

Bristol 2050 – May/June Update

We officially launched our Bristol 2050 project at the Initiative Evening in September 2009. Since then we have been developing a programme of how to deliver this ambitious project – a business vision for the Bristol City Region in 40 years time, culminating in the Bristol 2050 Plan to be launched in Spring 2011.

100 Subscribers

We are just starting the search for 100 Subscribers to the Bristol 2050 Plan. These businesses and individuals will have the opportunity to be seen as the forward thinkers of our time and will appear in print at the front of the book but also will receive great publicity via the website, the media and social media. It is such a unique project that in order to keep the kudos of being involved we are limiting the number of Subscribers to 100 - each contributing a minimum of £1,000. So far we have signed up – Beachcroft, UWE, Bristol Zoo, Bristol Water, Arup and a past president of the Chamber of Commerce, Alec Ewens. And we are making good progress with several more companies who have informally agreed, but yet to sign the form!

Young Peoples Workshop

In March 2010 we brought together fifty 13-14 year olds from across a diverse range of Bristol schools. The pupils came up with the following list of characteristics that made Bristol unique for them:

- The Downs
- Brunel
- Banksy
- Suspension Bridge
- TV & Media
- Concorde & aviation
- Architecture
- SS Great Britain
- Bristolian accent
- Football teams – City & Rovers

Their ideas for the future included a range of more immediate improvements and some future ideas – such as a Travelator up Park Street, a Hover Port, a Balloon House, wind turbines and tidal power, trams, an arts centre for young people, and more green space in the city. The full report is available on our website.

Principles Underlying the “Vision”

We have had some key debates about our assumptions and principles that will form the basis of the vision and plan. Our vision for the city region is based on an assumption that the area will grow and that this is desirable therefore we need to plan for that growth. In addition, there is an absolute recognition that growth needs to be sustainable and has to help ensure we meet some of the challenging targets set at a national/international level – with particular reference to the 80% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2050 target. Work is being carried out on this target by Martin Boddy at UWE, to help inform our spatial vision and other key aspects of the plan.

The Spatial Vision

This is developing fast – a full presentation of key issues was provided by David Lock at the last Initiative Evening in April (slides available on the Initiative pages of our website). David outlined the 5 main “big ideas” that had come out of our 2-day workshop, illustrating how they fit into the bigger picture and how they can be used to form the basis of the vision. A sixth theme was added after further discussion at our Steering Group.

Overleaf is a brief explanation of what each of these themes includes, from the discussion so far. At this point, these are just themes for further exploration and development, no decisions have been made about precisely what will be included in the “Plan”. In addition, this discussion specifically relates to the spatial aspects of the “Plan” and doesn’t attempt to fully incorporate elements relating to other work currently underway about the nature of work in the future, the skills agenda, reducing inequalities etc.

1. Transport & Connectivity

With the anticipated growth in the city region likely to take the population of the area to at least 1.5 million people by 2050 (a minimum of 200,000 new jobs and 200,000 new houses), there are a whole range of transport and connectivity issues that need to be addressed to cope with this growth and overcome existing challenges:

- Must have an excellent, state of the art tram system, providing high capacity, efficient, fast and effective linkages throughout the urban area
- Better use of the existing rail network, into and within the city region, extend the currently proposed "Bristol Metro" map, bringing new and existing opportunities to reality
- High Speed 3 – new route to Bristol/Cardiff, into the centre of the city as an embedded route, opening up Bristol as a European Gateway
- Eastern transport corridor – around the eastern edge of the city, improving connectivity and access to South Bristol from the M4. Could be a public transport corridor, could be a toll road giving priority access to business and local traffic, for people who live and work in the area

2. City Regional Park

A defining characteristic of the area of Bristol is its hinterland of green and water. This needs to be planned and managed as part of the city region not separate to the city. Why not become Britain's first city regional park?

3. Tidal shore and waterways

With the current uncertainty about a Barrage, we need to exploit the ideas and concept of energy from tidal flow as a positive benefit to the city region. We should also consider extending the benefits. What else could be achieved? Exploring the option of tidal lagoons along the North Shore of the Severn Estuary, alongside Weston, Clevedon and Portishead, to create an enhanced natural environment and coastline. There is also the possibility of energy being generated from submerged turbines, lakes, new shoreline etc. Consider a new "lagoon" along the River Avon, formed by building a Barrage at Avonmouth, providing a low level crossing, energy generation and a new leisure opportunity along the Gorge.

4. Redressing the Imbalance between North & South Bristol

Strategic employment centres are in the North of the city around the motorway network. This is a natural growth area for new housing and development in the future. Providing more housing close to current employment helps to redress some of the imbalance between housing and jobs. The other side to this imbalance is about providing new jobs in, or near South Bristol and improving access for residents. To improve transport and housing in areas of greatest need, is a key aspiration.

5. Governance

The city region needs a different kind of leadership – what about an elected mayor for the city region with the right responsibilities to overcome tribal barriers currently in place? We will draw on examples of successful cities elsewhere in the world and look at the systems they have in place for governance. Whatever system is in place it needs to have the following functions:

- Economic management and development – education and training to get people into work and ensure investment in the right places
- Delivery of housing and economic development with the ability to make things happen
- Visionary leadership – social and cultural development, to help make the place a good place to live

6. The "Heart" of the city

What is it about Bristol that is special? With a growing population, a desire to bring in new investment and improvements to the city region, there also needs to be a focus on the heart of the city – the centre of the city region. Issues to address here include:

- Making the most of the historic core
- Removing traffic from the centre
- Improving key areas – Lewins Mead, St Phillips, Old Market etc
- What is our cultural offer and what will it look like in 2050?
- What would we expect from a city centre in 2050?

This is an iterative process, with new ideas being captured all the time. Those outlined above are the key themes and ideas at this moment in time, but are already the subject of change and further development.