

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Assembly Board of Directors

15 January 2010

Regional Policy Activity for West Midlands Regional Assembly

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Board on key issues undertaken by the Secretariat on behalf of the Board and Assembly Partnerships over the last quarter.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Board considers the report and **notes** progress made.

3. REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS)

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Assembly, as the Regional Planning Body, is bringing forward the partial phased revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. In addition, ongoing work is being conducted in relation to RSS implementation, monitoring and conformity. Reports have been submitted to Assembly Members on a regular basis to update and inform them of the progress.

RSS Phase Two – See Agenda Item 7

RSS Phase Three – See Agenda Item 8

RSS Implementation

- 3.2 It will be recalled that a 'supplement' to the RSS Draft Implementation Plan was prepared ahead of the Examination in Public (EiP) held earlier in the year. In practice, this provided a valuable input to the EiP demonstrating the deliverability of the strategy and particularly the infrastructure requirements needed to support it.
- 3.3 Subsequently, in their report to the Secretary of State, the Panel was generally very positive about the approach to implementation adopted by

this Region concluding that 'the implementation arrangements for the West Midlands are as well developed as those for any RSS'.

- 3.4 A recent Draft Policy Statement on Regional Strategies has once again confirmed the importance of preparing an Implementation Plan to accompany any submission of the Regional Strategy in the future.

Contact Officer: David Thew, d.thew@wmra.gov.uk

Conformity

- 3.5 The Regional Assembly has recently given a formal opinion that Focussed Changes to the Core Strategy Publication Document for Rugby Borough are in general conformity with the published WMRSS. The changes address the original concerns of the Assembly in relation to employment provision and policies connected to offices that were in the Publication Document and follow productive discussions between officers of the WMRA and Rugby Borough Council.
- 3.6 The Regional Assembly has also been consulted on Publication Documents for the joint Black Country Core Strategy and Brierley Hill Area Action Plan. These are significant Plans for the sub-region and the WMRSS objective of facilitating urban renaissance. The Assembly's formal opinion of general conformity with the WMRSS will be provided in mid-January.

Contact Officer: Tim Williams, t.williams@wmra.gov.uk

4. RURAL

West Midlands Rural Affairs Update

- 4.1 The 32nd Meeting of the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum was held on 10th December 2009 at the BVSC, Birmingham City Centre. In addition to RSS, Regional Governance and RDPE updates, the refresh of the WMRAF core principles, vision, purpose and terms of reference were reviewed. Presentations were received on the Broadband and Digital Media – a Shropshire Perspective, European Funding for Rural Areas, Illuminating the Rural Fringe – managing environmental change using the rural-urban fringe as a focus, and the Farmsteads and Landscapes Project.

Rural Affairs Forum Conference

- 4.2 The Forum's Annual Conference is being held this year on Tuesday 16th March at the Stafford Showground.

Rural Proofing

- 4.3 The West Midlands Rural Community Action Network in conjunction with WMRAF and Government Office are hosting an event on 18th January to demonstrate areas of best practice in terms of rural proofing both at a regional and county level and to help improve and embed the practice of rural proofing so that outcomes can be delivered more consistently. Rural Advocate, Stuart Burgess together with WMRAF Chair, Bob Forster, will lead the day with presentations from Claire Robinson, Advantage West Midlands, and Sara Roberts, WMRA, on rural proofing to date of the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies respectively.

Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)/Leader

- 4.4 AWM now provide monthly updates on the developments, news and achievements of the RDPE Programme at the start of every month. See: www.advantagewm.co.uk/working-with-us/rdpe/programme-performance/default.aspx
- 4.5 Axis 2 of the RDPE funds both woodland and agri-environment grant schemes. These are administered by the Forestry Commission and Natural England respectively.
- 4.6 The key message is that grants are available now and applications are invited. Because of the favourable exchange rates, more money is available for more projects. However, it must be noted that there may be some complications in the provision of Treasury match funding.

CROSS BORDER WORKING WITH WALES

Succession arrangements

- 4.7 As confirmed at the last meeting, the succession arrangements for the Central Wales-West Midlands Cross Border Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) were discussed at October's Joint Strategy & Investment Board RAG Meeting seeking their advice. It was recommended that the ownership pass to the JSIB on 1st April 2010.

A New Way of Working

- 4.8 Endorsed by the Central Wales-West Midlands Core Officer Group in November, the Welsh-English Strategic Regeneration Programme represents a co-operative approach leading to real economic, environmental and social improvements for the benefit of the people who live in the border area and beyond:
- Providing a means to meet the needs that local communities, businesses and service providers have expressed, which are particular to this geographical area and not currently being well met through current interventions;

- Enabling businesses and public sector organisations to make linkages with complementary businesses and organisations elsewhere in the area, for mutual benefit;
- Showcasing what can be done in terms of rural regeneration, making the Welsh-English borders synonymous with innovation and achievement;
- Acting as a template for wider national learning, particularly in relation to rural proofing and 'deep rural' issues.

4.9 The Programme is made up of a linked series of interventions that together are intended to bring about sustainable economic regeneration. Ultimately, this is about keeping jobs in the rural communities, having better quality jobs and more of them. It's about having communities with a heart and with energy. It is about valuing the quality of the natural environment that makes the Welsh-English border areas what they are.

Additional support

4.10 Additional funding has been secured from the Welsh Assembly Government and AWM in order to finance a Co-ordinator/Facilitator Officer post. Recruitment, through secondment, has been delayed again but is now likely in February/March 2010.

Cross Border Dates:

4.11 15 January - Health & Social Care Group

4.12 11 February - Cross Border Core Officers Group, Offa's Dyke Centre, Knighton

4.13 June 2010 - Cross Border Strategic Forum

4.14 July 2010 - Town/Parish/Community Councils Event, Wyastone, Herefordshire

TREES, WOODS & FORESTRY – REGIONAL FORESTRY FRAMEWORK

West Midlands Woodland & Forestry Forum

4.15 Business Link West Midlands was the venue for the December Forum meeting. There was a full agenda with presentations on the Regional Forestry Economic Baseline, the refresh of the West Midlands Forestry Framework, Climate Change resilience and opportunities in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, Trees and Woodlands in the Built Environment, and an update on the Regional Spatial Strategy Revisions and new regional governance and policy.

Regional Forestry Framework - Refresh

- 4.16 After five years implementation, the Regional Forestry Framework has been reviewed by a series of thematic task groups over the summer and the refreshed draft is out for wider consultation. Forum members and stakeholders are being encouraged to provide responses by Friday 22nd January.
- 4.17 The West Midlands Woodland and Forestry Forum meet next in June 2010.

Contact officer: Sara Roberts, s.roberts@wmra.gov.uk

5. HOUSING UPDATE

Regional Housing Pot 2010-11

- 5.1 The Regional Housing Executive submitted its advice to CLG on the housing capital funding to local authorities for 2010/2011. As the Assembly Board have previously been notified, the total the Region is to receive under this funding stream, which covers funding for Decent Homes Municipal and Private Sector Renewal, is £54.681m. This amount is £10m less than the initial indicative allocation due to the switch of funding from the local authorities' private sector renewal programme to the National Affordable Housing Programme as part of the Government's Housing Pledge to fund extra affordable homes. Included in the submission were the concerns raised by local authorities of the negative impact of the funding switch, in terms of meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people and in stalling much needed regeneration schemes.

The Kick Start Equity Loan Partnership

- 5.2 The Kick Start Equity Loan Partnership delivers a programme of private sector home improvements through equity loans and other financial products. This is continuing to expand with the new groups of local authorities joining, which will help improve the efficiency of service delivery. Local authorities have been working on their local delivery plans and these will be presented to the Kick Start Operational Board at its meeting on 22 January 2010 in order to shape the Delivery Plan for the whole programme for 2010/2011.

RSS Revision Phase 3 Public Consultation – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 5.3 Following the completion of the consultation on options phase of the RSS Phase 3 Revision process an Interim Regional Policy Statement on the provision of new accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople has been produced. This is currently being developed in consultation with local authorities and other stakeholders for submission to the Secretary of State in March 2010. GOWM have confirmed that the Interim Regional Policy Statement will be a 'material consideration' in

Planning Inquiries into planning applications and at LDF Examinations in Public. It is expected to carry similar weight to that of a submitted draft Regional Spatial Strategy Preferred Option. In addition to the Interim Regional Policy Statement, Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople policy work will continue to be developed within the new Regional Strategy.

Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant Programme 2009/10

- 5.4 As in 2008/09, the Region has £2.5M allocated to contribute to the funding of new pitches provided by RSLs and Local Authorities. Four bids were submitted to the 2009/10 bidding round from Sandwell MBC, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Rugby and Bromsgrove in conjunction with Rooftop Housing Group. These bids were considered at the Regional Housing Executive meeting held on 24 September 2009. Following the meeting two bids, from Sandwell MBC and Bromsgrove / Rooftop Housing Group were recommended to Ministers for funding. At the time of writing Ministers have yet to confirm funding.

Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant Programme 2010/11

- 5.5 It is expected that the 2010/2011 bid round for the Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant Programme will be announced early in 2010 and local authorities are encouraged to submit bids in order to ensure full take up of the Region's share of funding, which remains (so far) , as with the previous two years' funding, at £2.5m. Local authorities considering whether to submit bids are advised to speak to housing colleagues at the Assembly or Rob Kilby from the Homes and Communities Agency.

Sub-Regional Housing Market Area Partnerships (HMAPs)

- 5.6 The HMAPs continue to meet on a regular basis and progress regional housing issues sub-regionally and locally. The Central HMAP is developing a brief to produce a sub-regional housing strategy and has commissioned work on issues of overcrowding and the role of the private rented sector. The North HMA is also undertaking preparatory work on a sub-regional housing strategy and is reviewing its original Strategic Housing Market Assessment, to update information in light of recent housing market changes. In the South and West HMAs, new constitutional arrangements have recently been introduced and both Partnerships are commencing a new programme of activity. WMRA's Secretariat continues to support the Partnership meetings and provides particular support in regards to sub-regional housing strategy development, the dissemination of National policy and formulation of Regional advice to Ministers (e.g. Regional Funding Advice).

Research Programme

- 5.7 The Regional Housing Executive has commissioned a range of research to refresh the joint shared evidence base to update the Regional Housing

Strategy, now to be included in the forthcoming Regional Strategy, the 'Strategy for the West Midlands'.

5.8 Over the last year the following commissions have been signed off and are available:

http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Housing/Publications_Guidance_and_Research/Research_Programme_200810.aspx This first group were mainly used as evidence for the RSS Phase 2 Examination in Public in April/May 2009.

- Affordability and Housing Supply - A review of the implications for the West Midlands of the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit recommendations.
- Housing demand and need in the West Midlands: 2009 revision to regional estimates for 2006 to 2026 April 2009.
- A planning-constraints based mapping exercise to inform policy for site provision for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople.
- Implications of Market Conditions for West Midlands Housing Markets and Regional Housing Policy 2009 (Credit Crunch Report).
- The Implications of the Economic Downturn for Regional Housing Targets (Credit Crunch report for EiP).
- House Price Analysis 2004-2008.
- Low Carbon Housing - developing a baseline for refurbishment in the West Midlands.
- Analysis of Strategic Housing Market Assessments in the West Midlands: Stage 1 Technical Report.
- Most recent occupiers in new build housing, survey for 2005-2008 and written report.

5.9 The following research commissions have also been let:

- Additional work to provide a regional overview of the Strategic Housing Market Assessments;
- Evaluation of the implications of economic conditions for homelessness in the Region (for West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group)
- An update on sub regional Housing Market Area geographical analysis;
- Work to explore the links between housing and health;
- An exploration of the impacts to date of the recession on housing markets in the Region and an evaluation of responses to these impacts;
- An update of work to examine the interface between housing and economic growth to provide an up to date picture given changes in housing markets and economic structure;
- Work to explore the links between transport systems and housing markets;

- An evaluation of the role and potential of the intermediate housing market and private rented sector in the West Midlands;
- A review of the housing evidence base to provide a synthesised overview of issues.

Contact Officers:

Steve Forrest: s.forrest@wmra.gov.uk

Emma Kiteley: e.kiteley@wmra.gov.uk

Fran Gilbert: f.gilbert@wmra.gov.uk

6. TRANSPORT

Regional Strategy

- 6.1 Transport is an important component of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The activities associated with RSS Phase 2 are set out elsewhere in this report.

Regional Funding Advice (RFA) - Transport

- 6.2 Significant progress has been made with the Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF), with the approval of £9.8 million funding for Wolverhampton City Council for the £22 million Phase 1 of the Interchange project. The project will transform the transport infrastructure of the City, unlocking the development of new office and retail space, starting with the redevelopment of the bus station.
- 6.3 Due for completion in Spring 2011, the RIF money will be used to clear the current site and redevelop a new bus station in its place, while providing temporary facilities during the construction of the new facility. The money will also facilitate the refurbishment of the listed Queen building and the development of retail and leisure floor space on the site.
- 6.4 In addition to the new bus station, Phase 1 of the Interchange project will deliver improvements to local highway infrastructures and public realm areas. A new pedestrian bridge linking the new bus station with the train station will also be developed under Phase 1, as will improvements to the Cornhill bridge for vehicle access.

Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS)

- 6.5 In December 2009 the Department for Transport confirmed that four transport studies in the West Midlands are set to share £1m from its 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS) programme.
- 6.6 The West Midlands DaSTS programme is being jointly managed by the West Midlands Leaders Board and Advantage West Midlands, through the shadow Joint Strategy & Investment Board. It will identify what the region's transport needs will be from 2014; planning now to ensure that

the West Midlands develops a sustainable transport programme that builds on current strategy and delivery programmes that are being delivered across the region now. The initial findings will be reported to the Department for Transport in April 2010.

6.7 The £1m funding will be divided amongst the following four studies:

- Growth Point Connectivity – will look at the transport challenges caused by increased house building and economic growth around the Shrewsbury, Hereford and Telford area.
- Improving Connectivity in Coventry north-south corridor – will examine key travel patterns to, from and within the Coventry area linking Nuneaton, Coventry, Kenilworth, Leamington Spa and Warwick.
- Improving Connectivity in North Staffordshire – will examine key travel patterns for people and goods around the Stoke-on-Trent area,
- Birmingham Access Study– this joint DfT/regional study will consider road and rail access to/around Birmingham for freight and passengers (including addressing M6, M5 and M42 performance issues).

High Speed 2

6.8 At the end of December 2009 High Speed 2 Ltd presented its findings to the DfT. In their latest newsletter HS2 state “The report we have submitted provides a detailed assessment of the London to West Midlands route and possible extensions further north at a broader and less detailed level of assessment. This is underpinned by a vast amount of information, in particular substantial reports on the Appraisal of Sustainability and the route engineering work.

6.9 The report acknowledges the very constructive engagement we have had with a wide range of interested stakeholders from London right up to Scotland. I am very grateful to everyone who has contributed to our work, provided evidence for us to consider or shown a keen interest. It is a pleasure to have been involved in a project for which there has been so much enthusiasm.

6.10 Earlier this month Lord Adonis indicated how he would like to take HS2 forward assuming he agrees with our conclusions. The first step will be a Government response to our report by the end of March next year. It is likely our report would be published as part of this announcement. This would be followed by a public consultation in the Autumn of 2010 which

will give everyone with an interest the opportunity to submit their views formally. In the meantime we will continue to report any key developments on our website. When our report is published, the website will contain the full suite of documentation which accompanies it."

Regional Transport Priorities Action Plan (RTPAP)

- 6.11 The RTPAP progress report will be published at a regional transport conference (expected in February 2010).

Contact Officer: Danny Lamb, d.lamb@wmra.gov.uk

7. REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 The West Midlands Regional Climate Change Action Plan was launched in January 2008. Progress on its 30 actions is continuing and progress reports have been presented to the Regional Minister. The next report to the Regional Minister sets out a range of projects that have been delivered. This includes the implications and next steps on the Governments Low Carbon Transition Plan, the promotion of the opportunities presented by climate change and the organisation of visits to leading edge examples of low energy schemes in the West Midlands. A contribution to the West Midlands Regional Observatory Annual Conference has been prepared on the theme of Challenge or Opportunity? –How to Plan for Climate Change. It is also proposed to refresh the Climate Change Action Plan to take full account of the Climate Change Act and impetus from Copenhagen 2009 and to align the Climate Change Panel with the emerging structures in early 2010.
- 7.2 The forthcoming Regional Strategy should include plans to tackle climate change, including energy and carbon reduction plans and targets. The GOWM are to look at plans and targets and a new body the Office for Renewable Energy Deployment (ORED) will work to ensure the 2020 targets are achieved and will provide support to this process.. PPS 1 and PPS 22 are also to be updated and combined into new PPS. The Climate Change Office have submitted a £65K bid for to the ORED to carry out a full assessment of the renewable and energy potential of the region. This will help to accelerate implementation and support the achievement of the national renewable energy target by 2020.
- 7.3 The Climate Change Adaptation Partnership has had three meetings and it has published a report on Climate Change Adaptation in the West Midlands: A Framework for Progress. With the launch of the UK Climate Change Projections in June a number of workshops have been held to explain the implications of the changing climate might be for the Region and to encourage organisations to take account of this work.

- 7.4 Further work is proposed on developing a communications plan and increasing awareness and understanding of the implications of climate change based on the results of new national research on the impacts of a changing climate on the West Midlands. Work on projects to investigate adaptation and health and resilience are in progress.

Contact Officer: Chris Blakeley, c.blakeley@wmra.gov.uk

8. QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 Environment partners have contributed to the production of interim policy recommendation on aggregates and other Policy Recommendations as part of the RSS Phase 3 work streams.
- 8.2 Treweek Consultants have completed a Regional Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) scoping report. This will identify whether there is a 'likely significant effect' on any European sites arising from the WMRSS Phase Three Revision process. Where there is a 'Likely significant effect' and adverse effects cannot be excluded this assessment will identify the avoidance or mitigation measures required to avoid any adverse effects on site integrity. Further work is in progress to undertake a Habitats Regulations review of the Interim Policy Statements and Policy Recommendations for the RSS Phase 3 work.
- 8.3 The West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party (RAWP) have commissioned work to develop a sub regional apportionment of aggregates up to 2020. This information has been requested by the Government to an extended deadline of March 2010. The sub regional apportionment needs to be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment. A technical consultation of the RAWP on the draft apportionment developed by the RAWP and Land Use Consultants has been issued for comment by the 22nd January 2010.
- 8.4 A Regional Historic Environment Strategy "Putting the Historic Environment to Work" supported by the Regional Assembly and other partners has been completed and launched in December 2009 by the Regional Historic Environment Forum. The Strategy has a four year lifespan up to 2013 and has been prepared to help policy makers ensure that the historic environment is considered in evolving strategic plans in the region. A draft Action Plan up to 2011 has also been produced. Also Heritage Counts, the eights annual survey of the West Midlands historic environment has been published.
- 8.5 The RPEE has responded to the draft PPS 15 on Planning for the Historic Environment. This important PPS updates planning policy guidance

affects a wider range of historic assets including archaeology, historic areas and landscapes as well as buildings.

- 8.6 The update of the regional habitat targets has been completed and these have been used to develop the RSS Phase 3 biodiversity policy recommendation and develop a draft Regional Biodiversity Delivery Plan. This will take account of the new England Biodiversity Delivery Framework and its set of 18 priority landscape scale project areas.
- 8.7 A renewed initiative to promote the benefits of Green Infrastructure (GI) is being developed by the Forestry Commission and other partners so as GI becomes an essential part of the development of sustainable communities and a recognised part of sustainable economic growth.
- 8.8 A new Natural Assets Programme has been launched by Natural England funded by AWM aimed at unlocking the economic potential of natural assets in the West Midlands. The £2million grant programme is open to a wide range of bodies at a 90% rate .
- 8.9 The final drafts of the two River Basin Management Plans for Severn and Humber Regions have been submitted to the Government. These plans set out targets for higher environment standards that will have implications for all plan making in the West Midlands.

Contact Officer: Chris Blakeley, c.blakeley@wmra.gov.uk

10. EUROPE

European examples of integrated strategy development

- 10.1 West Midlands in Europe undertook a piece of work for the Joint Strategy and Investment Board and the European Strategy Board examining best practice in integrated strategy development and delivery. This is now the subject of an ESPON bid - which if successful would provide the funding for researchers to undertake a bespoke comparative piece of work on behalf of the region and european partner regions.

Contact Officer: Richard Tuffs, richard.tuffs@westmidlandsineurope.org

Committee of the Regions Automotive group

- 10.2 At the European level, the Chair of the European Strategy Board is taking the role of vice chair of a group of automotive industry regions - supported by Interreg and potentially by ERDF funding bids. A major conference will take place in Birmingham on 28th and 29th January

Contact officer: Kishor Pala, kpala@easn.eu

European Institute of Innovation and Technology

- 10.3 In December 2009 AWM succeeded in their bid for a Knowledge Innovation Community giving the region the potential to act as a catalyst linking key climate change developments in the region with EU regions and cities in the same field, focussing particularly on domestic housing and transport.

**Contact officer: John Bloomfield, jonbloomfield@advantagewm.co.uk
Contact Officer: Esther Knight, e.knight@wmra.gov.uk**

ESF

- 10.4 Local government colleagues have been considering how the European Social Fund will be delivered within the region following both the closure of the LSC and responsibility for 16-19 funding transferring back to local authorities. The current co-financing agreement between the LSC and the WMLB is being cited as good practice by the LGA and will be used as the basis for all English regions in the future.

Contact officer: Joy Holland, j.holland@westmidlandsleadresboard.gov.uk

11. HEALTH

- 11.1 The Regional Health Partnership continues to promote and implement the Regional Health and Well-being Strategy. Champions have been identified for each of the Strategies Chapters and work is underway to review the chapters in the light of progress and changed circumstances, this includes the linkages between health and economy.
- 11.2 The Partnership is also considering its future beyond the Assembly and its December 2009 meeting was organised as a workshop session to look at its future. The outputs and implications from the meeting have still to be worked through and considered by the Partnership. However, it was clear that members consider that there is an on going need for a regional forum covering public health issues and a consequent commitment to taking the Partnership forward.

Contact officer: Janet Baker, Janet.Baker@dh.gsi.gov.uk

12. LIVING WELL

- 12.1 Year 2 evaluation report – The January edition of the Living Well newsletter will contain the key findings and learning from the year 2 evaluation information provided by our evaluators GHK, which will be both circulated and available on the Living Well website: www.livingwellwestmidlands.org. Some of the cumulative statistics include:

- 3,640 physical activity sessions.

- 2,030 mental wellbeing sessions.
- 870 healthy eating sessions.

And, in terms of other significant outputs:

- 1,000 professionals engaged in training activity.
- 540 partner organisations contacted / engaged.
- 300 people consulted.
- 170 volunteers recruited and / or trained.
- 110 sessions relating to consultation / research and scoping activities.
- 36 sites improved (not rounded).

In relation to the core outcomes (i.e. those collected by nearly all projects) of the Portfolio:

- Around 5,600 have improved levels of mental wellbeing, and the average points improvement on the WEMWBS (for those projects reporting this figure) was 5;
- Around 4,410 people are now taking more physical activity - 3,090 of which are to the recommended levels; and,
- Around 1,990 people have improved their diet and 1,380 are now eating 5-a-day.

12.2 Other interesting outcomes (not necessarily collected by a majority of projects) include:

- 3,900 people have improved knowledge of approaches to improving mental wellbeing;
- 150 employers have changed practice to better address mental wellbeing in the workplace;
- 7,460 people have increased their enjoyment / knowledge / opportunity for physical activity. The same figure for healthy eating is 2,820; and,
- 550 beneficiaries have gone on to access other services / similar opportunities / with improved knowledge of other services.

- 12.3 Second Living Well Annual Conference - This years Annual conference held in October was entitled 'Mental wellbeing and Commissioning' and over 200 regional leaders from across the health sector including commissioners, PCT's, Local Authorities and project leads attended to discuss and contribute their views on commissioning for population mental health and wellbeing. The idea behind the conference was to give the projects the opportunity to present their work directly to the commissioners. We were really pleased with the speakers we managed to bring to the conference including Alan Turley, Head of Sustainable Community Development – Stoke on Trent City Council, Dr Neil Deuchar, Medical Director - West Midlands Strategic Health Authority, Gregor Henderson, Well-being & Population Mental Health Programme Lead - National Mental Health Development Unit and Karen Newbigging, Philosophy, Mental Health & Social Inclusion, Principle Lecturer, Senior Researcher Fellow - University of Central Lancashire. Delegates considered the challenges and solutions for both commissioners and service providers in terms of what evidence projects can and need to provide and what information is most relevant for the commissioning process.
- 12.4 Press Coverage - Using Ad-value comparison data Ignition PR, the communications project for Living Well estimate they have secured over £25,000 worth of coverage for the portfolio and projects to date. Additionally the Communications team have put together a wider distribution list for our publications and news items, including tapping into the intranet for Local Authorities and PCT's. This has proved to be a really successful method of distributing information about the portfolio.
- 12.5 Engagement with other Regional and National Wellbeing Portfolios – A national wellbeing portfolios meeting was held in London at the Time to Change offices on the 7th December, which was an opportunity to share ideas and information across the portfolios, in particular the discussions focussed on sustaining project activity beyond the life of Wellbeing funding in a difficult economic climate.
- 12.6 Sustainability - to help projects with sustainability, we plan to hold two workshops in February as follows:
1. Bid writing workshop (5th February) – This was put in place further to requests from projects via GHK's evaluation visits. We may use information from this workshop to give more one to one support or follow on workshops as needs are identified.

2. Economic Analysis workshop (12th February) – This was something that projects indicated they would find useful with respect to commissioning and making the best economic case for the projects.

Contact Officer: Zena Lynch, z.lynch@wmra.gov.uk

13. Equalities and Diversity Partnership

- 13.1 The final Equalities and Diversity meeting took place on the 22nd September. This remit has now been transferred to a sub group of the Economic Inclusion Panel as the new the Equality and Diversity Advisory Forum. The inaugural meeting took place on the 17th November as part of Diversity week. The secretariat is provided by GOWM and the group will now meet quarterly.
- 13.2 The new Sub-Group, which includes the Leaders' Board Chief Executive, will continue to act as a strategic champion, reference point and forum for equality and diversity in the West Midlands.

Other Work Areas - OPEN:

- 13.3 OPEN is a two year project funded through the Progress funding stream from Europe, working with partners from Italy, Spain and Germany. The WMRA is leading the work in the West Midlands. OPEN focuses on raising awareness, debate around social inclusion and protection issues
- 13.4 2009 has focused upon engagement with frontline, public sector and third sector organisations through a series of thematic seminars. These have been around:
 1. 1st October 09 – Children's rights and conditions
 2. 14th October 09 – Family policies – decent housing for all
 3. 4th November 09 – Ethnic minorities & immigrants
 4. 20th November 09 – Health and long term care for older people
 5. 3rd December 09 – Labour market a place free from exploitation
 6. 20th January 2010 – Pathways to social & job inclusion for people with disabilities
- 13.5 2010 of OPEN will focus on taking this feedback through to policy makers and developing a strategic response. This specifically is seeking to influence the Strategy for the West Midlands.
- 13.6 The initial feedback and reports for this work will be available online by the end of January. The first regional event targeting regional policy makers and the regional Minister shall take place in March 2010.

Good practice examples

13.7 A number of good practice examples that have been submitted by workshop participants. These are currently being assessed and a selection will be developed into full case studies by Regen WM with support from SWM. These will be available with the other OPEN programme materials online. Five projects will be selected for inclusion in the final best practice EU handbook and also taken forward and presented to EU commissioners in April 2010

Contact Officer: Dalvinder Panesar: d.panesar@wmra.gov.uk

Olwen Dutton
Chief Executive
0121 678 1031
o.dutton@wmra.gov.uk