

NEWS RELEASE

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Date 23 01 2008

Ref. 2008 2301



Regional partners to discuss future governance of the West Midlands

Partners from across the West Midlands are to come together to discuss the future of the Region's governance after 2010, when West Midlands Regional Assembly ceases to exist.

Discussions will take place at the Assembly conference to be held on Monday 28 January at Aston Villa Football Club, Birmingham.

Speaking at the conference is Liam Byrne MP, Minister for the Region, Lord Bill Morris of Handsworth OJ and Simon Topman, Chief Executive of Aston based, Acme Whistles, the world market leader in the manufacture of whistles, animal calls, sound effects and signal horns.

Delegates representing organisations in the public, private and voluntary sector will have the opportunity to discuss the way forward and the future of the regional partnerships which have been developed over the past nine years through the Assembly.

Cllr David S Smith, chairman of the Assembly explained the significance of such a gathering. He said: "Although the Sub National Review (SNR) fails to mention the role of partnerships, regional working is critical to our success in delivering our ambitions, and both the voluntary and financial support provided from our stakeholders, regional partners and local government is essential.

"It is greatly significant that partners such as Advantage West Midlands, the Government Office for the West Midlands and local authorities who will play a bigger role within the Region post SNR will join us on Monday. This demonstrates to government and the adjoining regions that the West Midlands can speak with one voice and is committed to delivering a challenging agenda.

"Our role as a regional place shaper and convenor is continually evolving and adapting as necessary to deliver the priorities for the Region against the constantly changing and challenging landscape. In my role as Chairman I am convinced that this is something we need to develop further and ensure that our partnerships, already strong, are focused on how they can shape the delivery of what is necessary for the Region."

Although the year ahead will be challenging for the Assembly, its top priority will be to maintain momentum on the various partnership successes such as:

- The Endorsement by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Phase One Revision, which supports future long term plans for the transformation of the Black Country and will pave the way for new homes, more jobs, better shopping and, above all, a better environment for over one million people who live in the sub region
- The revision of the WMRSS Phase Two, currently undergoing consultation up to 28 March. This is the most important strategy ever produced for the Region and addresses issues as far reaching as climate change, transport and waste recycling
- Endorsement of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which provides regional mechanism for multi-agency dialogue around health and wellbeing, and facilitates action to address health inequalities, promote health issues, and ensure NHS investment contributes to economic, social and physical regeneration
- Launch of the Climate Change Action Plan which sets out a programme to ensure the Region takes action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as being well-prepared for the impacts of climate change.

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The Assembly Annual Conference ‘Voice of the Region – Speaking Out for the Region’ will be held at Villa Park, Holte Suite from 10am to 3.30pm on Monday 28 January. Please find attached a programme.

For interview opportunities or if you would like to attend please contact Jay Rana on 0121 245 0181.

West Midlands Regional Assembly

1. West Midlands Regional Assembly (‘the Assembly’) represents a wide range of democratic, social and economic interests throughout the West Midlands region.
2. The Assembly’s membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 members representing the local authority, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
3. The Assembly provides a platform for organisations to consider matters of common concern including: regional planning, transport, economic prosperity, sustainability, culture and Europe. It also supports regional policy forums and task groups on social inclusion, faith, housing, life long learning/skills, health, rural and community safety/crime reduction.
4. The Assembly works in partnership with Advantage West Midlands (AWM) the regional development agency (RDA), the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM), Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM) the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA) and other regional and local organisations from across the West Midlands region.
5. The Assembly’s Regional Planning Partnership is the designated Regional Planning Body for the West Midlands, and is also responsible for scrutinising the operation of the region’s RDA, Advantage West Midlands.
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk
7. The Independent Performance Assessment was undertaken by the National Audit Office as part of an examination of all 8 English Regional Development Agencies at the request of the Department of Trade and Industry.
8. The final report can be downloaded from Advantage West Midlands’ website www.advantagewm.co.uk

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