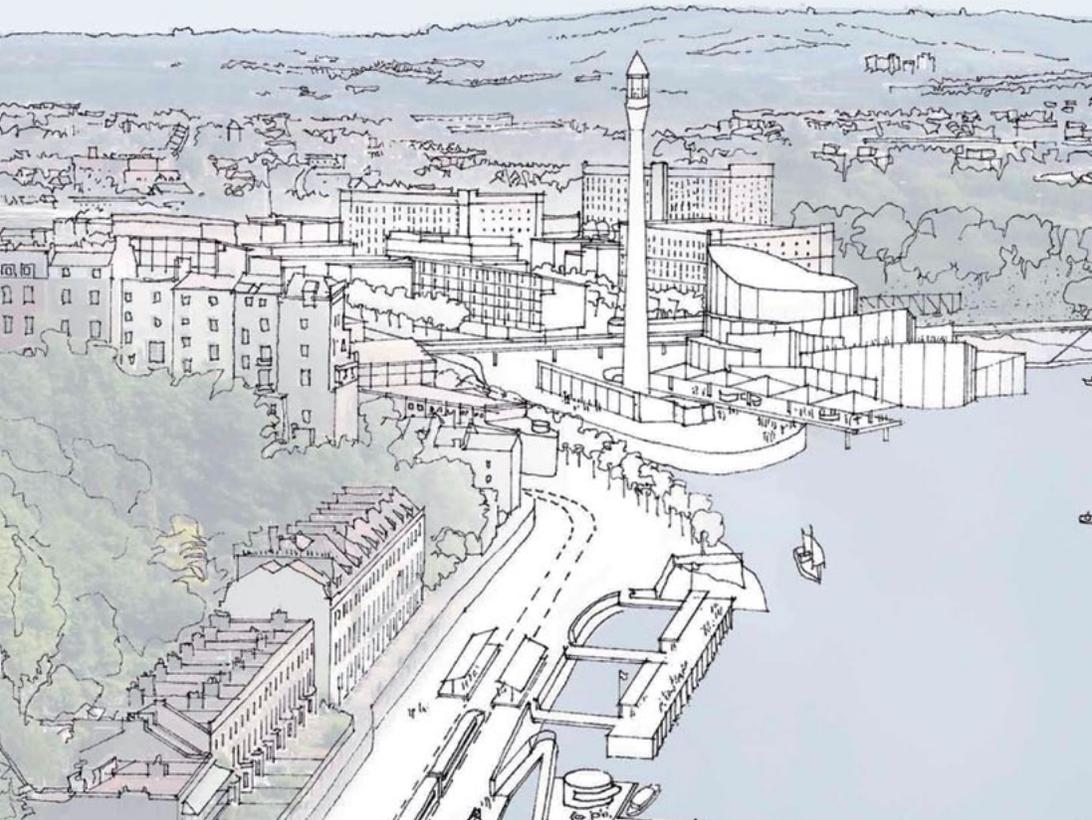


# Bristol 2050

A Business Vision for  
the Bristol City Region



# Introduction

Nearly 25 years ago in Bristol, a group of 12 visionary business leaders got together to see what they could do to address the social and economic ills of the city. Under the direction of John Savage, they instigated projects to tackle homelessness, improve educational performance and support economic prosperity.

Now in 2011, that group has grown to over 200 business leaders, all with an interest in improving the city region, increasing economic prosperity, supporting growth and eradicating poverty. This group, 'The Bristol Initiative', supported by Business West, has developed a vision and a plan for the Bristol city region to 2050. A visual and written interpretation of a business vision, it provides a clear statement about jobs, housing and infrastructure requirements to meet the needs of the area to enable it to develop and grow as the economic powerhouse of the South West. This plan illustrates what growth could look like, where it could go and how it could be achieved.

The development of this vision is exactly what 'The Initiative' was set up to do. It reflects the issues businesses have been raising with us and others for many years and is at the heart of what Business West is about – providing strong leadership, ensuring the business voice is heard and promoting the city region as the place to do business and a great place to live. It is about joining up plans and strategies and having a comprehensive view of the future, without getting too bogged down in red tape and bureaucracy, or embroiled in excessive consultation processes.

This vision is needed now more than ever to respond to changing government agendas and to fill the void in strategic planning left by the abolition of regional plans. The Bristol 2050 vision goes beyond existing and planned strategies and documents. It reflects and borrows the best of all those plans but takes them a step further into a longer timeframe, where the emphasis will be on sustainable growth and the continued development of the city region as a successful economic unit.

The vision is intended as an invitation to local and central government, as well as the business community, to work together to make this a more successful and economically vibrant city region that makes a significant and increasing contribution to the UK economy.

Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood.  
Make big plans, aim high in hope and work,  
remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die  
(Daniel Burnham, Chicago Plan 1909)

# The Vision

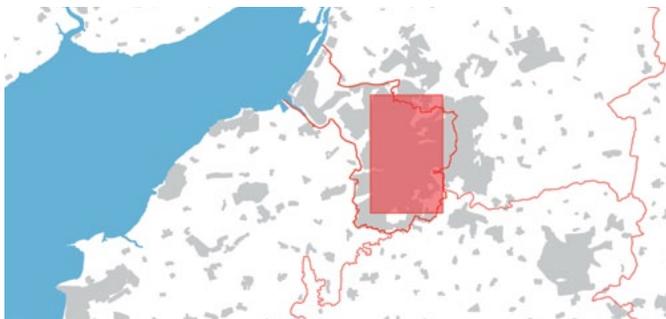
We believe a long term view is essential if Bristol is to realise its full potential as a leading economic and cultural powerhouse. We also believe that this area possesses more of the vital ingredients for a great and ambitious place than any other in the UK. The vision addresses the inevitability, indicated by consistent statistics over the previous 20 or so years, that the population will grow by inward migration and indigenous expansion regardless of attempts to ignore that reality. The challenge is daunting: extra living and working space will be required within existing urban areas, but the demand will also spill out into the countryside.

A simple extrapolation of trends demonstrates that over the 40-year period to 2050 the minimum space required to accommodate a population that will have increased by 500,000, requiring 300,000 new jobs and a further 200,000 new homes, will be 6,000 hectares. To put this into perspective, the space occupied by the present Bristol unitary authority is approximately 11,000 hectares.

The vision seeks to establish that thoughtful strategic planning in the broadest sense will yield greater positive outcomes. It also points to the danger that, without such a vision, the unavoidable growth will be haphazard, unproductive and quite possibly corrosive.

The vision, produced as a book in December 2011, suggests that taking time and resource to imagine and shape a vision for the longer-term future of any place is the best pathway to sustainable solutions for current challenges, imbalances and inequalities. The proposals and ideas are not absolutes; they are selected examples and the book is only a starting point. Continuing debate, collection of evidence and development of concepts into achievable realities will be needed over time to develop the vision further. The book most certainly is not a handbook for the solution of all ills.

The attraction for government, for 'UK plc', is a tangible and improving return on public investment, with a significant increase in the gross domestic product of the city region. Implementing the deal will require new permissions, perhaps primary legislation, and great encouragement. It will certainly demand imagination and courage and a tenacity that carries it through the crushing blight of short-termism.



Map of the West of England with red block representing the 6000 hectares needed for urban growth

# Leadership & Responsibility

The Bristol city region and economic area covers the four local authorities of Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Each has its own political structure and leadership, often with different party affiliations, who have come together to form partnerships across the area to deliver on strategic issues. It could be argued that the successes from these partnerships have been limited and hard fought, with local priorities and party politics sometimes getting in the way of more strategic progress.

## **Recommendations**

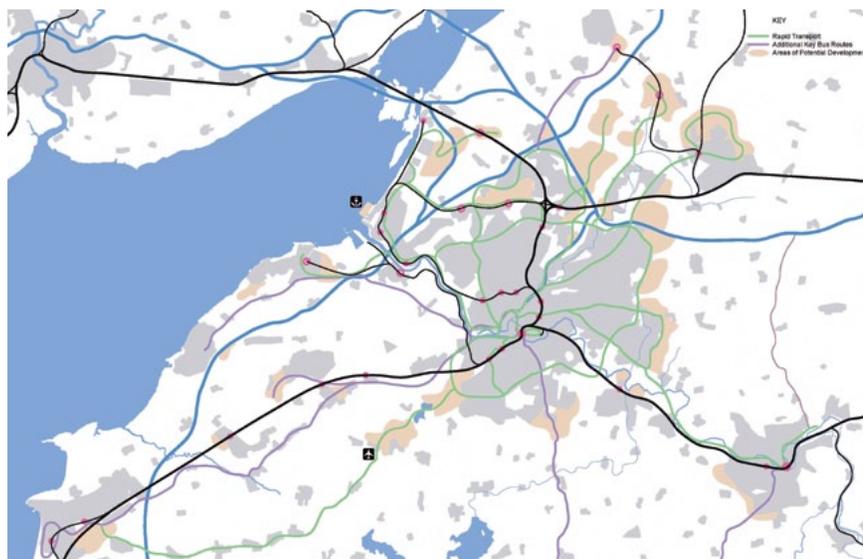
- Agree and adopt a unified vision for sustainable growth for the city region confirming the need to generate 300,000 new jobs and as a result develop a further 200,000 new homes across the city region by 2050
- Support the concept of an elected mayor for the Bristol city region, covering the four Unitary Authority areas, with the powers and responsibility to deliver on key strategic issues
- Provide the ability to maximise business rate retention and pooling across the city region, with greater ability to levy local taxes and greater control over the use of funds
- Support the setting up of Transport for Greater Bristol as a planning and coordinating body for transport with ownership and responsibility for services

It is clear to us as a business community that, for our area to succeed and progress, strong civic leadership is needed. That is why we are supporting the government's proposals for an elected city mayor for Bristol with executive powers to lead on strategic planning, transport and economic development. Indeed we would go one step further and recommend that government consider the establishment of a city regional mayor, covering all four council areas across the Bristol city region, with a directly elected cabinet, all with a degree of democratic accountability for the city region.

The need for a clear master plan for the city region should be a given, an obvious requirement, but it doesn't exist and it does not even appear to be in local government minds to produce such a plan. The success of the Bristol city region depends on being able to make the most of the opportunities on offer, responding to inward investment potential, addressing social inequality and creating the right conditions for growth. This requires an agreed plan and vision for the sustainable growth of the city region, identifying and confirming the need for homes and jobs, planning how and where they will be delivered and establishing the infrastructure needed to support that growth.

Alongside this master plan there needs to be an investment plan, a plan to bring in funding from government and private sector investors to deliver the infrastructure and connectivity demanded by a successful 21st century city region. We need to use existing powers, and lobby for new ones, pool resources across the city region, make the most of public sector land banks, draw down government funds and convince the private sector this is a place worth investing in. Business needs to have a say in how and where these funds are invested in order to generate the private sector jobs so badly needed by our economy.

### Basic Framework Plan



# Removing Barriers to Growth

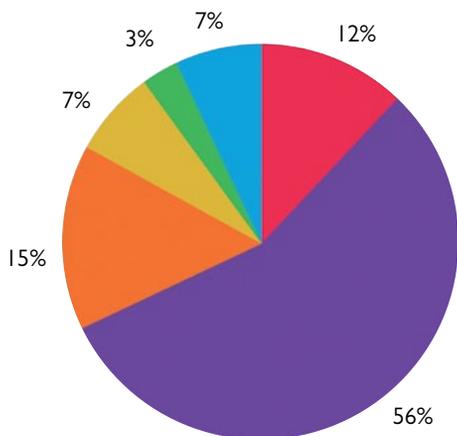
The cost of unemployment and worklessness to the Bristol city region is significant and is set to grow. Assuming, at a conservative estimate, the same proportion of claimants to population as at present, the number of claimants by 2050 will have risen to over 130,000 unless effective measures are taken now to address the issue.

## **Recommendations**

- Support the development of improved skills and education programmes to reduce the costs of worklessness
- Support the future development and international accessibility/connectivity of the sub region through extending High Speed Rail to Bristol, supporting Port and Airport expansion and strategic road access together with the roll out of superfast broadband

It is estimated that the cost of worklessness to the city region at present is £255m. By 2026 this could rise to £420m and by 2050 it could reach a staggering £1bn. This situation is clearly unsustainable and innovative plans and programmes need to be established now to reverse the trend and provide jobs, training and opportunities for people not in work, education or training. The business community has a critical role to play in this area but it also requires the support and commitment of central and local government to trial new schemes and listen to business requirements.

In any discussion with business in the city region someone will always mention transport and congestion as a major obstacle to growth. The volume of traffic on the roads in the West of England continues to grow at a rate above the national average. It has been estimated that at least £350m is lost to the economy each year as a result of congestion, a figure that is expected to rise to almost £600m by 2016. As well as the need for a more strategic body coordinating transport across the city region, there is a desperate requirement for investment in new infrastructure to support the growing needs of business and the economy.



Left: Graph showing West of England claimants by type, May 2008 (based on information from the West of England Partnership). Around 75 per cent of inactive people do not want a job. Of those who do, the majority are people on long-term sick leave or who are looking after a family/home.

- Job Seekers
- Incapacity Benefits
- Lone Parents
- Carers
- Others on income related benefit
- Disabled

# Initial Project Ideas

Throughout the visioning process we have been collecting good ideas; innovative and imaginative ideas about projects and actions that could happen now or can be developed for the future. Many of these are highlighted in the book, others are expressed through the 2050 website, but all are valid and worth consideration. The 2050 vision is really just a starting point for ideas and debate.

## **Recommendations**

- Support the development of an Avon Barrage to provide additional road access across the River Avon, energy generation and a new water park as a key entrance to the city
- Pilot and support new innovative programmes to help provide young people 'with attitude' who are work ready
- Pilot and support the concept of urban village schools, human scale education and Education Unlimited programme
- Support and promote the development of the West of England Estuary as a prime outdoor education and bird watching centre in Britain

## Avon Barrage & Gorge

The concept of an Avon Barrage has been promoted on many an occasion but without anyone really taking hold of the idea and bringing it to fruition or indeed developing the concept to its full potential. The 2050 vision brings the barrage idea together with other ideas about creating a new gateway to the city of Bristol, generating sustainable energy and providing additional road access across the River Avon. Developing an extensive water park along the Gorge will breathe life into and make the most of this impressive asset at the heart of the city region.

## Education

Why should it be that academic success in the city region is dictated by geographic region rather than individual talent? Whilst examination results may state that the education system serves many of the West of England's children well, the reality is that too few reach the minimum standards expected of a thriving city region. Substantial sums have already been spent in various attempts to engage, inspire and instruct those children who are currently slipping through the net, with mixed results. More radical steps are needed to develop and deliver a new vision for education and a greater commitment to investing today in the future of our young. One such concept worth pursuing is that of the urban village school model put forward by the visionary educationalist, James Wetz, which focuses on human scale education and brings back to urban areas the sense of community inherent in village schools.

## Skills

It is difficult to link school education directly to the employment market as we do not know precisely what future jobs will be like and what skills will therefore be required. However, what employers are always going to need are young people with the necessary 'soft skills' for the workplace and a willingness to learn, to be reliable and to be committed to doing their best. They want well-rounded, emotionally mature individuals; a mixture of executive high-fliers, innovators, team leaders, team players and solid core workers. They need young people with 'attitude'. Schools need to be well-placed to provide these types of recruits, through programmes such as the work baccalaureate proposed by think tank Demos.

## Severn Estuary

Despite harbouring one of the most diverse ecosystems in the UK, the public find it difficult at present to gain entry to large stretches of the shore of the Severn Estuary. Sympathetic design solutions could address this problem, as well as enrich the ecosystem that this unique asset supports. The 2050 vision highlights the opportunities to be gained by simple investment in improving access and facilities for visitors. The environment of the water-margin could be improved by the removal of urban debris and by innovative installations that create more varied depths of water and more varieties of vegetation to encourage more wildlife. The main objective of what might be termed the West of England Estuary Waterfront would be to create the prime education and bird watching centre in Britain, centred on wading and feeding flocks on the mudflats, sand and gravel spits in the channel.

# Conclusion & Recommendations

The primary purpose of developing the 2050 vision was to start a debate, to raise aspirations and to carry forward some long term thinking for the city region. For the 2050 vision to be a success there needs to be an ongoing debate about many of the issues contained within and a continual refresh of new ideas and opportunities. Success will also need to be measured against achievements in terms of local and central government commitment to supporting change and helping to deliver on the recommendations as set out in the vision and included in the schedule opposite.

## Bristol 2050 Recommendations

The schedule below outlines 10 key recommendations and actions highlighted as critical to the future growth and prosperity of the Bristol city region in the 2050 vision. Alongside each issue is a clear indication of who needs to support and agree the proposed action – business, local authority, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and/or government.

2050 Vision Recommendations	Support Required
<b>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</b>	
1. Agree and adopt a unified vision for sustainable growth for the city region confirming the need to generate 300,000 new jobs and as a result develop a further 200,000 new homes across the city region by 2050	Government, Business, LEPs, Local Authorities
2. Support the concept of an elected mayor for the Bristol city region, covering the four Unitary Authority areas, with the powers and responsibility to deliver on key strategic issues	Government, Business, Local Authorities
3. Provide the ability to maximise business rate retention and pooling across the city region, with greater ability to levy local taxes and greater control over the use of funds	Government
4. Support the setting up of Transport for Greater Bristol as a planning and coordinating body for transport with ownership and responsibility for services	Government, Business, LEPs, Local Authorities
<b>Removing Barriers to Growth</b>	
5. Support the development of improved skills and education programmes to reduce the costs of worklessness	Government, Business, LEPs, Local Authorities
6. Support the future development and international accessibility/connectivity of the sub region through extending High Speed Rail to Bristol, supporting Port and Airport expansion and strategic road access together with the roll out of superfast broadband	Government
<b>Initial Project Ideas</b>	
7. Support the development of an Avon Barrage to provide additional road access across the River Avon, energy generation and a new water park as a key entrance to the city	Government, LEPs, Business
8. Pilot and support new innovative programmes to help provide young people 'with attitude' who are work ready	Government, LEPs, Business
9. Pilot and support the concept of urban village schools, human scale education and Education Unlimited programme	Government, Business, LEPs, Local Authorities
10. Support and promote the development of the West of England Estuary as a prime outdoor education and bird watching centre in Britain	Local Authorities/LEP

For further information about the 2050 Vision and Book visit [www.bristol2050.co.uk](http://www.bristol2050.co.uk)

