

SOUTH WEST WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE

23rd January 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

Report Title: Western Gateway Board Representation

Purpose of Report	To decide an appropriate approach to take regarding the offer tabled for an additional seat to be added for the South West Corporate Joint Committee on the Western Gateway Board.
Recommendation(s)	It is recommended that Members consider the options provided and proceed with Option 1: Agree the additional seat as a Corporate Joint Committee seat on the board in addition to Swansea's seat.
Report Author	Will Bramble
Finance Officer	Chris Moore
Legal Officer	Craig Griffiths

Introduction / Background: Background and Context

The Western Gateway is a cross-regional partnership of local government, business and academia leaders across South Wales and Western England. The Western Gateway aims to work towards driving economy forward, creating opportunities for sustainable growth using skills and industry to power a greener, fairer future for our area and the UK.

In 2019, three of the four South West Wales authorities, Neath Port Talbot Council, Carmarthenshire County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council, concluded that they would not be included in the Western Gateway.

However, following the successful bid for the Celtic Freeport (which would bookend the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee region between Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire), the three local authorities have discussed whether there is now a case for joining and if this would help deliver synergy and benefit across several mutual areas and aims. The Celtic Freeport is being set-up to facilitate industrial scale decarbonisation, renewable energy associated innovation and skills development, and is intended to bring with it significant potential for economic growth across the region. The Freeport's development across the South West of Wales CJC area, alongside the last two years of the CJC's development regarding the partnership of the four county councils particularly where energy, planning, economic growth and transport networks are concern align strongly with the strategic aims of the Western Gateway. The H2 network from Milford Haven through Carmarthenshire and onto Port Talbot, and the necessity to deliver a genuine high speed/short journey rail network are two examples that align well.

Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire County Councils wrote to the Western Gateway individually to express their interest in joining the partnership, seeking to gain a seat each so that they may represent themselves on the board.

Following the local authorities' individual approaches to potentially join the partnership, the Western Gateway Board considered that there would be a strong economic case for the whole of the Swansea Bay City Deal area to formally become part of the partnership, in particular because of the opportunities in Floating Off-Shore Wind and Hydrogen and the hugely important role the ports already play in maximising those opportunities.

During initial discussions, it was the feeling of the Western Gateway Board that it is important to be consistent with the way the sub-regions are represented across the Western Gateway in relation to governance. The discussion surrounding the South West Corporate Joint Committee's joining of the Western Gateway Board has been based on replicating the Cardiff Capital Region arrangements, where Cardiff City Council has one space and then there is a space on rotation for the remaining local authorities in the Capital Region. The Western Gateway Board felt that this was the most appropriate membership model for the Swansea Bay City Deal area and have agreed to give Swansea Bay City Deal one additional membership at the Board in addition of the seat already held by City and County of Swansea Council. It would be for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee/Swansea Bay City Deal participants under their own governance to determine who represents the area at the Board initially.

Given the statutory duties now on corporate joint committees it is felt that the determination in this regard should be via the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee and not the Swansea Bay City Deal.

Unfortunately, the Western Gateway Board have been clear that they cannot accept individual authority requests to join, and will turn down individual requests to join from each of the local authorities within the South West Corporate Joint Committee. It should be noted that previous dialogue with Western Gateway suggested Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire would have an interest in joining but only on the basis of full membership and a seat on the Board. This was the basis of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's approach as well.

Therefore, 3 potential options which could be taken by the South West Wales CJC exist:

Potential Options:

1. Agree the additional seat as a Corporate Joint Committee seat on the board in addition to Swansea's seat.

Swansea will retain its existing seat on the board. A new/additional seat for the South West Wales CJC will be added. The initial additional representative for the region will need to be communicated to Western Gateway, with one of the three authorities leading on an annual rotation.

Advantages of this option:

It would be beneficial for Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot Council's to have a voice as a conduit into the Western Gateway Board providing an input via a regional seat in the upcoming Western Gateway review of governance.

Disadvantages of this Option:

The main disadvantage to this option is that it doesn't meet the desired outcome that Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire set out for, which was to secure individual representation within the Western Gateway for each of the Local Authorities.

Swansea having a separate seat on the Western Gateway Board, would also create a 2-tier approach of having double representation for the South West Corporate Joint Committee region with one seat on the board belonging to Swansea, and the other to the initial representative of the South West Corporate Joint Committee that will take the seat. This has the potential to create complications of clarity on the Board, or uncertainty about who is the actual representative for the south west area on the Board. .

2. Maintain the status quo of not joining the gateway.

Advantages of this option:

The advantage of taking this option, would be that Swansea could continue with its historic existing membership without worrying about creating a two-tier representation, or double representation approach on the Board.

This would avoid any potential issues of clarity on the Board.

Disadvantages of this option:

The disadvantage of taking this option, is that it would lead to the weakening of the rest of the region's voice and influence on a national stage and would reduce our access to, and influence on UK central government.

The rest of the region would also be missing out on the economic opportunities and assistance that comes with being a member of the Board.

3. Swansea relinquish their seat on the board, and allow the South West Wales CJC to take the seat.

It should be noted that the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee cannot insist on this requirement as the decision as to whether to vacate their existing seat would vest in Swansea alone as it would be a voluntary surrender by Swansea. Swansea do not wish to give up their current seat on the Western Gateway board, and as such this option is not an option we can proceed with.

Financial Impacts:

If the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee take up a seat on the Board, there will be a membership fee required for the additional seat on the Western Gateway Board of

£10,000 per annum as match funding for the financial support provided by the Department for Levelling Up to demonstrate local buy in to the Pan Regional Partnership.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage**
- **Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language**
- **Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.**
- **Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.**

In recognition of the above duties, the Corporate Joint Committee has adopted an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Tool which allows for a 2-stage approach to be undertaken to measure any potential impact of its decisions. It is not considered that an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is required for this report as it does not seek a substantive policy decision from Members.

The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee approved its Corporate Plan 2023-2028 in March 2023. The Corporate Plan includes the Equality Objective which is set out below for ease of reference:

“To deliver a more equal South West Wales by 2035 by contributing towards:

- (a) The achievement of the [Welsh Government’s long-term equality aim](#) of eliminating inequality caused by poverty;*
- (b) The achievement of the [Equality statement set out in Llwybr Newydd](#) which is to make our transport services and infrastructure accessible and inclusive by aiming to remove the physical, attitudinal, environmental, systemic, linguistic and economic barriers that prevent people from using sustainable transport, and*
- (c) [The achievement of the Welsh Government’s long-term equality aims](#) of cohesive communities that are resilient, fair and equal and where everyone is able to participate in political, public and everyday life. There will be no room for racism and / or discrimination of any kind.”*

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Alignment with CJC Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and the identified CJC Well-being objectives:

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

The South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee approved its Corporate Plan 2023-2028 in March 2023. The Corporate Plan contains the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee's well-being objectives and frames the corporate direction of travel. To this end, it is considered that the recommendation(s) contained within this report align(s) to the corporate policy framework of the CJC as set out within its Corporate Plan, most notably in terms of Well-being Objective(s) as outlined below for ease of reference:

Well-being Objective 1

"To collaboratively deliver the Regional Economic Delivery Plan and Regional Energy Strategy thereby improving the decarbonised economic well-being of South West Wales for our future generations."

Well-Being Objective 2

"To produce a Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales that is founded on collaboration and enables the delivery of a transport system which is good for our current and future generations of people and communities, good for our environment and good for our economy and places (rural and urban)."

Well-Being Objective 3

"To produce a sound, deliverable, co-ordinated and locally distinctive Strategic Development Plan for South West Wales which is founded on stakeholder engagement and collaboration, and which clearly sets out the scale and location of future growth for our future generations."

Workforce Impacts:

There are minimal workforce impacts for the Corporate Joint Committee to be concerned with in relation to this report.

Legal Impacts:

There are no legal impacts for the CJC to be concerned with in relation to this report.

Risk Management Impacts:

Failure to become a part of/being outside of the Western Gateway could potentially lead to the region having a weakened voice and decreased influence on the national stage and with UK Government.

Consultation:

No formal consultation required for the purpose of this report.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure the opportunity for the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee to gain representation on the Western Gateway Board is not missed, and that an agreed approach is taken to ensure clarity of representation for the South West Wales area on the Western Gateway area.

Recommendation:

That the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee agree the additional seat as a Corporate Joint Committee seat on the board in addition to Swansea's seat.

Representation of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee on the Western Gateway Board will be provided by one of the Leaders of the three local authorities on an annual rotation basis as stated below, starting with the Carmarthenshire County Council.

- Leader, Carmarthenshire County Council
- Leader, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Leader, Pembrokeshire County Council

Implementation of Decision:

This decision is proposed for implementation following the conclusion of the three-day call day call in period.

Appendices:

None

List of Background Papers:

Western Gateway Board Letter