the responses; just over 800 responses had been received, which were fairly evenly spread across the region, although there were a few more responses received from Neath Port Talbot and Swansea areas. It was mentioned that Officers were not concerned about this and believed that the responses were a representative sample of the region. Reference was made to the key themes that were being picked up from the consultation responses; firstly, the viewpoint that there was not enough bus and rail services and the accessibility to those services, both in terms of hours of operation and quantity of services. Another theme noted was concerns regarding active travel being at the top of Welsh Government's agenda, as some people questioned the relevance of cycling and walking in certain areas, particularly rural. The other point of concern raised in the consultation was the capability and maintenance of the road network; Officers stated that the guidance did not permit bids for maintenance schemes, however there would need to be a strong commentary regarding maintenance within the policy element of the RTP.

Officers referred to the detailed stakeholder map that had been produced to provide guidance on some which technical stakeholders they would need to engage with; this process had started last week with bodies such as Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. It was confirmed that further sessions would be held this week, with the bus and rail operators in particular.

The Committee was informed that the draft RTP would be subject to a formal public consultation at some stage in the process; this would most likely be early 2025.

A discussion took place in regard to the Wellbeing Assessment. Officers were due to receive a draft of the scoping report; following receipt of this they would engage with specialist Officers within the

four Local Authorities around some of the topics contained in the scoping report. It was added that the Wellbeing Assessment would be sent out for formal consultation with the statutory consultees.

To conclude the update, Officers stated that they would shortly be arranging a workshop to take place in October 2024 with the membership of the Regional Transport Sub-Committee; the main focus of this workshop would be to discuss progress with schemes and programmes.

The Committee were pleased with the number of responses received as part of the 'Case for Change' public consultation exercise, and asked if Officers could share further detail in terms of how many people responded from each Local Authority area. Officers confirmed that they would provide further detail in regard to the consultation responses outside of the meeting; however, they were split as follows:

- Swansea area: 290 responses
- Neath Port Talbot area: 233 responses
- Pembrokeshire area: 140 responses
- Carmarthenshire area: 132 responses
- Outside of Southwest Wales region: 29 responses

It was noted that the majority of responses were from individual members of the public; responses from organisations will form part of the wider engagement with stakeholders. Officers highlighted that they were also going to be calculating how many people responded per population in order to provide further context.

Members suggested that it would also be useful to know if the issues raised from those in an urban area, were differed from those in the rural area.

The Committee acknowledged the amount of work that had already gone into developing the RTP, and asked whether discussions had taken place in regard to what will happen in the longer term. It was noted that although the RTP was a five-year plan, the Policy Framework set out a clear direction in regard to lower carbon and sustainable approaches for transport and the economy; there were efforts being made to embed other work with the RTP, for example land use planning, to ensure that the region had a robust plan in place beyond the five-year period.

In addition to the above, Members were informed that Officers were currently trying to understand if some of the delivery plan money could be utilised for schemes that had a longer development period; Officers were still awaiting clarity from colleagues at Welsh Government and TFW on this.

A further discussion took place regarding maintenance, to which Officers stated was a significant challenge. As previously mentioned, bids for maintenance schemes were not permitted; however, Officers were thinking about how they could ensure that maintenance was included in future schemes.

Reference was made to freight and logistics, particularly in relation to Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs); Officers were trying to determine if, in policy terms, HGVs could be encouraged to use more suitable routes. In addition, it was noted that there were issues with facilities for lorry drivers; Officers wanted to explore road-side facilities and the capacity and capabilities of those. Members were also informed that there were challenges pertaining to lorries in town and city centres that needed to be addressed.

Members asked for an update in regard to the costs associated with the development of the RTP. It was highlighted that the outline estimate was yet to be confirmed; however, Officers could provide Committee Members with a brief overview of the current funding position. It was confirmed that Officers were receiving some support from TFW and the Southwest Wales Corporate Joint Committee had allocated £51,500 to the Regional Transport Sub-Committee; this was on top of the funding received from Welsh Government.

Further to the above, it was explained that there were some parallel schemes that were key contributors to the development of the RTP; the bus franchise and the bus network design being one of them. It was noted that the Local Authorities and TFW were working on this scheme at present; there will be a follow up engagement exercise and briefing with Members around that. Officers also referred to the metro project which was ongoing; this project will also include a number of schemes that will contribute towards the delivery plan.

It was acknowledged that some of the schemes will include other County Boroughs and regions across Wales; therefore, Members asked if there was an arrangement in which costs were shared across Local Authorities if they were collaborative in development.

Officers confirmed that this detail would form part of the bidding process; there were a number of examples that already existed in terms of the cross-authority working measures.

RESOLVED:

1. That the verbal progress reports from officers on the RTP development workstreams be noted.
2. That the Regional Transport Plan policy framework be endorsed.
3. That the revised RTP development work programme be endorsed.

5. **Forward Work Programme**

It was explained that the scheduled meeting of the Regional Transport Sub-Committee in October would be utilised as a workshop for Committee Members; and a special meeting would be arranged for 15 November 2024.

The Regional Transport Sub-Committee Forward Work Programme was noted.

6. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

CHAIRPERSON