

Business West works with nearly 20,000 business as the Chambers of Commerce for Bristol, Bath, and Gloucestershire and through our business leadership team, The Initiative, we operate right across the Bristol, Bath and the West of England area and in Swindon & Wiltshire, delivering business support. As the powerful voice for business, with member companies both small and large in every sector, we play a major role in shaping and supporting economic growth and success. Many of our business support contracts involve working across the South West, and the respondent has 14 years experience working with businesses and agencies to improve the infrastructure and connectivity both across, and into the Region.

Air travel is vital for the further flung economies but, it is puzzling why, amongst the Airports listed in the paper at Manchester. Leeds and Birmingham, there is no mention of Bristol. The afore mentioned all provide connectivity for their Regions of the UK, but Bristol is equally important in its access to the South West and Wales, and doubly surprising given its recent pace of growth.

Within chapter 3 at 3.48 there is mention of the recent decision by two global companies to move closer to International hub Airports, and yet at 3.47 the reference to the fact that transport links only played a supportive role behind availability of qualified staff and access to markets and clients, when it came to location decisions. Equally important but often forgotten is the need for aftercare of our foreign investors, and I should point out the loss of a large US owned electronics company that was once based in Torbay, employing 6000 people. The then MD had reported frustration with the journey time to and from the facility via Heathrow, and over a period of several years the business was gradually run down and eventually closed. Torbay has never recovered and still suffers high unemployment rates compared to rest of Devon and the Region. This is a real example of how poor connectivity played a direct role in severely affecting the growth of an area.

As I'm sure you've heard previously, Bristol, and the West of England is the second highest provider of GDP, behind London, borne largely on the back of Aerospace, Banking & Finance, and Professional & Business Services, and our recent (unsuccessful!) bid for the Green Investment Bank was largely based on the professional legal expertise within the environmental sector based in the City. Good connectivity is vital for these professions, and whilst journeys to the Northwest of England may be undertaken by car, we are increasingly aware of how much business is being completed in the North East and further north. The Oil business in Aberdeen is a major customer for many businesses in the South, a fact borne out by two Air Operators competing on the Bristol/Aberdeen route.