

**Monitoring Stakeholders Event-
25th September 2009**

Quality of the Environment Workshop Notes

1. Environment Policy Lead briefly outlined the results of the RSS Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2008 as it relates to Quality of the Environment. There were positive results on the reuse of derelict land. For flood risk broadly positive and comparable with the previous year. The headlines are that in terms of the AMR improvements have been made, but some indicators represent only a small part of the asset, whilst for others, eg renewable energy there is little chance of reaching targets despite modest increases.
2. Discussion- Natural England raised the good news about the improved condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and indicated that this could improve further for the 08/09 AMR round. However, the RSS has little influence over the state of SSSIs that are affected by land management issues. The indicator does not deal with the more intractable issue of continuing habitats fragmentation and subsequent impact on species, for example.
3. Difficult choices –more sophistication needed in AMR, but the Single Regional Strategy could be at a higher level, with environmental monitoring squeezed to fit? Environment Policy Lead highlighted the challenge of reflecting the quality of the environment properly in the AMR. Difficulty increased in Single Regional Strategy, with possible less depth and wide range of topics under quality of the environment.
4. Current indicators are often only partial, eg Forestry and Woodlands not picking up all the planting from planning conditions. Natural England mentioned specific need to review indicator for forestry and woodlands to reflect wider benefits of green space/Green Infrastructure. Need to link to economic value of assets/low carbon economy, eg Green Infrastructure, solar gain reduces need for air conditioning or heating.
5. English Heritage drew attention to the region's poor performance relative to others and indicated a need for a broader approach to historic environment, moving from listed buildings to heritage at risk, linked into the national programme of monitoring. Still dependant on having right skills at local authority level, for example to undertake surveys. Issues of consistency and comprehensiveness in surveys.

6. Environment Policy Lead stressed the importance of narrative in the AMR that tries to bring out wider issues and emphasises policy interventions.
7. Natural England commented that the existing indicators have a protectionist stance – what we could lose, and the Single Regional Strategy may be an opportunity to widen approach to a more positive stance. Environmental monitoring reliant on Environmental Agencies and their decisions on what is important. Important to collect consistent data only once.
8. Waste Policy Lead commented that data collection needs to be continuous and meaningful over longer term. Changes in definition eg what is waste what is recycled make it difficult to understand trends. Also, importance of intelligence. Warwick 52% recycling rate sounds good comparatively, but if most is green waste of which a proportion could be dealt with at source, may not be best solution.
9. Example of renewable energy indicator - may not include wider micro renewable figures and disguises energy from waste. Minerals Policy Lead commented that there is difference between installed capacity with power plants and the actual output. Workshop recognised the importance of monitoring progress on climate change and the move to a low carbon economy.
- 10 Environment Agency commented re flood risk indicator, needs greater response from local authorities. Contrary call from a local authority for the Environment Agency to find out information from local authorities.
11. Waste Policy Lead set out new web based tool for all local authorities to complete database of existing waste facilities. Each authority can add to list based on permissions granted and to enable waste arising and capacity of infrastructure to deal with waste in a way other than landfill to be reflected. Contrasted the aggregates levy, which has had minimal impact, with landfill tax that is changing the way industry diverts waste from landfill. Impact on Small and Medium sized Enterprises at high £72 a tonne will be 8% of turnover so waste/resource use becomes a key economic issue.
12. Environment Policy Lead fed back to conference the need for more sophisticated indicators to reflect fully environmental assets, the issue of reliance on data from Environmental Agencies, the need to monitor climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the need to reflect the economic benefits of assets.