

# WMRSS UPDATE

## Phase Three Special

### November 2009

#### ▼ **Welcome**

A warm welcome to this special edition of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Update. This issue is designed specifically to explain the way forward on the WMRSS Phase Three Revision and to inform those interested on how policies will be developed and progressed.

#### ▼ **Overview of the current WMRSS Revision**

When the WMRSS was published in June 2004, the Secretary of State supported the principles of the strategy but suggested that several issues needed to be developed further. This Revision process is being undertaken in three phases.

**Phase One** of the Revision has been completed and sets out a long-term strategy for the Black Country area.

**Phase Two** is still in progress. This phase has focused on housing development, employment land, town centres, transport and waste together with overarching policies relating to climate change and sustainable development.

The **Phase Three** Revision topics are 'Rural Services', 'Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople', 'Culture, Sport and Tourism', 'Environment' and 'Minerals'.

The first stage of the WMRSS Phase Three Revision was the publication of a Project Plan which set out the issues to be covered in the Revision. A copy of the Project Plan is available on the Assembly website at:

[http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning\\_and\\_Regional\\_Spatial\\_Strategy/RSS\\_Revision/RSS\\_Revision\\_Phase\\_3.aspx](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning_and_Regional_Spatial_Strategy/RSS_Revision/RSS_Revision_Phase_3.aspx)

Following this, because there were a number of choices as to the nature and content of new or revised policies, an Options document was issued for consultation which identified those choices and the consequences of adopting them. Consultation on the Options took place between 29th June and 14th August 2009 and attracted 442 responses. The final report analysing the consultation responses is available on the Assembly's website (see above link).

#### ▼ **The Way Forward - Progression of WMRSS Phase Three Workstreams**

In July 2007, the Government published a Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration. Among other things, the Government proposes to bring together the Regional Spatial Strategies and the Regional Economic Strategies into a single Regional Strategy for each of the English regions.

In the light of these legislative changes, there was a "stock-take" meeting in September 2009 involving officers from the Assembly, Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) and Advantage West Midlands to consider how the WMRSS Phase Three workstreams can be taken forward in the most effective way. It was agreed at that meeting that the Phase Three issues should be progressed through the new Regional Strategy process rather than through the WMRSS Phase Three Revision.

It was agreed that the Phase Three issues be taken forward in one of two ways:

**a) Policy Statements** which will provide a framework for relevant policies in the preparation of Local Development Frameworks. Two Policy Statements will be developed which cover:

- Provision of pitches for Gypsies & Travellers and Travelling Showpeople; and
- Sub-Regional Apportionment of Construction Aggregates.

GOWM have confirmed that they expect local authorities to give the Policy Statements similar weight to that of a submitted draft RSS. Also Policy Statements will carry weight in relation to Development Plan Document examinations and planning inquiries.

**b) Policy Recommendations** which will feed directly into the preparation of the new Regional Strategy. The majority of issues within the Phase Three Options document will be progressed in this manner as are listed in the table overleaf.

#### ▼ **Joining the Database**

If you would like to join our consultation database and be kept updated with progress on the WMRSS Revision please email your contact details to [wmrss@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:wmrss@wmra.gov.uk).

# Proposed Policy Recommendations

## Rural Services

- Rural Services

## Culture, Sport & Tourism

- Culture & Sport – including relevant historic environment issues
- Tourism – including relevant historic environment issues

## Quality of the Environment

- Integrated Approach to Management of Environmental Resources
- Restoring Degraded Areas & Managing & Creating High Quality New Environments
- Greenery, Urban Green Space and Public Spaces
- Protection & Enhancement of Historic Environment
- Conservation, Enhancement & Restoration of the Region's Landscape
- Protecting, Managing & Enhancing Region's Biodiversity & Nature Conservation Resources
- Forestry & Woodlands
- Protection of Agricultural Land
- Air Quality
- Energy Efficiency
- Renewable Energy - Targets
- Renewable Energy – Criteria for Ensuring Appropriate Locations
- Positive Uses of Green Belt

## Minerals

- Safeguarding Mineral Resources
- Future Brick Clay Provision

It has been agreed that all Phase Three work will be “banked” and counted as part of the preparation process for the new Regional Strategy. The approach of formulating Policy Statements and Policy Recommendations was accepted by the Regional Planning & Environment Executive (RPEE) and Assembly Board at their meetings on 22nd September and 30th September 2009 respectively. The approach has also been agreed with Government Office for the West Midlands.

Following the publication of the WMRSS Phase Two EIP Panel Report, it now seems likely that “Water Environment” and “Flood Risk” will be incorporated as part of the Phase Two Revision. The WMRSS Phase Two Proposed Changes are due for publication by end of 2009.

It should be noted that existing policies in the WMRSS will remain in place until incorporated or replaced by a new Regional Strategy.

## Timetable

Progress on the emerging Policy Statements and Policy Recommendations will be reported through, and approved by, the existing Regional Planning Body arrangements (RPEE and Assembly Board) and the new regional arrangements - the Joint Strategy and Investment Board (JSIB) and the West Midlands Leaders Board (WMLB).

Work on developing the Policy Statements and Recommendations is progressing with a view to final sign-off by the JSIB at its meeting on 3rd March 2010. The intention is also that the draft Policy Statements and Policy Recommendations be signed-off initially by the Assembly Board at their 15th January 2010 meeting.

Policy Statements and Policy Recommendations will be tested through relevant appraisal and assessment processes (Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Rural Proofing) to provide rigour and weight to the final outputs.

There will be technical consultation with Local Authorities and WMRSS Reference Groups in the preparation of the Policy Statements and Policy Recommendations.

Further information on the Phase Three Revision can be found on the Assembly's website: [http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning\\_and\\_Regional\\_Spatial\\_Strategy/RSS\\_Revision/RSS\\_Revision\\_Phase\\_3.aspx](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Planning_and_Regional_Spatial_Strategy/RSS_Revision/RSS_Revision_Phase_3.aspx)

Any queries regarding Phase Three should be directed to David Clarke via email [d.clarke@wmra.gov.uk](mailto:d.clarke@wmra.gov.uk) or telephone 0121 678 1023.

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