

1.0 INTRODUCTION, VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Chapter One sets the scene for the development of the Regional Transport Plan. It clarifies:

- The role and purpose of SWWITCH and the Regional Transport Plan
- The overarching context for the regional plan, including the national, regional and local strategies and policies which influence the plan
- The evidence base for the strategy and policy development
- How SWWITCH has engaged with stakeholders at each stage of the plan
- The regional vision, objectives and key priorities for the plan

Introduction

- 1.1 **SWWITCH** - The South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWWITCH) was formed in 1998 in recognition of the need for the four Unitary Authorities in the region to work together to address increasingly complex transport and access needs, many of which cross local and regional boundaries. SWWITCH comprises the four South West Wales authorities:
- Carmarthenshire County Council
 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
 - Pembrokeshire County Council
 - City and County of Swansea

More detail on SWWITCH and the way it currently operates is included in Appendix A and Figure 1.1 (page 2) shows the region and key transport infrastructure.

SWWITCH recognises the need to be flexible to meet future needs and will continue to develop its constitution and organisational structure as appropriate.

- 1.2 **Transport Strategy for Wales** - The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) published One Wales – Connecting the Nation, The Wales Transport Strategy (WTS)¹ in May 2008. This sets out strategic priorities for improved transport and required outcomes across Wales. These are shown in Appendix B.

- 1.3 WAG is also in the process of preparing a National Transport Plan (NTP)². This document follows on from the WTS and will set out what actions WAG intends to take to deliver the WTS outcomes through those elements of transport and access over which it has powers and responsibilities, including:

- Rail services
- Long distance bus and coach network
- Motorway and trunk road forward programme
- Sustainable Freight facilitation
- Air and shipping
- Planning Policy Wales



¹ Welsh Assembly Government, (April 2008) *One Wales: Connecting the Nation The Wales Transport Strategy*. Crown Copyright

² Welsh Assembly Government, (October 2007) *Wales National Transport Plan – Product Description*, circulated by Andrew Holmes, Project Manager

Introduction, Vision and Objectives

In December 2008 WAG published a revised Trunk Road Forward Programme and a Rail Forward Programme³. The projects identified within these plans will form a key part of the NTP programme and there are a number of projects included which impact on the South West Wales region.

3

- 1.4 The draft NTP is expected to be published for consultation in Summer 2009 with a final plan adopted by the end of 2009. SWWITCH has consistency urged a strong framework for engagement between WAG and regional transport consortia on the evolving NTP. This will ensure that priorities at national and regional levels can be developed interactively and a clear and consistent way forward to facilitate One Wales can be agreed.
- 1.5 Regional Transport Plans - WAG requires the four transport consortia in Wales to prepare Regional Transport Plans (RTP) for the period 2010 – 2015. Each RTP must help to deliver the outcomes and strategic priorities of the WTS in its region taking into account local and regional needs.
- 1.6 The RTP is intended to set out long term aims for improved access and transport through clear policies and strategies. It will also be a bidding document for a five year programme of capital transport projects and will replace the annual transport grant bids which have previously been submitted by the individual local authorities.
- 1.7 WAG issued guidance on developing RTPs in 2007⁴. Since that time, the timescale for the submission of the RTP has been extended, due to delays in completing the Wales Transport Strategy and in preparing the National Transport Plan. Final RTPs are now due for submission by 30th September 2009.
- 1.8 A formal draft RTP was published in July 2008 and consultation closed at the end of September 2008. There were 75 responses received to the draft RTP and the details of the formal consultation process are set out in Appendix E.
- 1.9 Following the submission of the Provisional RTP in December 2008, SWWITCH has received feedback from WAG. This Final RTP updates and strengthens the December 2008 draft and also incorporates changes to address comments made by WAG. It also takes account of progress in developing the National Transport Plan.
- 1.10 Overarching Policy Context for the RTP - Residents, businesses and visitors to South West Wales need good access to enable them to use services/facilities, to reach markets/customers or attractions/destinations. Transport is one way of providing access to all types of activities. The RTPs and the WTS are intended to help achieve other higher level aspirations in Wales, as set out in documents such as:
- One Wales - a Progressive Agenda for Wales
 - Wales Spatial Plan
- 1.11 The most important link for the RTP is with the Wales Spatial Plan, which sets out the future strategic planning framework for Wales and defines the future vision and long term strategy for each area. The role of the RTP is to facilitate improved access and transport to help deliver that strategy.



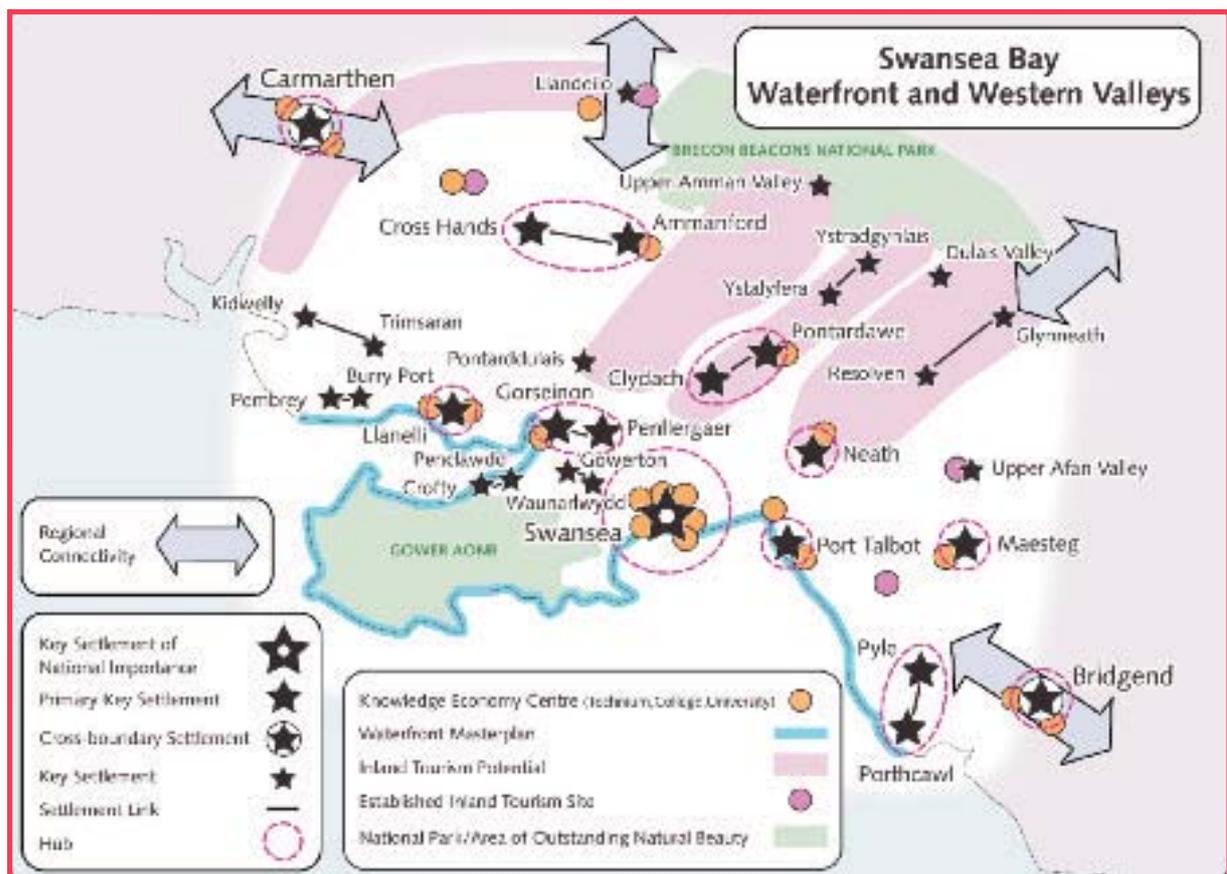
³Rail Forward Programme and Re-Prioritised Trunk Road Forward Programme – Office of the DFM, 2nd December 2008

⁴Welsh Assembly Government, (April 2007) *Guidance on Regional Transport Plans – Version 3*.

- 1.12 In South West Wales, the Spatial Plan regional group boundaries are not consistent with the transport consortia boundaries. The SWWITCH region is made up of three Wales Spatial Plan (WSP) areas:
- Swansea Bay: The Waterfront and Western Valleys
 - Pembrokeshire Haven
 - Central Wales (part)

The Area Strategies for the two main Spatial Plan areas influencing the SWWITCH Region are shown in Figures 1.2 and 1.3 below.

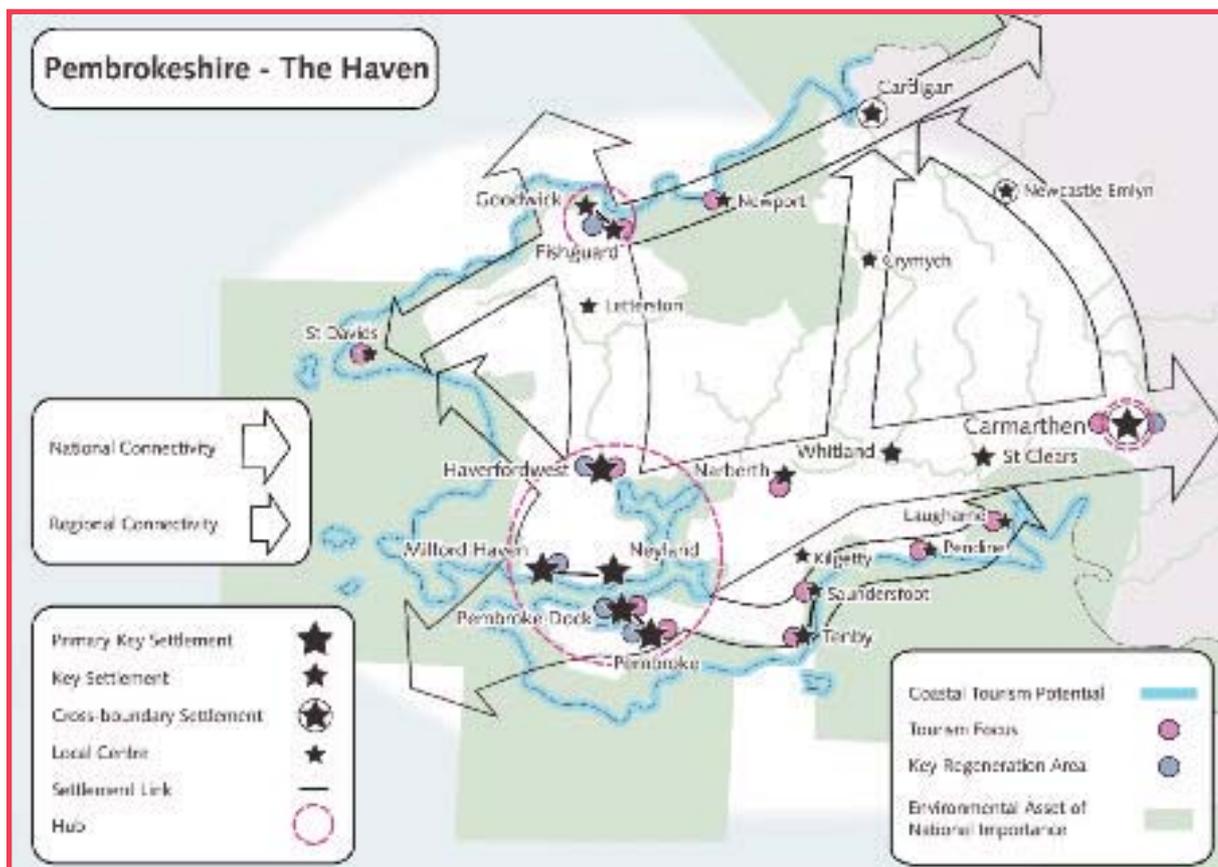
Figure 1.2 - Wales Spatial Plan: Swansea Bay and Western Valleys Area Strategy



Reference: Wales Spatial Plan

- 1.13 The “fuzzy” boundary of the Central Wales WSP group includes Carmarthen town and the north west of Carmarthenshire. However, Carmarthen town is also included in both of the two other groups in the region and SWWITCH has therefore been in close contact with its neighbouring mid Wales consortium, TraCC, which covers the whole Central Wales group to ensure a two way information flow. The fuzzy boundary also means that strategic links to other key settlements outside of SWWITCH (for example Cardigan, Maesteg, Pyle and Porthcawl) involve joint working with TraCC and the South East Wales consortium Sewta.
- 1.14 Whilst there are some differences in emphasis between the access and transport issues between each WSP area regional strategy, the common aspiration for each area is to achieve sustainable accessibility, both internally and externally. The WSP access priorities are set out in Appendix C. Many of the WSP access aspirations depend upon a substantial increase in revenue funding, for example to improve public transport access between key settlements and to and from Strategic employment sites.

Figure 1.3 - Wales Spatial Plan: Pembrokeshire Haven Area Strategy



Reference: Wales Spatial Plan

- 1.15 The WSP was subject to extensive consultation from January to April 2008 and a Wales Spatial Plan Update⁵ was published in June 2008. This RTP is based on the updated WSP aspirations and SWWITCH is continuing to work with the WSP groups and private and third sector parties to develop and deliver actions plans and monitor progress.
- 1.16 WAG recently consulted on One Wales – One Planet⁶ which sets out the long term commitment and delivery mechanisms for a sustainable and thriving Wales. The proposals are intended to build on the current statutory sustainable development commitments of WAG (as set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006) and to confirm the central role of sustainability in all the activities of the Assembly.
- 1.17 WAG is developing targets for reducing carbon emissions and these are expected to include a target for transport. This is essential because climate change is one of the biggest challenges we face. Rising concentrations of greenhouse gas are recognised to be causing climate change. Road traffic is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas in Wales. One Wales commits the Welsh Assembly Government to setting a specific carbon reduction target for Wales. The UK Government has now set legally binding carbon budgets for the period until 2022, with a revised target to reduce emissions to at least 34% below 1990 levels by the end of 2012.
- 1.18 It is clear that technology (in the form of more efficient engines and cleaner fuels) and eco-driving can deliver reduced CO₂ emissions over time. But these will probably not be sufficient,

⁵Welsh Assembly Government (June 2008) - *Peoples, Places, Futures – The Wales Spatial Plan 2008 update*

⁶Welsh Assembly Government, November 2008 – *One Wales: One Planet – Consultation on a new sustainable Development Scheme for Wales*

by themselves, to meet future targets for transport. Significant changes in travel behaviour (such as shifting from single car occupancy to car sharing, public transport, cycle and walking) will be necessary to meet such targets. SWWITCH will take appropriate steps to implement these carbon reduction targets when they are announced.

- 1.19 There are a number of other relevant policy/strategy documents which the RTP must take into account and contribute to, including:
- **Unitary Development Plans (UDPs)** – These are the adopted development plans for each Authority (and National Park Planning authorities where Joint Plans are not adopted) which determine where and what type of development will be permitted in specific areas. These are being replaced by:
 - **Local Development Plans (LDPs)** – each of which must be consistent with the WSP and also support local development aspirations and community needs. As for UDPs above, National Park Authorities are also responsible for the development of an LDP
 - **Community Plans** – each of which has been developed through local engagement and represents grass roots involvement in policy prioritisation and service delivery
 - **Health and Well Being Strategies** – these are cross service sector plans intended to deal with promoting good health as well as dealing with the impacts of ill health. Good links to health care facilities as well as sustainable transport options for promoting active lifestyles are an aspiration of each local strategy and these have fed into the RTP consultation process
 - **Community Safety Strategies** – these are cross sector plans developed to improve safety, personal security and, importantly, the perception of safety. These have clear links with all modes of public and private transport
- 1.20 Geography and Population - The South West Wales region is diverse in terms of geography, population and economy. It includes strategic road and rail links which are part of Trans European Networks (TENS) linking Ireland, the United Kingdom and mainland Europe (Figure 1.4 – page 7). It also has one Trust Port, a number of commercially operated (passenger and freight) ports and three small airports. The sea ports in particular play a significant role in supporting the national and regional economies (for example the energy and steel industries) and in enhancing international connectivity.
- 1.21 South West Wales includes the City of Swansea, other key urban centres at Neath, Port Talbot, Llanelli, Carmarthen and Haverfordwest, significant district centres, industrial areas, valley communities, a large rural hinterland and a lengthy and beautiful coastline. The area incorporates Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, part of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

“Significant changes in travel behaviour will be necessary”



- 1.22 The total population of the region is approximately 659,500⁷, just under a quarter of the overall population of Wales. The population is spread unevenly with relatively high population densities in the urban and more eastern part of the region and sparsely populated areas to the west and north of the region. However, there are also pockets of high population density in Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire and similarly, very low densities in parts of Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.
- 1.23 Economy and Deprivation - Historically, the economy of the area was based on the traditional industries of coal and steel production, large-scale manufacturing, agriculture and fishing and in the west a number of Ministry of Defence establishments. However, over the last 30 years service sector employment, retail, tourism and smaller scale manufacturing have come to make up the majority of employment.
- 1.24 There has been recent development in more specialised areas such as the energy sector in the Milford Haven waterway. This area has seen the construction of LNG shipping import terminals, gas storage, pipeline and generating station development. Additionally, the development of knowledge economy hubs is helping to attract high end value employment in information technology applications and research to the Swansea Bay and Pembrokeshire areas.
- 1.25 The whole of South West Wales is part of the West Wales and the Valleys area that is eligible for European Union Structural Fund support. This is because prosperity is 75% or less than the European Union average and economic inactivity is one of the main reasons for this⁸. The Lisbon Agenda and targets focus on increasing employment opportunities and reducing economic inactivity. Improving access can help support these objectives.
- 1.26 Within the region however, there are significant disparities in terms of the distribution of areas with high scores for indices of multiple deprivation (See Figure 1.5 on page 9). The degree to which deprivation is the result of poor access varies widely and action to improve access and transport must be based on a rigorous analysis of the facts and not on general assumptions. Appendix D sets out key facts on the South West Wales Economy.
- 1.27 Working in Partnership - SWWITCH has taken great care and invested a lot of time in engaging with a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the RTP. This has not been restricted to specific sections of the RTP, but has been integral to the whole process. The engagement process started in June 2006 and the latest consultation was carried out in with Key Stakeholders in November 2008.
- 1.28 In addition to workshop sessions, SWWITCH has used other means of engagement. For example, a number of smaller scale consultations carried out electronically predominantly with stakeholders who had attended previous consultation sessions, or with those unable to attend the workshops.

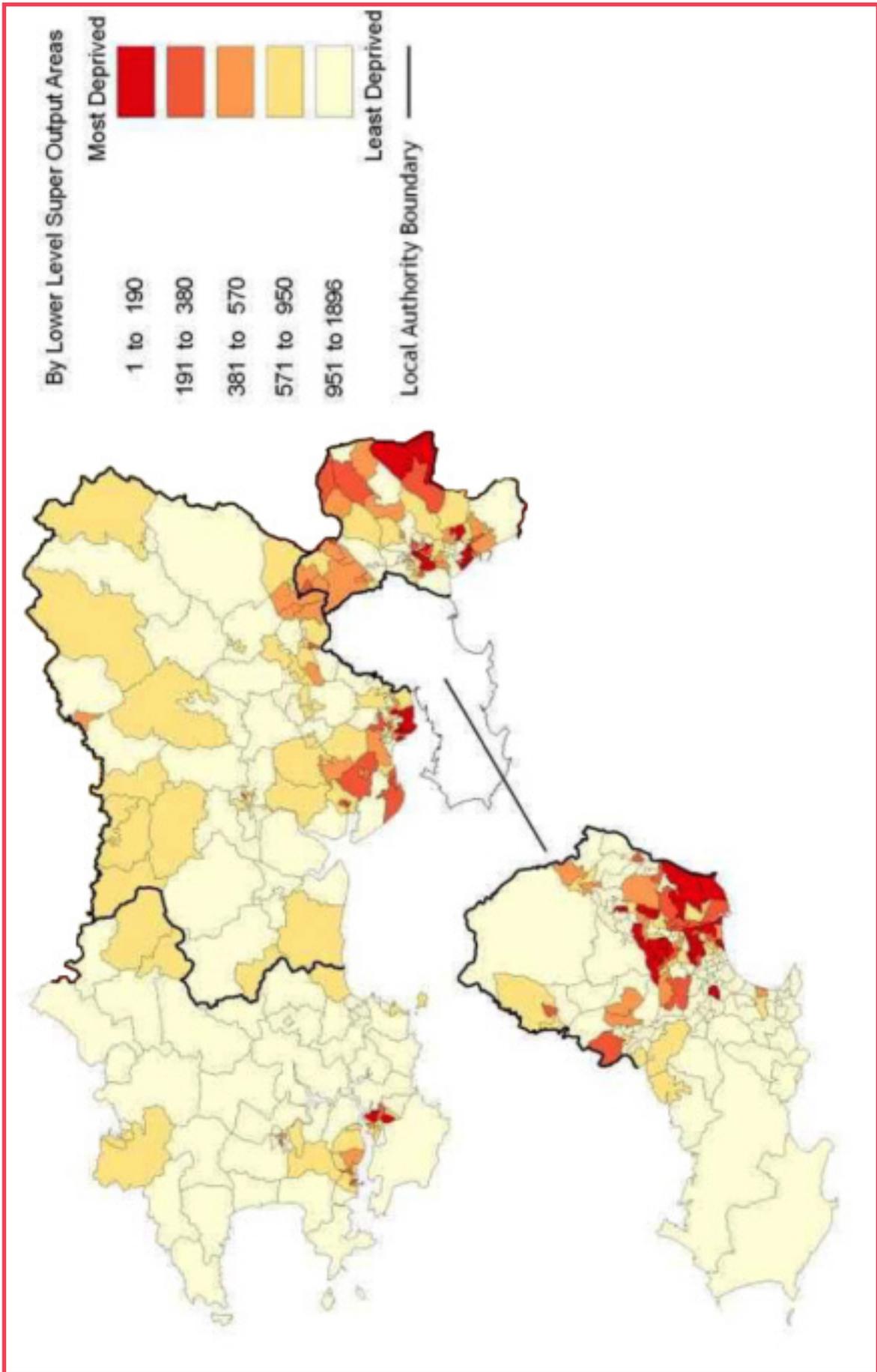


S.K.Miles Collection

⁷Welsh Assembly Government, (August 2007), *Statistical Directorate – 2006 Mid Year Estimates of the Population*

⁸Welsh Assembly Government (2006) Consultation on Convergence Programmes 2007 – 2013, Crown Copyright

Figure 1.5 – Indices of Multiple Deprivation - South West Wales 2005



SWWITCH also publishes a quarterly newsletter to inform a very wide range of stakeholders regarding the development of the RTP and to encourage feedback. The SWWITCH approach to participation forms an important part of the WeITAG appraisal of the RTP.

- 1.29 SWWITCH has also taken account of the results of previous relevant surveys conducted by SWWITCH. In particular:
- Public Transport User Satisfaction surveys 2005
 - Citizens' Panel surveys in 2007 – examining the transport views and priorities of statistically representative groups of residents across the region
 - Travel Pattern research in 2005/6 – this involved more than 2000 households completing seven day travel diaries and answering questions about travel habits and priorities (see Appendix E for more details)

More detail on all the stakeholder engagement, how it has influenced the evolving RTP, and on the above surveys is included in Appendix F.

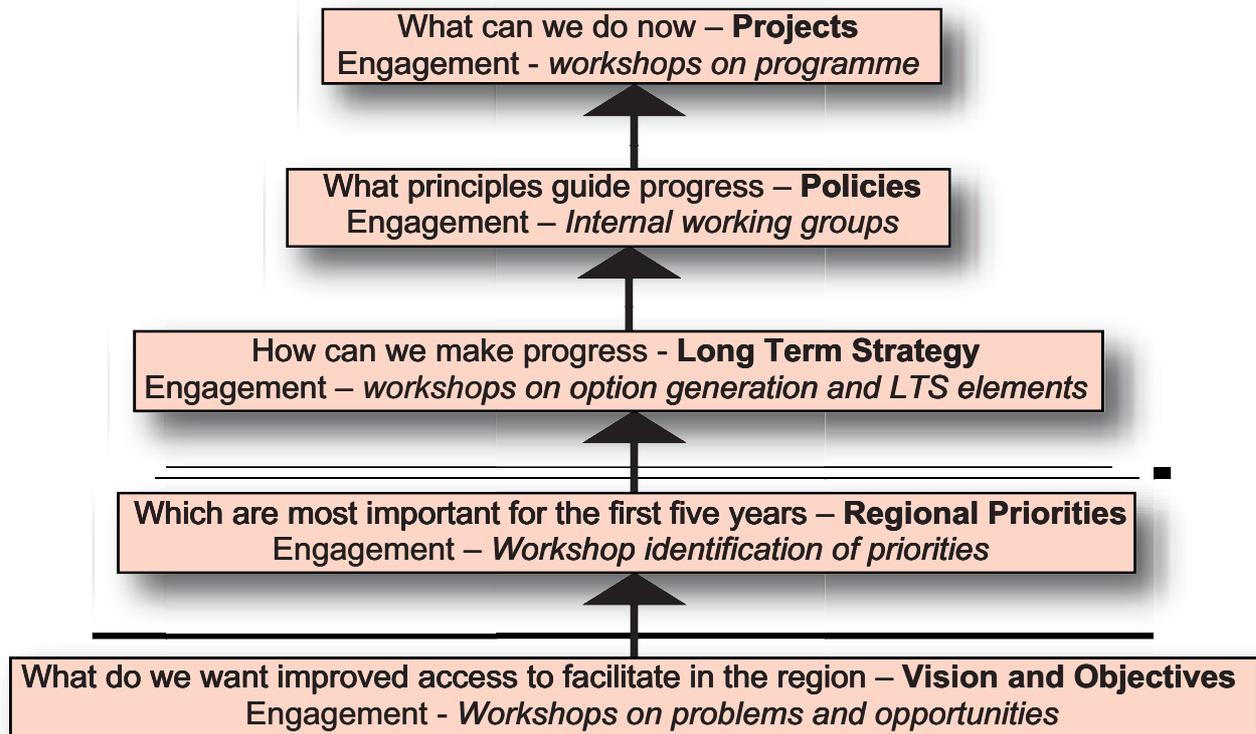
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SWWITCH
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- 1.30 The RTP guidance referred to in 1.7 above set out a clear process (in stages) for developing the RTP. SWWITCH has used each stage as an opportunity to work with stakeholders, teasing out issues along the way and helping to generate better awareness of the aspirations and concerns of other stakeholders. The stages of developing the RTP and the stakeholder engagement are shown in Figure 1.6 on page 11.
- 1.31 SWWITCH plans to continue involving stakeholders in developing the monitoring framework and the detailed planning and delivery of projects (where appropriate) and also as part of the ongoing process of annual progress reporting on the RTP.

Current transport issues in South West Wales

- 1.32 These are set out in detail in Appendix G and summarised below:
- **Road traffic volumes** in the region have grown considerably over the last decade resulting in pressures in terms of unreliable journey times, increased congestion, reduced air quality, increased noise, vibration and carbon emissions. Air pollution, in particular can have a significant impact on public health. There is currently only one designated transport related Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in South West Wales, the Hafod (Swansea) Air Quality Management area, which was declared in 2001, due to the level of NO₂ associated with traffic congestion. Further assessments are taking place across the region and it is likely that additional AQMAs will be declared due to increased traffic flows and congestion. Appendix H contains details of a baseline mapping of traffic flows and congestion
 - **Road safety issues** raise public concerns and whilst there has been a general reduction in serious injuries and deaths from road traffic collisions, there are wide variations across the region and for particular road user categories

Figure 1.6 – RTP Stages and Engagement



- **Car Ownership and use** has increased rapidly although there are disparities across South West Wales. Those with cars are able to participate in a far wider range of opportunities than those reliant on public transport, walking or cycling
- **Public Transport** provision broadly matches population distribution with higher frequency services and better coverage to the south and east of the region where the majority of the population lives, and less extensive provision in the more sparsely populated rural areas. Rail, bus and coach services are provided by private sector companies through a mixture of commercial operation and subsidised services. Physical access to bus and rail services and rolling stock remains a barrier to mobility impaired in some locations

1.33 Other key transport facilities and services which have influenced the RTP development include:

- **Freight operation** is an essential contributor to the economy but is planned and delivered by the private sector within European and UK legislative processes
- **Ports and Shipping** facilitate the movement of passengers and freight to and from the region and are a critical link in the national supply chain network
- There are three small **Airports** in the region: Swansea, Pembrey and Witherby. They do not currently play a strategic role or provide scheduled services, but they all have the potential to be developed to serve small niche markets for business and leisure travel



Figures 1.7 to 1.10 show the key transport networks and interchanges in the region.