

**Agenda Item 13**

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**23 April 2008**

**Transport Challenge Conference – Worcester Rugby Club, 10 March 2008**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

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**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report:

- a) Provides Members with details from the ‘Transport Challenge’ conference, held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at Worcester Rugby Club; and
- b) Informs Members of the next steps in the ‘Transport Challenge’ process.

**2.0 Recommendation**

2.1 Members are requested to **note** the report.

**3.0 Background**

3.1 This was the first ever West Midlands Transport Challenge conference. The aim of the conference was to update stakeholders on the progress the Assembly, Regional Transport Partnership and Advantage West Midlands (AWM) have made so far. The conference explored how we should work together to sequence the Region’s transport priorities and maximise the Region’s potential.

3.2 The conference and the Assembly received very positive media coverage in the Birmingham Post, on the BBC’s Midlands Today (a video is available on their website) and BBC News website, see

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west\\_midlands/7288539.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/west_midlands/7288539.stm) and

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/midlandstoday/content/articles/2008/03/10/transport\\_priorities\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/midlandstoday/content/articles/2008/03/10/transport_priorities_feature.shtml)

**4.0 Conference Details**

4.1 More than 80 delegates heard from Liam Byrne M.P., Minister for the West Midlands. He has made clear his view about the strategic importance of transport to the West Midlands ever since he was appointed to the role.

4.2 At the conference the Regional Minister set out how a transformed transport system can ease the burdens in people’s lives while responding to the opportunities and

challenges facing the Region, such as delivering sustainable homes and growth, improving the Region's skill base and closing the wealth gap.

4.3 Cllr Roger Phillips, Chairman, West Midlands Regional Transport Partnership reminded delegates that "Last year Liam Byrne set the region a challenge to identify our regional transport priorities. Working with a broad range of partners we responded to his challenge. The conference - the first of several over the coming year - is intended to help regional partners work together to make sure that we get our regional transport priorities right and that they support long term sustainable growth across the region."

4.4 Cllr Roger Phillips also reminded delegates of nine regional transport priorities:

- Birmingham New Street Station;
- Birmingham International Airport - runway extension and surface access;
- M6/M5 capacity improvements and Motorway Box Active Traffic Management;
- Rail Freight Upgrades - Peterborough and Southampton to Nuneaton;
- Regional Rail Capacity, both for passengers services and strategic freight connections;
- Black Country 'strategic transport spine' (rapid transit);
- North Staffordshire Integrated Transport;
- New Growth Points/ Settlements of Significant Development
- Smart Choices

4.5 Both the Assembly and AWM emphasised the importance of the West Midlands' Spatial and Economic Strategies in setting out the framework for identifying the transport priorities. Delegates also received presentations from Yorkshire Forward on the experiences from the Northern Way and the Department for Transport regarding 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System' and innovative funding.

4.6 The delegates were asked to consider the following questions:

- Why we need these priorities – what is the compelling case that demonstrates how the Region will succeed with them or fail without them?
- When do we need them and in what order? Do we need houses before transport or vice versa, do we need jobs before houses? Can we wait or do we need some things now?
- What can we do to make this all happen – how can we work together and speak with one voice to make sure we win support from the Government, funding institutions and our communities?
- What can individual organisations bring to the partnership, resource, expertise, funding?

4.6 The discussion groups feedback is incorporated within the Conference Report which is available at [www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=444](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=444)

## **5.0 Next Steps**

5.1 The major outcome from the conference is agreement that partners need to produce a Regional Transport Action Plan. The development of the Action Plan will be led by the same group tasked by the Regional Minister to develop the 'challenge' i.e. the Assembly's and AWM Chief Executives and Cllr Roger Phillips.

- 5.2 At the end of March 2008 the Regional Minister wrote to the Assembly's and AWM's Chief Executives and Cllr Roger Phillips to say that he thought the conference had been a real success. He also expressed his enthusiasm to meet with AWM, WMRA, GOWM and representatives from the separate priorities at a summit meeting to receive an update on both the development of the Regional Transport Action Plan and progress with the individual priorities at the end of June 2008.
- 5.3 It is expected that summit will be attended by representatives from each of the transport authorities. The summit format will be a 'round table' meeting to discuss the following issues:
- Update on the development of the Regional Transport Action Plan;
  - The strategic context for the priorities;
  - Mapping out the overall delivery timeline;
  - Sharing of common experience to date e.g. barriers that delay delivery and successful approaches that support delivery;
  - Review the schedule of key milestones/timelines for each priority to provide an likely overview of sequencing of projects; and
  - Understanding the next steps running through the second Transport Challenge conference.

Olwen Dutton  
Chief Executive