

## EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PARTNERSHIP

### Notes of meeting held 24 November 2006 at Austin Court, Birmingham

#### PRESENT:

#### Members

**(Please note: following the acceptance of proposals regarding membership at the 16 June 2006 EIAP meeting, a distinction is no longer made between formal and ex-officio members of the Partnership)**

Cllr Sir Albert Bore (WMLGA) – Chair, Cllr Michael Angell (CoR), Cllr Philip Atkins (WMLGA), Cllr Eddie Boden (WMLGA), Denise Craig (FSB), Cllr Pauline Dee (CLRAE), Julie Fowler (Learning and Skills Council), Neena Gill MEP, Malcolm Harbour MEP, Cllr Martin Heatley (WMLGA), Jerry Hutchinson (EIAP Secretary, North Warwickshire Borough Council), Judith Lamie (University of Birmingham, representing Michael Clarke), Richard Randall (representing Liz Lynne MEP), Roger Sumpton (AWM), Cllr Ken Taylor (WMLGA)

#### Officers

Jon Bloomfield (AWM), Esther Knight (WMRA), Helena Muskett (Chair REIOG), Stefan Preuss (WMRA), James Watkins (WMBC), Glynis Whiting (WMiE), Patrick Willcocks (Chair REFPG), Louise Chilton (WMLGA)

Item	Discussion and Decision	Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies</b> Apologies had been received from: Philip Bradbourn MEP, David Burton (CWMCC), Philip Bushill-Matthews MEP, Mike Cherry (FSB), Prof Michael Clarke (WMHEA), Cllr Sue Davis (CLRAE), Olwen Dutton (Regional Partnership), John Edwards (AWM), Cllr Roger Lawrence (WMLGA), Liz Lynne MEP, Isabella Moore (AWM), Cllr Paul Tilsley (WMLGA), Cllr Milner Whiteman (CoR)</p>	
2.	<p><b>Notes of 29 September meeting and matters arising</b> The notes were <b>agreed</b> as a correct record of the meeting. Relevant action points were to be covered in the day's agenda.</p>	
	<b>For Discussion</b>	
3.	<p><b>Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013 progress</b> The Partnership was briefed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the outcome of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) consultation, including financial allocations and changes to management arrangements for the 2007-2013 structural funds programme period and</li> <li>• the programme document for the Region and its consultation process.</li> </ul> <p>Members were asked to note the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Region now knew how much ERDF and ESF funding it would receive for 2007-2013 and a 55% reduction in funding from the 2000-2006 programmes had led to agreement between partners to concentrate on a limited number of specific activities outlined in the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy (WMRES).</li> <li>• The EIAP's response to the NSRF consultation had stressed the Region's need to be able to tackle both basic and higher level skills through ESF funding. The final NSRF had confirmed the focus on lower level skills whilst leaving scope for supporting some higher level skills activity to support the strategy for tackling low level skills.</li> <li>• The Region had wanted to see the European Social Fund (ESF), a</li> </ul>	

national programme, managed alongside the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) at the regional level. AWM was carrying out consultation on proposed management arrangements and, aware of concerns raised within the Region following the recent confirmation of Regional Development Agencies as regional ERDF managers, had made proposals together with the Regional Skills Council for a shared ESF/ERDF Programme Monitoring Committee for the Region which would help towards co-ordinating ESF and ERDF at the regional level.

- The EIAP had agreed the creation of a small cross sector steering committee to prepare the regional RCE operational programme. The programme was nearly at consultation stage and would be made available shortly on <http://www.westmidlandsworkingtogether.org.uk/government/home.php>
- The committee had requested a socio-economic analysis setting out the evidence base and strategy for the new programme. Concentration of resources would mean focusing funds on projects and wider initiatives which presented prospects for high value growth and sustainable jobs under three major priorities:
  - Promoting innovation, research and development
  - Stimulating enterprise development
  - Achieving sustainable urban development.
- The programme was designed to address market failure and reduce inequalities within and between regions and the geography of the programme needed to be dealt with in the context of this.
- Within Priority 1 the committee would examine five innovative technology council clusters and activities which relate to the high technology corridors.
- Priority 2 would focus on 10 clusters aligning the programme to the current WMRES and would stress linkage between the food and drink, tourism and environmental technology clusters which would have a strong rural dimension. Both priorities 1 and 2 would provide scope for specific activities designed to respond to the needs of sparsely populated and isolated rural communities.
- The Region's disadvantaged and deprived areas are primarily located within the two major conurbations.
- The wish to integrate the rural, urban and regional European networking experiences of the 2000-2006 EU programmes (eg Leader, Urban and Equal) into the mainstream Structural Fund programme had resulted in the development of a small trans-national priority within the RCE programme.
- Partners were now being asked for observations. A further report would be brought to the February EIAP meeting; the programming document would go to the Commission by the end of March. It was hoped that the programme would become operational in early Autumn.

The EIAP welcomed the support of larger scale projects as advocated by the European Commission and made the following points during discussion:

- Was the Region prepared for the administrative change from GOWM to AWM and could it deliver and retain its previous position of 100% take-up of funding?
- How would sectors such as textiles which were concentrated in urban areas, which no longer fitted into AWM priorities but which would also not attract funding under structural funds, have access to alternative means?.
- Existing core industries needed to be funded but innovation and technology transfer would be more prominent - had this been correctly

	<p>anticipated to complete preparations by the Autumn?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was all funding of rural regeneration fully integrated or would other elements of rural money be obtainable?</li> <li>• Hard choices faced by the Region due to reduced funding had raised the issue of transparency of bidding.</li> <li>• AWM had allocated an experienced project officer, Paul John, to oversee the change in management direction and he was working closely with Mark Foley (Deputy Director Western Division) of GOWM. Three working groups including one comprised of partners were now preparing a general document on the transfer and the role of sub-regional groups within the new working arrangements. The new arrangements would ensure continuation of partnership methods which had begun with collaborative arrangements through the PMC. Mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that some of concerns aired by a number of colleagues were being addressed as summarised in a joint GOWM/AWM letter sent to partners on 26 October.</li> <li>• It was confirmed that the DTI's reluctance to show an interest in the JEREMIE, JASPER and JESSICA programmes had hampered the Region's engagement in these programmes.</li> </ul> <p>It was <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To note the outcome of the NSRF consultation and proposed responses to the ESF and governance consultations.</li> <li>• To endorse the broad framework and approach to the new RCE Operational Programme outlined in the report and to encourage widespread discussion of the programme among partners.</li> <li>• the SWOT analysis requested by the Steering Committee is available at the end of the Socio Economic Analysis section of the programming document on <a href="http://www.westmidlandsworkingtogether.org.uk/government/library/documents/post%202006%20consultation/Socio%20Economic%20Analysis.pdf">http://www.westmidlandsworkingtogether.org.uk/government/library/documents/post%202006%20consultation/Socio%20Economic%20Analysis.pdf</a></li> </ul>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Consultation on Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Spatial Options (presentation by Stefan Preuss, WMRA)</b></p> <p>The current strategy had been published in June 2004. Following its publication the Secretary of State had recommended that some issues should be immediately examined and developed further which had resulted in a partial revision being undertaken in three phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 (Black Country) had been submitted to the Secretary of State at the end of May 2006.</li> <li>• Phase 2 issues currently being examined included housing figures, employment land centres, transport and waste</li> <li>• Phase 3 would examine critical rural services, recreational provision, environmental issues and the development of a framework for provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites.</li> </ul> <p>European and International issues to note included the influence on the current WMRSS of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and the links with the Lisbon Agenda (eg role of airports, opportunity for providing employment) and the EU Landfill Directive.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the Phase Two Revision Timetable. The Consultation period would formally start in early January with the opportunity to provide feedback.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were raised:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns were expressed regarding the alignment of the WMRSS and WMRES, as the focus of the ESDP and the polycentric model on urban renaissance were inconsistent with some of the thinking expressed in the WMRES review discussions. It was confirmed that one Stage 2 aim was to align with the WMRES and that the WMRES review had provided the opportunity to foster links. Although the existing WMRSS adapted a framework of polycentric development there were sub regional foci outside major urban areas in the existing strategy and Phase 2 would look into the role of these.</li> <li>Unbalanced economic growth in London and the South East must be taken into account in the RSS revision. The current strategy had tried to address housing development in the southern part of the Region which was intended to stop migration towards London.</li> <li>The Planning Team must act on information it received about European initiatives and must consider the best method of doing this.</li> </ul> <p>The document was now available for consultation for a three month period. Any comments should be forwarded to the Planning Team on <a href="mailto:wmrss@wmra.gov.uk">wmrss@wmra.gov.uk</a> 0121 245 0200.</p>	ALL
5.	<p><b>European Commission's policy priorities for 2007</b></p> <p>This report highlighted areas of the European Commission's annual work plan for 2007 and outlined proposals for a structured approach to considering the work plan on behalf of the Region. It was proposed that the Regional European Funding and Policy Group (REFPG) review the work plan annually to highlight areas relevant to the WMRES and report on the first review to the 23 February EIAP meeting.</p> <p>EIAP members welcomed the work plan's inclusion in the EIAP agenda and the intention of the Region to shape its work around the work programme. The following comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The work plan's emphasis was on improving quality of legislation.</li> <li>The detailing of priorities and list of actions would enable European Parliament committees to better plan their workload.</li> <li>There would be focus on better regulations and targeting for Climate Change.</li> <li>Development aid was noticeably absent from the priorities.</li> <li>It was suggested that the European Council summit priorities also be reviewed annually.</li> <li>The REPPG response would be taken into consideration during the drawing up of the WMiE 2007-2008 Business Plan.</li> <li>The CoR provisional Work Programmes 2007 for the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER) and the Commission for External Relations (RELEX) and Decentralised Cooperation were also referred to.</li> </ul> <p>It was <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To note the report.</li> <li>To receive a paper at the 23 February EIAP meeting setting out the Commission priorities the Region would wish to focus on and how this could be achieved, by eg engaging with the European Parliament and relating to the CoR work programmes.</li> </ul>	REPPG
6.	<p><b>(Standing Item) News from</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The European Parliament</b></li> </ul> <p>Particular items of note over the past quarter were:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Services Directive had now been approved and regional colleagues, particularly the business community, were thanked for their input to this.</li> <li>• It was expected that the whole package of the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework (FP7) programme would be approved shortly. Alongside this the Directorate General Information Society and Media had announced plans to invest over €9 billion investment in research on information and communications technologies at the Information Society Technology 2006 conference and exhibition in Helsinki on 26 November 2006 . This is the largest single budget item in FP7. The EC was also launching the largest single consolidated public/private Joint Technology Initiative called ARTEMIS.</li> <li>• The German Presidency had indicated its priorities during its presidency in the first half of 2007 would be internal market strategy, energy and strengthening security.</li> <li>• There had been differences between the European Parliament and the Council on the 2007 budget negotiation.</li> <li>• The European Parliament had voted on a new energy policy.</li> <li>• Ask Esther about focal point for Small Businesses in RES review.</li> </ul> <p>• <b>The Committee of the Regions</b></p> <p>CoR members drew attention to the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final report of the Group working on the leverage study of the structural funds was imminent. One of the case studies was the Masshouse Project in Birmingham.</li> <li>• Information on the Regional Learning Platform was distributed.</li> <li>• The ERRIN network, originally instigated by WMiE, had been relaunched in October and was now moving from an EU-funded project to a sustainable network with membership on a subscription basis. AWM would fund membership for the West Midlands. Sectoral working groups would be set up from January 2007 which would examine key priority issues and exchange experiences.</li> </ul> <p>Further to recent discussions with the Eindhoven Brussels Office regarding ERRIN's development, there had been agreement to fund a placement from a West Midlands university or research technology organisation to reinforce staffing at the office and increase involvement of West Midlands colleges in FP7.</p>	
	<p><b>For Update</b></p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>Outcome of Assisted Areas Review</b></p> <p>The Partnership was updated on the review of the assisted areas map for 2007-2013 and its implications for the West Midlands. Ward swaps conducted since the second phase of the consultation (in line with regional responses) had resulted in a more sensible map.</p> <p>It was noted that the wards detailed in annex 1 were previous wards and that boundary changes had given rise to some oddities.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To note that overall the West Midlands maintained a strong base of coverage, despite sustaining a cut in line with national levels</li> <li>• To note that Ward swaps conducted since the second phase of the consultation were in line with regional responses</li> <li>• To note that the new map was in line to come into force on 1 January 2007</li> <li>• That a bigger map would be made available for the use of the EIAP.</li> </ul>	

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<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Regional Funding Activity – Beyond the Structural Funds: West Midlands-EU Connects</b></p> <p>The Partnership was updated on progress on the WMiE Connects project proposal. Research had indicated which activities should form part of the services offered by the project and there was a proposal for a pilot project under the current structural funds to raise awareness which would concentrate on the Life Long Learning and Competitiveness and Innovation programmes. Any pilot activity would add value to the work carried out in the WMiE office in Brussels by building a virtual network in the Region of cross-sectoral expertise in developing and delivering EU programmes.</p> <p>It was emphasised that the EIAP was endeavouring to deliver the message that organisations must participate in programmes beyond structural funds.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> to note the report.</p>	
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>West Midlands in Europe Events 5-7 December 2006</b></p> <p>EIAP members were reminded that this was the last chance to sign up for the various events taking place at the WMiE Brussels Office on 5-6 December.</p>	
	<b>For Information</b>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Finding 6000 Potential New Exporters</b></p> <p>The Partnership was informed of the successful completion of a project carried out by West Midlands Business Council to identify potential new exporters from within the Region, targeting new and potential future EU member states in particular. Meeting the objectives set out in the report had led to a continuation of work, linking first time exporters with emerging markets. Particular thanks were given to Philip Bushill-Matthews MEP and the Confederation of West Midlands Chambers of Commerce for all their help with the project.</p> <p>The report was <b>noted</b>.</p>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Future meetings</b></p> <p>Friday 23 February at 1100 at the Regional Partnership Centre  Friday 29 June at 1100 at the Regional Partnership Centre</p> <p>The Partnership was asked to <b>note</b> that it was hoped that the Commission’s Rapporteur for R&amp;D work, Jerzy Buzek MEP, would be available to address the June EIAP meeting on FP7.</p>	ALL PLEASE NOTE