

West Midlands Regional Assembly

Agenda Item

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Regional Planning and Environment Executive 15 December 2009.

Quality of the Environment and Climate Change Information Report

1. Purpose of Report

To update the Executive on Quality of the Environment and Climate Change matters for information.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the report be noted.

3. Items for Information:-

Draft Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning for the Historic Environment

3.1 The draft PPS 15 Planning for the Historic Environment was launched for consultation in July. It updates planning policy affecting archaeology, historic areas, buildings and landscapes and, once finalised, will replace the current Planning Policy Guidance notes PPG15 and 16. The draft PPS 15 provides a new integrated approach to the historic environment and affirms the Government's broad aim that the historic environment, and heritage assets in particular, should be conserved, enhanced and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. The Executive responded to the consultation via the Chair and Vice Chair in October 2009.

Putting the Historic Environment to Work: A Strategy for the West Midlands

3.2 The West Midlands Historic Environment Strategy and accompanying Action Plan have been launched on the 3rd December 2009 by the Regional Historic Environment Forum. A vision for the historic environment of the West Midlands is set out together with a series of priorities under the themes of people, places and policies.

Several priorities are identified that will be carried through to the Action Plan which seeks to realise the vision over the coming years with the support of the heritage sector as well as other key regional partners and stakeholders. Copies of the Strategy and Action Plan are available at:

http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/Putting_the_Historic_Environment_to_Work_-_a_Strategy_for_the_West_Midlands.pdf?1260262205

http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/WM_HES_Action_Plan.pdf?1260262205

Sub-Regional Apportionment of Aggregates Provision 2005-2020 Project

- 3.3 The WMRA and AWM working with the Regional Aggregates Working Party (RAWP) have commissioned consultants to prepare alternative options for the apportionment of aggregates in the West Midlands for the period 2005-2020. The options will have regard to the level of aggregate resources in the West Midlands in relation to planning and environmental considerations and population and household growth projections.
- 3.4 The options will be subject to an independent Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environment Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment. It is proposed to involve all Mineral Planning Authorities in the process through the RAWP. The Project should be completed in early 2010 and the results are also required to be submitted to Government by the end of March.

Heritage Counts West Midlands

- 3.5 Heritage Counts West Midlands 2009 is the eighth annual survey of the region's historic environment. It is prepared by English Heritage on behalf of the West Midlands Historic Environment Forum. It forms part of a national set of work that now includes a full set of regional indicators as well as view maps detailing the historic environment. This year the project has included a study that shows the importance of the historic environment in having a positive impact on sense of place and social capital.
- 3.6 For more information please see :

www.english-heritage.org.uk/heritagecounts

West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework Refresh

- 3.7 The refresh of the Framework follows five years of implementation. This work will update the Framework to align more closely with the National Trees, Woodlands and Forestry Strategy and will lead to the development of new benefits for the trees, woodlands and forestry sector in the region.
- 3.8 The refreshed Framework has been widely discussed and developed by a number of specialised themes groups and is now out to consultation to key stakeholders for further comment until the 22nd January 2010. The new Framework will be a web based resource and will lead to the new three year rolling Delivery Plan that will be updated each year together with annual monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Natural Assets Programme

- 3.9 A new programme has been launched by Natural England funded by AWM aimed at unlocking the economic potential of natural assets in the West Midlands. The £2 million grant programme is open to a wide range of bodies including local authorities at 90% rate. It is expected that up to 15 grants will be awarded. The programme will focus attention on realising the economic benefits from environmental initiatives and how with investment the natural environment can support local jobs and economic activity.

River Basin Management Plans for Severn and Humber and Flood and Water Management Bill

- 3.10 The final drafts of the two River Basin Management Plans that cover the West Midlands have been submitted to the Secretary of State for approval. This is the culmination of work to set out the pressures facing the water environment in the region and to work required up to 2015 to address them. This will fulfil the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
- 3.11 The Frameworks set out targets for higher environment standards that will require a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities to be involved. The proposed Strategy for the West Midlands will need to take account of these new statutory plans in the future.
- 3.12 The Flood and Water Management Bill has been published by the Government. This is a response to the implementation of the EU Floods Directive regulations. This Bill aims to provide improved more sustainable management of flood risk, help safeguard against surface water flooding and protect water supplies.

Challenge or Opportunity? How to Plan for Climate Change

- 3.13 As part of a series of reports prepared by the West Midlands Regional Observatory on the state of the region, this report sets out to explain the challenges and opportunities that may face six different policy areas as a result of climate change. The report aims to demonstrate that climate change will impact on all areas of life, but that these areas can all contribute to minimising the impact, help adapt to the changing climate and take advantage of the opportunities that arise.
- 3.14 In terms of planning there are useful chapters on the built environment, natural resources, transport and energy and waste. For the built environment, it emphasises the scale of the challenge in that up to half of carbon emissions result for the energy use of the built environment. The report, together with other reports on the state of the region, is available in **Appendix 1**.

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