

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
Regional Planning & Environment Executive
15 December 2009

RSS Phase Two Revision – Progress Report

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update of progress on the RSS Phase Two Revision and the proposed process for preparing an Assembly response to the Secretary State's Proposed Changes.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members note this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the October meeting of the Regional Planning & Environment Executive (RPEE), Members received a report outlining the initial analysis of the EiP Panel Report and any major issues arising. Since then, RSS Policy Leads have progressed their analysis of the Panel Report in preparation for the Secretary of State's Proposed Change. In addition, views have been sought from sub-regional leads in respect of the implications of the Panel's recommendations for different parts of the Region. These were considered at the November and December meetings of the RSS Policy Leads and the RSS Coordination Group.
- 3.2 As far as the timetable of the Phase Two process is concerned, it is understood that GOWM still aims to publish the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes before Christmas. It is understood that, in practice, this would have to be before Parliament rises on 16th December 2009. The Regulations governing the RSS process require that the consultation period must not be less than 8 weeks starting on the day the Secretary of State publishes his Proposed Changes. In the light of this, the consultation on the Proposed Changes could run until mid/end February 2010. Members of RPEE will be updated orally at the meeting.
- 3.3 Following this formal consultation, the final stage in the process rests with the Secretary of State to give final approval to the RSS Phase Two Revision, presumably in Spring 2010.

3.4 Whilst the exact short term timetable is still subject to confirmation by GOWM, the above is the current best estimate that can be used as a basis for planning the process of preparing an Assembly response to the Proposed Changes (see Section 4). In any case, time will be very precious when the Proposed Changes come out for consultation, not least if we are to achieve sufficient engagement and consensus building with regional partners, in particular, local authorities.

4. Next steps

4.1 The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes will be a crucial step in the Phase Two process and the last formal opportunity for the Assembly and regional partners to influence the outcome. It will be of great importance to prepare a coordinated response. As flagged up above, the Proposed Changes are expected to be published shortly and the time period for preparing and agreeing a response will be tight.

4.2 In order to be effective in influencing the final outcome, a coordinated regional response will be essential. RSS Policy Leads will be leading on the development of the Assembly response. However, the input from regional partners, in particular from Section 4(4) Authorities, will also be critical. Partners are therefore strongly encouraged to share their emerging position with the Assembly at the earliest opportunity, especially where there may be areas of concern or conflicts with the emerging regional position. It is recognised that it may not always be possible to achieve perfect correlation but early communication will be beneficial in any case to achieve maximum alignment.

4.3 The estimated timetable for preparing an Assembly response to the Proposed Changes is set out at Appendix 1. However, key dates are still subject to confirmation by GOWM and may therefore change, in particular the end of the consultation period.

4.4 Under this timetable, the Assembly Board will consider a first draft response at their meeting on 15th January 2010. As far as will be possible at that stage, the Board will be asked to agree key principles of the response and to give a clear steer for firming up the response. Subject to agreement by the Board, it is proposed that the final response is endorsed by RPEE at their meeting in February (Please note that the date of the February RPEE meeting may need to change depending on the exact timing of the end of the consultation period). It is proposed that, following RPEE's endorsement, the response would then be signed off by the Chief Executive of the Assembly, in consultation with the Assembly Chairman, for formal submission to GOWM.

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Strategic Advisor - RSS**Appendix 1 – Anticipated timetable for preparation of Assembly response****(NB. Key dates are subject to confirmation by GOWM.)**

Date	Event	Comment
04/12/2009	RSS Policy Leads & Coordination Group meetings	To consider progress of preparatory work in anticipation of Proposed Changes.
16/12/2010	Publication Proposed Changes	[tbc by GOWM]
	Circulation of draft response to PLWG & COOR	
06/01/2010	RSS Policy Leads & Coordination Group meetings	To consider first draft response to Proposed Changes.
	Circulation of draft response to Assembly Board	
15/01/2010	Assembly Board meeting	To consider first draft response to Proposed Changes
	Circulation of draft final response to PLWG & COOR	
03/02/2010	RSS Policy Leads & Coordination Group meetings	To consider draft final response to Proposed Changes.
	Circulation of draft final response to Regional Planning & Environment Executive (RPEE)	
23/02/2010	RPEE meeting – for sign-off of response	To sign-off response to Proposed Changes. NB. This date may need to change depending on the exact timing of the end of the consultation period
Mid-end 02/2010	Deadline for submission of response	[tbc by GOWM]
Spring 2010	Consideration of all formal responses and sign off of final RSS Phase Two Revision by the Secretary of State	