

NEWS RELEASE

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Town Planners' President Challenges the Region

The future of regional planning arrangements face major changes and the Regional Assembly must face them head on, advised the President of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) at the Regional Assembly Board meeting yesterday.

All Regional Planning Bodies across the UK look set to be abolished next year, should a new government be elected. Martin Willey, the RTPI President, highlighted a clear gap between national and local planning issues that needed to be bridged. He said the new West Midlands Leaders' Board, which is due to replace the Regional Assembly*, needed to make its own arrangements for continued cooperation. He gave four good reasons why they must do so:

- To establish agreed priorities for attracting Government funding.
- To make it easier for councils to cooperate and resolve cross boundary planning issues
- To give developers a clear and positive picture of the Region as a place where they should invest
- To bring together all public service providers to meet citizen's needs.

He commended the West Midlands for its long history of partnership working and pleaded for the retention of its intellectual capacity to take the Region out of its difficult times during the recession.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the leading professional body for spatial planners in the UK, with a purpose to develop the art and science of town planning for the benefit of the public as a whole. The town planners' president is on a national tour to take the pulse of the planning profession in the middle of recession.

* The Leaders Board has been established in line with Government's proposed changes to regional working contained within the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill which is currently before Parliament and expected to gain Royal Assent this year.

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Notes to Editors

1. The West Midlands Regional Assembly ('the Assembly') represents a wide range of democratic, social and economic interests throughout the West Midlands Region.
2. The Assembly's membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 elected members representing the local authority, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
3. The Assembly provides a platform for organisations to consider matters of common concern including: regional planning, transport, economic prosperity, sustainability, culture and Europe. It also supports regional policy forums and task groups on social inclusion, faith, housing, life long learning/skills, health, rural and community safety/crime reduction.
4. The Assembly works in partnership with Advantage West Midlands (AWM) the regional development agency (RDA), the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM), Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM) the West Midlands Leaders Board (WMLB) and other regional and local organisations from across the West Midlands Region.
5. The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body.
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk