

Appendix 3

The Mersey Partnership (TMP) Response to the Options Paper

TMP Response to Atlantic Gateway Options Paper

(Aug 09)

General Comment

The strength of the Atlantic Gateway Strategy will be its capacity to address those themes that add genuine agglomeration to the North West and in particular extenuate the partnership between Liverpool and Manchester through their relative strengths.

Ultimately I think we should end up with about five or six themes for consideration as any more and it becomes unmanageable and indistinguishable from focus of the RS2010.

The core criteria for selecting the themes should be: -

- Does it stimulate agglomeration benefits across the region as a whole not just $1+1=2$?
- Does the issue create a genuine differentiator for the region against other regions?
- Is there a reason why it would be in Atlantic Gateway as opposed to simply being part of RS2010?

For each option not all the sub-options are mutually exclusive and the strategy can consider part of each or one or two independently.

Themes / Options

1 Accelerating Innovation

Do the learning institutions need (or indeed want) to be connected within the Atlantic Gateway spatial area considering some are internationally renowned and their network operates globally with fellow learning institutions and business communities not simply North West-wide? Networking is a positive aspect, but a question is why the strategy should exclude other NW colleges such as Lancaster? And further, why not leave it to the institutions themselves who do it to the levels they each want and when the needs require?

Additionally innovation as an economic development driver is about stimulating transformation in business and this is being addressed by Business Link across the North West with its innovation programme.

It is not clear where Atlantic Gateway would create added value on this theme over and above the work that has already been developed by the NWDA.

2 Key Sector Focus

Although clusters tend to be managed regionally at present some key sectors are concentrated within the corridor from Manchester to Liverpool and would create genuine differentiators for Atlantic Gateway spatial area. The key sectors identified that reflect the sectoral strengths of the Liverpool City Region leveraged to benefits the whole corridor include Transport & Logistics which encompasses much of Liverpool SuperPort and Renewable energy.

Option 1 developed around the above sectors seems the most effective approach.

3 Digital Infrastructure

The Atlantic Gateway area provides the scale of high value businesses that should make it an attractive proposition for a variety of private sector operators to become involved in provision of fibre into the office. A concern is that a single operator (such as BT) could command an unassailable position in the market through contracting with the constituent local authorities within Atlantic Gateway as a single spatial area to the detriment of competition and ultimately the business community across the area.

Subject to the above caveat Option 2, examining the options, should be pursued as an assessment of need is probably required at all spatial levels before we can move forward. The initiative needs to be demand driven not simply provision of dark fibre.

4 Manchester / Liverpool Marketing Offer

In reality only Option 3 (Each city and town for itself) would be acceptable.

Liverpool in particular has worked hard in maintaining its very strong brand presence internationally and the idea of an Atlantic Gateway brand would be at best diluting of significant strengths that indeed each city has, and at worst highly detrimental and confusing. Also need to consider the issue that most of the Atlantic Gateway is nowhere near the actual Atlantic Ocean!

5 External Connections

This theme is consistent with the Liverpool SuperPort strategy and Peel Group's Ocean Gateway strategy and is therefore a strong proposition for consideration as a theme for Atlantic Gateway. This, however, has to be subject to the branding issues connected to Liverpool SuperPort and Ocean Gateway with further confused branding unacceptable to the development of both these strategies.

All the options outlined should be included for consideration. It should be noted though that SuperPort does not just refer to the maritime operations (as suggested in this section) but to the combined synergies of port, airport and logistics.

6 Sustainable Transport

If Atlantic Gateway is to have any chance of success as a concept it needs to ensure efficient transit between the two major cities as a bare minimum. To this end Option 2 seems the obvious choice with Options 1 and 3 largely concerns for the individual city regions.

7 Addressing Deprivation

Although the high level options outlined in this theme have merit in tackling deprivation they do not seem to need to align themselves necessarily to the Atlantic Gateway spatial area and should be addressed as part of the RS2010 and encompass the whole of the North West to gain maximum effectiveness.

8 A New Approach to Housing

As with the deprivation theme this seems like a agenda item for the whole of the North West and would not benefit from being restricted to the boundaries of Atlantic Gateway. It should be addressed as part of RS2010.

9 Energy Generation and a Low Carbon Economy

With its geographical opportunities for energy generation (i.e. Mersey and coastal area) and the majority of demand largely within the Atlantic Gateway spatial area it does seem sensible for this to be addressed by this strategy and could create a genuine differentiator for the North West region.

All three options outlined could be considered.

10 Adapting the Landscape

Cannot see the obvious benefits of geographically bounding this theme around Atlantic Gateway and would suggest it would be better managed as part of the RS2010 strategy.