

Abstract

This briefing provides an overview of the current and upcoming work around the '2026 Delivery Plan' and outlines the potential for exploitation for future work across the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

Aviation Strategy Overview

The 2026 Delivery Plan

The 2026 Delivery Plan is an £8bn worth programme of work consisting of 163 transport projects (accurate to June 2018) that are planned to be completed across the West Midlands Combined Authority by the end of 2026 that are aimed at meeting the objectives outlined in the 'Movement for Growth' strategy document.

Procurement

The WMCA have procured Smartsheet as part of a package of services included within the new internally managed Data Insight Service (a replacement of the old Joint Data Team service as provided by Motts Macdonald) in order to help collect, store, manage and track data relating to changes on the transport network. The pilot project for the effective use of this service was the 2026 Delivery Plan which has proved a huge success both internally and across our local authority partners.

Previous Process

Previously programmes and planning data for the 2026 delivery plan were updated through a manual, time-consuming, inaccurate and untimely process that lacked any governance and made audit tracking virtually impossible. This was largely using long email trains, phone calls and many versions of hard copy spreadsheets that were not consistent with each other and did not provide any certainty to the contributors or end users of whether the data they were using or editing was accurate or up to date.

New Process

The new system allows for unlimited access to transport data for anyone needing to view, update or comment on the progress of each of the transport projects, as well as the ability to create instant outputs for their own purposes, at no extra cost to the local authority partners or to the West Midlands Combined Authority. This means that a 'single source of truth' can be established where information is given only once by each project lead, can be visible and editable by others 'live' and can be used in other places without the need to input the information again. Updating can be achieved through a simple form sent to the individual project managers with drop-down menus, tick boxes, and calendar selection for dates greatly reducing the possibility for human error and time spent 'cleaning' the data. Changes can be tracked at a cell level history with a 'who', 'what', 'when' timestamp and can be auto-highlighted for ease of use. The sheet can be accessed and edited by multiple users at the same time providing a 'one version of the truth' view that users can be certain is up to date and accurate. Comments, images and emails can be attached at a project level to mitigate the risk of losing important documents and information within email threads and make them available to anybody who is working on the project as well as providing a discussion forum for disputes regarding a project so that an agreement can be formed. The tool also has the capability to integrate with many other programmes and software that local authority partners may be using reducing the need to create 'hard copy' files.

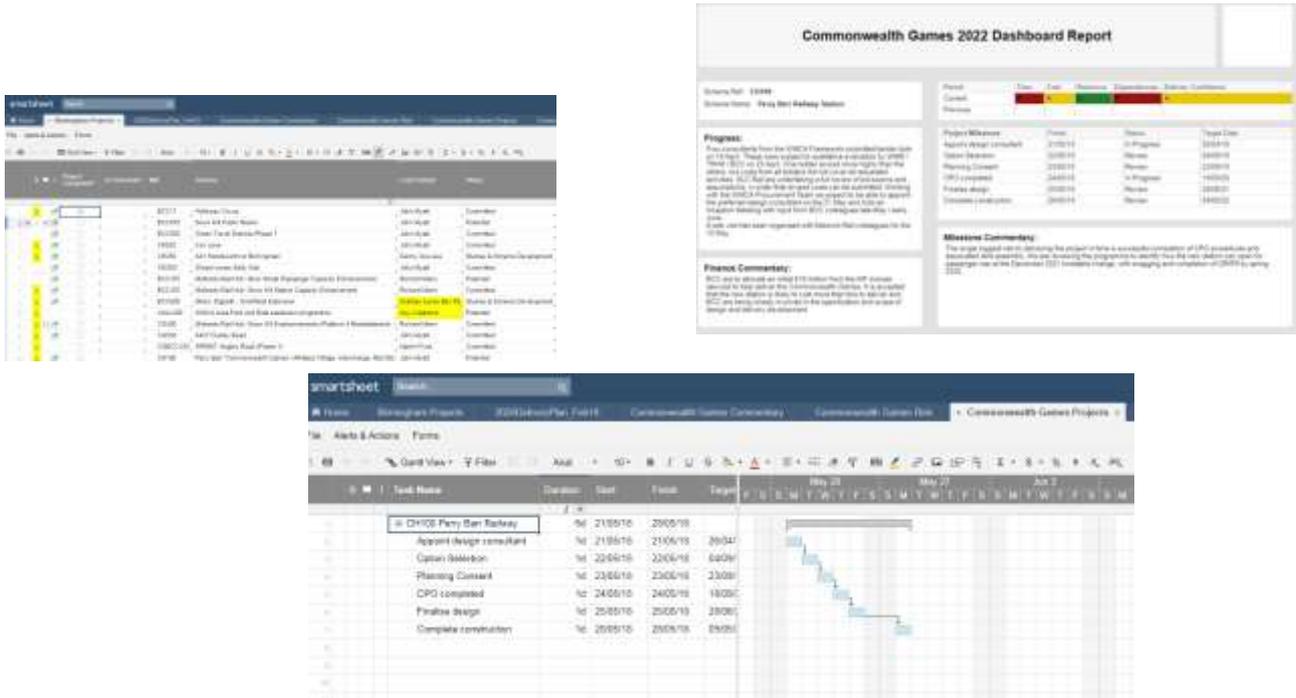


Figure 1: Smartsheet Output Reports

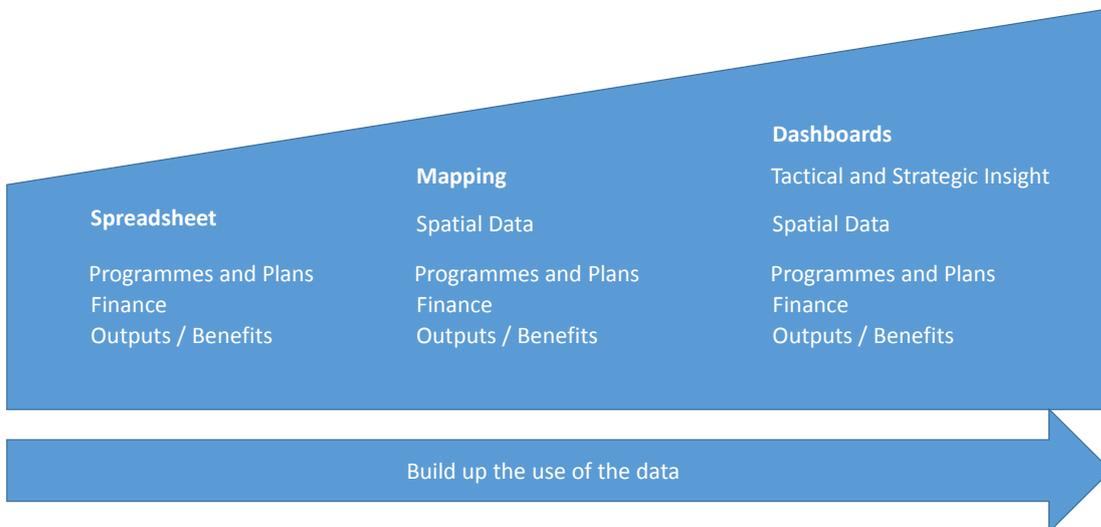


Figure 2:..Exploitation of Data

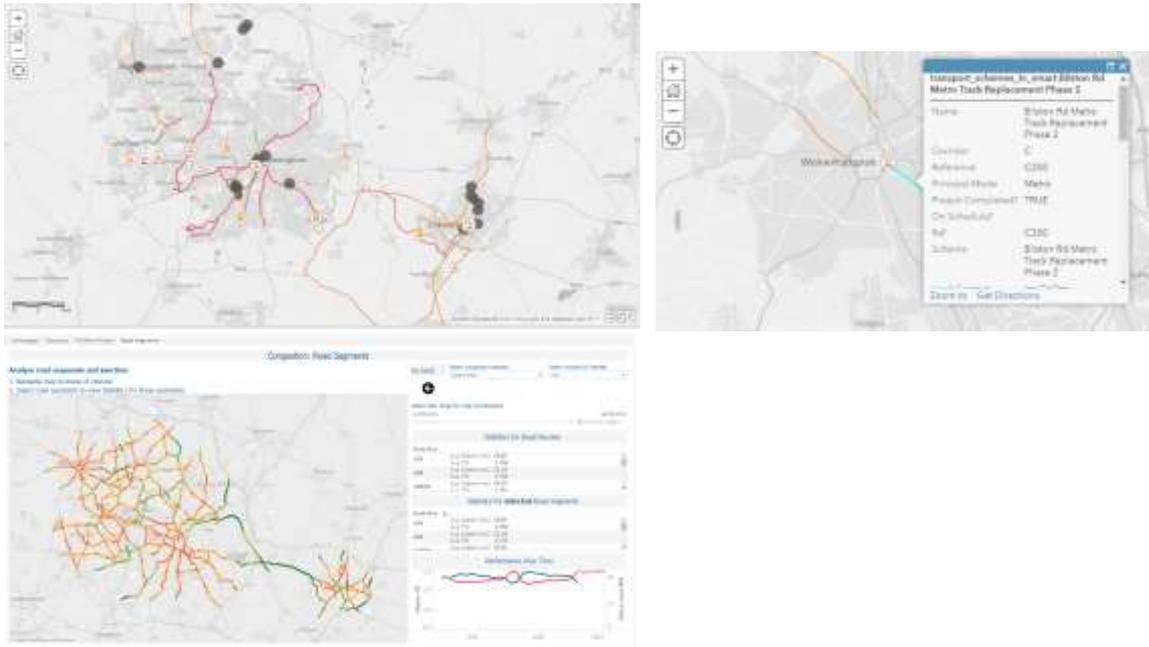


Figure 2: Exploitation of Data

- Enter data ONCE use in many places
- There is not ONE system to rule them all
- View scheme data
- Collaborate on data and reporting
- Simple highlight reports
- Short term and long term plans
- Improved governance
- Version tracking

Benefits & Results

The current update procedure is completed at a minimum of once every quarter and takes just a week to complete (with each project lead taking an average of 3 minutes to update all of their projects via the form link) and producing a variety of ‘real time’ outputs such as Gantt charts. Previously, this process took a month and occurred only once a year. Since the procurement of Smartsheet in March, the ‘2026 Delivery Plan’ is now available to over 70 active users and is growing on a weekly basis. The ‘2026 Delivery Plan’ on Smartsheet has heavily assisted the development of the draft Spatial Investment Delivery Plan (SIDP) and it has now been recommended that the ‘2026 Delivery Plan’ is updated when the SIDP is adopted. Having the data sitting on the Smartsheet platform also enables easy integration with other platforms and software without exporting to excel for example there are in built Microsoft Office, Google Suite, Project Management Software and Business Analysis Tool extensions as well as API access.

Responding: Next Steps

Further use cases are continually being found across the West Midlands Combined Authority with interest growing in the areas of programme development, network resilience, housing and project management. At a low cost to the West Midlands Combined Authority (just under £2000 a year) Smartsheet has enabled the process to be 'minimum effort by all, for maximum output to all' and can now also be used for other projects such as the 'Commonwealth Games 2022' and 'Housing Investment Fund'. Despite its success, this tool is still under-utilised at the WMCA and has the potential to be exploited further at limited or no further costs. An example of this further potential is to use the delivery plan data and the wider mapping expertise as a sound basis to develop the emerging work around the 'Inclusive Growth Corridors'.

- Utilise what is in place
- Respect existing systems and workflows that work
- Multi-user and multi-agency access (read and edit)
- Low cost solutions
- Easy to deploy and access
- Integration to other systems

Further Information	
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