

The West of England - GBR HQ

Expression of Interest submission





The West of England



Our Location

The West of England covers four unitary authorities: Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, boasting four prestigious universities and over 46,000 businesses.

Our 1.1 million population speak over 91 languages, ensuring the region has a truly global outreach and is truly welcoming of international businesses.

Accessibility is a key strength of the region - 85% of the UK is within a 4.5-hour drive.

London Paddington Station is 79 minutes by train and we are home to the UK's most centrally located deep-sea port.

Our proximity to London, accessibility to the rest of the UK and railway heritage as the home of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, ensures the West of England offers a strategically-strong location for the GBR HQ.

Support

This expression of interest is being led by the West of England Combined Authority, with the support of our Metro Mayor, four unitary authorities, LEP, Chambers of Commerce and Bristol Property Agents Association.

Proposed Site of GBR HQ

We are proposing the whole of the West of England as the proposed site for the GBR HQ.

There is a rich mix of real estate options available in our region to suit different property needs.

Bristol city centre has 13.25m sqft of commercial office space with 5m sqft located Out of Town, with over 750,000 sqft either under construction or to be built in the next five years.

- Bristol City Centre Headline Grade A Rent – **£40/sqft**
- Bristol City Centre Refurbished Grade A – mid **£30s/sqft**
- Bristol City Centre Grade B – **£25-32/sqft**
- Bath City Centre Grade A – **£35/sqft**
- Bath Average Commercial Property – mid **£20s/sqft**
- Out of Town (South Gloucestershire and North Somerset) Average Commercial Property Rent – **£18/sqft**
- Out of Town (South Gloucestershire and North Somerset) Headline Rent – **£23.50/sqft**

The West of England would allow GBR HQ to scale, accommodating businesses across a range of size requirements starting in serviced offices through to new build space of 200,000 sqft+.

Phased office opening:

Phase 1, Soft-landing into the region in serviced office – licence rental

The West of England's shared workspace market has seen more office deals than any other big six regional office markets; that rich supply has meant businesses across different sectors are able to choose from a variety of spaces, from traditional to tech, licenced to flexible short-term leases. The West of England Combined Authority's Inward Investment agency, Invest Bristol & Bath have strong relationships with our workspace operators and will support GBR to identify suitable property.

The average per-desk rental cost is £300-350 per month, inclusive of all fees.

Phase 2, Mid-term office solution – short term lease (sub-let or plug & play)

A popular choice for inward investors is to move into sub-let offices or the increasingly popular, Plug & Play model. We can explore the sub-let market for you and will undertake research with our commercial property partners to identify availability at the time of your enquiry. This option has been really successful with new businesses locating to the region, giving them time to secure a longer-term solution while still providing you with your own office and front door.

Example of short-term lease/plug & play office:

The Quorum located in central Bristol offers let-ready office space to businesses on flexible terms. The offices are fully furnished with WiFi throughout, fitted kitchens, private meeting rooms and plenty of break-out space. Quoting rent for this property is £28.50 per sqft on a 2-year lease.

Phase 3 Long term office solution - Leasehold

The West of England is witnessing increased office development with a healthy pipeline over the coming years. We are able to accommodate businesses looking to secure up-to 200,000 sqft in a single building.

Stock Levels

1,500,000 sqft of new Grade A stock:

- Over 655,000 sqft Grade A floorspace deliverable by Q1 2023
- Over 900,000 sqft Grade A additional floorspace with implementable planning

Examples of Grade A space currently available, or coming to market within the next 12 months

- EQ: completion Q1 2023. Located in Bristol City Centre, a 2-minute walk from Bristol Temple Meads. Targeting Net Zero. Quoting rent £41/sqft.
- 10 Victoria Street: available now. Located in Bristol City Centre, a 5-minute walk from Temple Meads, offering 47,410 sqft of refurbished Grade II listed office. Quoting rent: c£37/sqft
- No. 1 Bath Quays: new landmark building located in Bath City Centre offering 2,860 - 45,032 sqft. The Quays development aims to transform Bath and regenerate the riverside site. No.1 Bath Quays is a 5-minute walk from Bath Spa station and is located in Bath's Enterprise Zone offering up to 100% business rates relief to businesses who sign before 31 March 2022. Quoting rent: c£35/sqft
- 1000 Aztec West: completion April 2023. 80,000 sqft new Grade A office at Aztec West in South Gloucestershire. Estimate rent: £27.50/sqft.

- Major plans to redevelop landmark Bristol building – Quay located across from Bristol Temple Meads. The project will almost double the building in size, creating a high-quality office focused on sustainability and wellness. This will be the first construction works in Temple Quay for over 15 years and the redevelopment will form part of the broader transformation of Bristol Temple Meads, one of the UK's largest regeneration projects. As part of its plans for the wider area; Bristol City Council is also looking to revive 130 hectares of brownfield land, build 10,000 new homes and create 22,000 jobs over the next 25 years. Quay is within walking distance of the new £300 million University of Bristol campus.
- Real Estate within Network Rails ownership includes The Passenger and Engine Shed. Home to Brunel's boardroom and attached to Bristol Temple Meads, Passenger Shed offers an outstanding Grade 1 listed Victorian building. As one of the oldest train stations in the world, Brunel's original adjoining Passenger shed is now an atmospheric conference venue. We understand the Network is considering the future of the shed alongside Engine Shed which is currently home to SETsquared, the Global Number 1 University Business Incubator. SETsquared and The Engine Shed plan to relocate from the premises in the coming years which will increase the availability of office space at Passenger Shed.
- Freehold – Canons House located on Bristol harbourside is currently occupied by Lloyds. Lloyds will be relocating to a nearby building with Canons House to be sold. Estimate value of £30m.

The West of England Combined Authority would work with GBR to identify suitable properties, from soft landing to a permanent HQ if GBR choose to locate outside of Network Rail estate.

What GBR would mean for the West of England

The benefits of GBR selecting the West of England as their new HQ include both direct and indirect job creation.

Temple Quarter which includes Bristol Temple Meads estate regeneration, plans to create 22,000 jobs. Businesses in our region like to cluster and collaborate so we would anticipate other organisations and supply chains to follow GBR.

We would expect to see an increase in investment and regeneration – Bristol Temple Meads railway station has seen limited investment and is one of the final transport hubs across the UK to be redeveloped.

Bristol Temple Meads and Temple Quarter neighbour some of the country's most deprived locations with over 15% of Bristol's population living in the 10% most deprived areas of England (according to Government's 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation) and three quarters of the population of the local electoral ward for Bristol Temple Meads suffering high employment deprivation.



EQ

EQ – potential HQ

Levelling Up

Our Levelling Up Vision

Levelling up is critical to the West of England Combined Authority's mission. Our vision is ensuring all parts of the region benefit from economic prosperity, raising living standards and improving life chances, spreading opportunity, and fostering local pride.

Our region has a strong economy with innovative businesses and a well-qualified workforce. It scores well on measures of average prosperity but this hides disparities in incomes and opportunities, which mean some communities within the region are among the most deprived in the country. In these places, people cannot access the jobs that exist in our city centres, and they cannot develop the skills they need to participate in the current and future workforce.

On skills, we plan to focus on the following key areas:

- Improving access to education and training
- Clear progression routes to employment
- Established and sustainable funding system
- More flexibilities to study
- Blended learning
- Opportunity to study at higher levels
- Learning Communities formed that serve to deepen learning, but also trust in an established funding system
- Seamless progression opportunities

We are seeking to level up our region through the delivery of programmes to support people into better, more secure employment, improving digital connectivity (particularly in our rural areas) and investing in improving our local transport network so that everyone in the region can access the opportunities that exist here.

Levelling Up in Action

We already deliver a range of programmes focussed on improving opportunities for people in disadvantaged communities including:

- Future Bright – career coaching, training and support to those receiving in-work benefits or earning below the real living wage;
- Workforce for the Future – helping SMEs to identify skills needs and develop their people to meet them. Currently working with 267 SMEs across the region with two years of the programme remaining;
- City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement – strengthening bus, rail, cycling and walking provision across the region to better connect residential and employment areas, particularly focusing on parts of the region such as south Bristol where people face obstacles to accessing jobs;
- Migrant Business Support – supporting the launch, stabilisation and growth of refugee and migrant businesses through personalised business support.

Locating the GBR HQ in the West of England will enable us to further support Levelling Up across our region by providing new jobs in a well-connected location, increasing local opportunities and supporting the region's economy as it recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

It will also support Levelling Up by ensuring that those making decisions about our railways will be better able to understand the issues faced by regions such as the West of England and similar places across the country, further supporting devolution.

Proposed sites for the HQ, such as Temple Meads, would also support the regeneration of a historically deprived area, plans linked to the Temple Quarter regeneration that are already underway. It would also foster a sense of local pride, building off the region's strong railway heritage.

Our Connectivity

Accessing Proposed Sites

All our proposed sites are accessible to staff and visitors via public transport. All sites in Bristol Temple Meads can be accessed via rail from Bristol Temple Meads and GWR. Sites in Bath are within walking distance of Bath Spa railway station and Out of Town locations are currently served by Bristol Parkway and Filton Abbey Wood. A new station at Filton, part of the YTL development will open in 2024, taking 15-minutes from Bristol Temple Meads.

Investing in travel:

- MetroWest aim to generate over a million new railway journeys and give 80,000 more people access to train services. Improvements are being made to existing rail stations and routes to achieve a target of half-hourly services across most of the local rail network. Two lines will be reopened to passengers and up to six new stations will open between 2021 and 2024.
- E-scooter trial. We are over 12 months in to an e-scooter trial which has passed one million rides, with over three million kilometres travelled around the region. Operator, Voi estimates around 370,000 car trips have been replaced since the beginning of the trial reducing over 200 tonnes of CO2 emissions. The majority of rides are taking place in the city centres as people are using them to shop, run errands and go about their daily lives. Train stations are one of the most popular locations to start and end rides, suggesting users are using Voi's service to complement public transport journeys.

As part of the trial, the West of England Combined Authority area was the first place in the UK to offer residents both the Voi hop-on-hop-off and the long-term rental options. So far, over 650 people have applied for the long-term rental scheme, and currently, nearly 400 people are taking advantage of this green and cost-effective way to travel.

- metrobus is a modern public transport system for the greater Bristol area, covering 50km. metrobus adopts ‘buy before you board’ ticketing and limited stopping at key destinations for faster boarding and shorter journey times. metrobus services use a combination of high quality and environmentally-friendly Euro 6 diesel and biogas vehicles, helping to significantly improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions in the Bristol area.
- West of England Bus Strategy - considering options to improve the bus network and set out how further growth in bus usage can be encouraged, including proposals to create better, faster, more reliable and more accessible services across Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Through this strategy, the West of England Combined Authority aims to see bus passenger numbers double by 2036.

Support for Business:

Employers in the West of England are able to attract talent from within an hour commute which takes in locations in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Cardiff and other areas of Wales. We are aware this draw does not work in reverse. The ability to walk and cycling to work are increasingly important to employers and employees with some Bristol-based businesses reporting that 95% of their workforce commute this way.

The West of England Combined Authority have grants and support available to:

- Install cycle racks or showers
- Help remote workers stay active
- Build confidence to change habits
- Plan journeys
- Start a cycle to work scheme

Accessing the UK from our region

Both Bristol Temple Meads Railway station and Bath Spa Railway station include operators GWR and Cross Country (BTM) including direct trains to London Paddington, Cardiff, Birmingham New Street, Sheffield, Penzance and Edinburgh.

- 85% of the UK is accessible from the West of England
- Bristol Airport flies to over 100+ locations and is located 8 miles from Bristol City Centre
- Bristol deep sea Port is located 7 miles from Bristol City Centre

Examples of collaboration

Our region is highly collaborative, our Combined Authority has a proven track-record of working in partnership with our Unitary Authorities, government and businesses to attract investment. Examples of this include the creation of HMRC Government Hub in Bristol which included successful staff relocations and the successful bid to Channel 4 for one of their creative hubs. The success of the Channel 4 hub has resulted in increased investment and productions in our region including local skills development and an increased focus on creative industries.

You can view case studies of our inward investment service here: <https://www.bristolandbath.co.uk/case-studies/>



OUR

IN CINEMAS
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up to every 7 mins

70
71

ALUNA

Connecting you to UWE

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West of England & Great British Railways opportunities



The West of England Combined Authority, LEP and Chambers of Commerce will work in partnership with GBR to foster links between customers, the private sector and wider transport industry. This can include talent pathways development via our People & Skills teams, universities, colleges, and schools engagement. Business roundtables and membership to networks and organisations in the West of England will also support GBR with their objectives.

All of our proposed sites sit within mixed developments including incubators and accelerators, housing, and the new University of Bristol Enterprise Campus.

What opportunities does your location offer for working with the rail supply chain, manufacturing hubs and institutes?

The West of England is benefitting from a huge variety of National Tier 1 contractors who are already engaged in live construction projects in the region and have offices here (eg. BAM Nuttall).

We are committed to supporting local, regional and National SMEs / Tier 2 and 3 contractors, who will enhance the supply chain pool working on rail construction projects nationally. We have a significant pipeline of works to support the rail supply chain over the coming years, including MetroWest Phases 1 and 2 and Enhancement works at Bristol Temple in the short term and longer term MetroWest to the South, potential links with East West Rail and improved connectivity to Wales, Devon and Cornwall.

The West of England is home to the National Composite Centre (NCC), part of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC), we would propose exploring collaboration opportunities, we are already exploring opportunities with the NCC and Network Rail to collaborate on a composite footbridge at North Filton Station.

What opportunities exist for collaboration with the retail, economic and environmental sectors? How could Great British Railways benefit from these links?

Great British Railways and the West of England Combined Authority are aligned in the challenges they face around sustainability and decarbonisation. Opportunities exist moving forward to share learning and best practice resulting from the Combined Authorities' Climate Emergency action plan, Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy and Future Transport Zones projects. These are all aimed at progressing new or existing ways to decarbonise the transport network by reducing car usage and through creating better connectivity between transport modes (through digitalisation, policy etc). Outcomes will be relevant to GBR, and best practice would be shared.

By choosing to locate to the West of England, GBR could access an existing pipeline of station enhancement works, including new stations under the MetroWest programme, where retail opportunities could be explored. Significant enhancement works are planned at Bristol Temple Meads stations and similar retail opportunities will exist.

Finally, there is an openness to trial GBR National initiatives at a local level in our region including new materials and decarbonisation initiatives etc.



Our railway heritage and current network links

Links with rail ecosystem (rail employment, regional offices, innovation, sector bodies)

Network Rail employ 3,800 staff across the South West, with 400 staff in Bristol City Centre. GWR have 400 staff located at Bristol Temple Meads. Network Rail have significant plans in the West of England, these include further electrification of the line and transforming Diesel trains to Biomode. The West of England Combined Authority have strong links with Network Rail via our Infrastructure and Business & Skills Directorates. We also have strong partnerships with the landowners of the surrounding estate at Bristol Temple Meads including Homes England and Bristol City Council. The West of England Combined Authority's interim Head of Capital Delivery is on secondment from Network Rail, where he is Industry Programme Director. Our rail investment programme is worth approx. £200m and is one of the largest investment programmes nationally.

Our railway heritage

Bristol Temple Meads was opened on 31 August 1840 as the western terminus of the Great Western Railway from London Paddington. The railway (including Temple Meads) was the first to be designed by the British engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel (Brunel came second in the BBC's 2002 public poll of the top 100 Greatest Britons). The station was also used by the Bristol and Exeter Railway, the Bristol and Gloucester Railway, the Bristol Harbour Railway and the Bristol and South Wales Union Railway. To accommodate the increasing number of trains, the station was expanded in the 1870s by Francis Fox and again between 1930 and 1935 by Percy Emerson Culverhouse. The historical significance of the station has been noted, and most of the site is Grade I listed. In *Britain's 100 Best Railway Stations* by Simon Jenkins, the station was one of only ten to be awarded five stars.

Locomotive engineering was a vital industry in Bristol from the later 1830s to the 1950s, the Bristol Harbour Railway which was built by the Great Western Railway in the 1870s and extended in the 1900s, built in the Fishponds area of Bristol in 1917 by the Avonside Engine Co and painted battleship grey, Portbury was taken to work on the construction of the new Portbury shipyard towards the end of WW1. In 1920 she moved to Avonmouth Docks where she worked on the internal railway system. Portbury had a reputation for great strength and in her hey-day it was said that she could 'pull a town down'. She was joined by Henbury, built at Bristol company Peckett & Sons in 1937. A more powerful engine, Henbury augmented a growing fleet of 40 engines at work in the docks.

When diesel engines took over in the 1960s, both engines were handed over to the museum and have run as a heritage railway ever since. The railway runs on the quayside between M Shed and the SS Great Britain or alongside the New Cut to Vauxhall footbridge. In 1981, Henbury made railway history as the first preserved steam locomotive to pull scheduled freight on main line rail. Since 1978, Henbury has pulled hundreds of thousands of visitors on trips to Bristol Harbour Railway, joined in 1988 by Portbury.

The railways and innovation are in our DNA, GBR's investment would further cement our rich railway heritage.



HENBURY

M Shed

M Shed

Free Entry
↓

Henbury at M Shed

Value for money

The West of England is an attractive region with a highly skilled workforce. Our region is likely to present lower costs in relocating current staff, and a strong talent pool for future recruitment. This presents a good balance between reasonable rental/property costs (with opportunity for co-location), a strong labour market and a good location, reducing travel times to other key locations such as London, Cardiff and Birmingham.

Locating here will also bring social benefits to the region. Some of the sites we propose are located in historically deprived areas, such as the area around Temple Meads station where three quarters of the population of the local electoral ward for Bristol Temple Meads suffer high employment deprivation. A new HQ in this area would boost wider regeneration plans for the Temple Quarter district, further supporting new jobs and homes for the region. Each of our proposed sites are well positioned next to key transport routes, opening up opportunities to people across the region and further afield.

A new GBR HQ would be located with good access to public transport allowing access by sustainable transport modes. Our City region Sustainable Transport Settlement will see significant investment in new bus, walking and cycling routes and we are also continuing to upgrade the local rail network to offer new connections. Our Climate Emergency Action Plan will also soon be published setting out our aims and aspirations to be net zero carbon by 2030.

Locating the GBR HQ in the West of England would send a positive signal around sustainable transport in the region and would also benefit from the moves we are taking to create a greener future for residents and businesses.

Property

Our Inward Investment team have negotiated soft landing rates for new businesses moving to our region. The team is also on hand to help identify suitable sub-lets/lease assignments which can come at reduced market rates and offer a good transitional space to new investors and teams.

In terms of office costs, headline rents in London are now c.£90/sqft compared to £41/sqft in Bristol with the regional average closer to £29/sqft making our region £12/sqft cheaper than London. Based on a 10,000 sqft building which could accommodate 100 staff that represents a saving of £6.1 million over a 10-year lease. Our city centre office rents are more affordable than locations including Manchester, Oxford, Cambridge and our out-of-town locations are more affordable than equivalent locations in Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Brighton, Reading, Cambridge, Oxford and London. Our region also has good office availability across a range of sizes compared to other UK cities.

Business memberships

We can also negotiate discounted memberships to organisations including several business lounges and the Chamber of Commerce. We are on hand to provide complimentary recruitment support including research on salaries, advertisement of roles and connections to training and education providers.

Recruitment

Salaries in our region will also offer financial efficiency with salaries on average 10% cheaper than London.



Brunel's Boardroom

Welcoming GBR to the West of England

As a major employer the railways are critical to our economy, they are also of vital importance to our businesses from strong transport links to London and the rest of the UK which are key for talent attraction, retention, and investment for international businesses, our tourism sector and residents. We are committed to investing into the network to support our local communities including the reopening of stations and lines, so no one is left behind.

We would intend for the new national headquarters to be a publicly accessible building where residents and schools could visit to learn about rail improvements and career opportunities. We would hope the selection of the West of England for the new GBR HQ would trigger further investment including much needed investment to upgrade Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station so it becomes not only fit for purpose, but also a station recognising its own national significance.



Montpelier Station

Thank You



We thank you for considering the West of England as the future home of the new Great British Railways HQ. We would be delighted to continue conversations with you as the next part of the process and we look forward to a potential visit in May.

Please do contact us if we can provide any further information to inform your decision.

Contact us

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