

Regional Policy Partnerships

Much of the Region's strategic work is guided by Regional Policy Partnerships (RPPs), comprising a wide range of interests from across the Region. Some of these Partnerships are led by the Assembly, in its regional co-ordinating role, some by other partners. As several people have requested contact details for these Partnerships current West Midlands RPPs are listed opposite, together with an officer contact for each.

Culture - Jenny Drew (j.drew@wmra.gov.uk)
Energy - Andy Stevenson (andystevenson@advantagemwm.co.uk)
Environment - Chris Blakeley (c.blakeley@wmra.gov.uk)
European & International - Esther Knight (e.knight@wmra.gov.uk)
Health - Zena Lynch (z.lynch@wmra.gov.uk)
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Planning - David Thew (d.thew@wmra.gov.uk)
Rural - Kate Docherty (k.docherty@wmra.gov.uk)
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Transport - Danny Lamb (d.lamb@wmra.gov.uk)

Speaking Out



Issue 14. Winter 2007

How the Assembly is structured

The Assembly's membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 members representing local government, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.

The following is the current list of West Midlands Regional Assembly Members at the time of printing:

LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS

Birmingham Sub-Region:

Cllr Sir Albert Bore (Birmingham)
 Cllr Mike Whitby (Birmingham)
 Cllr Paul Tilsley (Birmingham)
 Cllr John Lines (Birmingham)

Staffordshire & Stoke Sub-Region:

Cllr Terry Dix (Staffordshire)
 Cllr Rex Roberts OBE (Staffordshire)
 Cllr Philip Atkins (Staffordshire)
 Cllr Robert Simpson (Staffordshire)
 Cllr Roger Ibbs (Stoke-on-Trent)
 Cllr Charles Miller (Stoke-on-Trent)
 Cllr Terry Doughty (Stoke-on-Trent)
 Cllr Neil Stanley (Cannock Chase)
 Cllr Alex Fox (East Staffordshire)
 Cllr David S Smith (Lichfield) - Chairman
 Cllr Simon Tagg (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
 Cllr Brian Edwards (South Staffordshire)
 Cllr Stan Highfield (Stafford)
 Cllr Ron Locker (Staffordshire Moorlands)
 Cllr Jeremy Oates (Tamworth)

Worcester & Hereford Sub-Region:

Cllr Terry James (Herefordshire)
 Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire)
 Cllr Beris Williams (Herefordshire)
 Cllr Dr George Lord (Worcestershire)
 Cllr John Buckley (Worcestershire)
 Cllr Liz Tucker (Worcestershire)
 Cllr Roger Hollingworth (Bromsgrove)
 Cllr Diane Rayner (Malvern Hills)
 Cllr Jack Cookson (Redditch)
 Cllr Simon Geraghty (Worcester City)
 Cllr Martin Jennings (Wychavon)
 Cllr Stephen Clee (Wyre Forest)

Black Country Sub-Region:

Cllr Ann Millward (Dudley)
 Cllr David Sparks (Dudley)
 Cllr Steve Eling (Sandwell)
 Cllr Anthony Ward (Sandwell)
 Cllr Sadie Smith (Sandwell)
 Cllr Bob Badham (Sandwell)
 Cllr Tom Ansell (Walsall)
 Cllr Tim Oliver (Walsall)
 Cllr Ian Shires (Walsall)
 Cllr Peter Bilson (Wolverhampton)
 Cllr Paddy Bradley (Wolverhampton)

Shropshire & Telford Sub-Region:

Cllr Malcolm Pate (Shropshire)
 Cllr Peter Phillips (Shropshire)
 Cllr Alan Mosley (Shropshire)
 Cllr David Beechey (Bridgnorth)
 Cllr David Minnery (North Shropshire)
 Cllr David G Lloyd MBE (Oswestry)
 Cllr Peter Nutting (Shrewsbury & Atcham)
 Cllr Jo Jones (Shrewsbury & Atcham)
 Cllr Heather Kidd (S.Shropshire)
 Cllr Claude Bodenhan (S.Shropshire)
 Cllr Keith Austin (Telford & Wrekin)
 Cllr Ian Fletcher (Telford & Wrekin)

Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Sub-Region:

Cllr Ken Taylor (Coventry)
 Cllr John Mutton (Coventry)
 Cllr Norman Davies (Solihull)
 Cllr Hugh Hendry (Solihull)
 Cllr Ted Richards (Solihull)
 Cllr Richard Hyde (Warwickshire)
 Cllr Mick Jones (Warwickshire)
 Cllr Colin Hayfield (North Warwickshire)
 Cllr Ian Lloyd (Nuneaton & Bedworth)
 Cllr Craig Humphrey (Rugby)
 Cllr Chris Saint (Stratford-on-Avon)
 Cllr Mrs Margaret Begg (Warwick)

BUSINESS SECTOR MEMBERS

with nominating body

Mike Cherry	Federation of Small Businesses
Prof. Michael Clarke	West Midlands Higher Education Association
Barrie Williams	West Midlands Business Council
Arthur Hill	National Farmers Union
Mike Hill	Confederation of West Midlands Chambers of Commerce
John James	Institute of Directors
Geoff Minshull	Chartered Institute of Building
Richard Moxon	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Chris Newis	West Midlands Co-operative & Mutual Council Ltd
Ben Reid	Business in the Community
Fraser Mitchell	Association of Colleges
Dr Sarindar Singh Sahota - Vice Chair	Asian Business Forum
Roger Stone	Country Land and Business Association
Brian Summers	Heart of England Tourism
Roger Trotman	Engineering Employers Federation
Jane Yardley	Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators

OTHER SECTOR MEMBERS

with nominating body

Name	Nominating Body	Other Sector
Jay Patel	EMBRACE	Black and Minority Ethnic Communities
vacancy	TBC	Disability
Gerald Kells	West Midlands Sustainability Network	Environment
Valerie Broom - Vice Chair	West Midlands Trades Union Council	Trades Unions
Rev John Hall	West Midlands Faiths Forum	Faiths
Cavelle Lynch	Agender for Women	Gender
vacancy	West Midlands Health Federation	Health
Howard Farrand	West Midlands Federation of Housing Associations	Housing
Brian Woods-Scawen	Culture West Midlands	Culture
Cllr Mrs Elizabeth Newman	West Midlands Association of Parish Councils	Parish Councils
Lee Thompson	Regional Action West Midlands [through UK Youth Parliament]	Voluntary & Community Sector (Young)
Richard Quallington	Regional Action West Midlands	Voluntary & Community Sector (Rural)
Richard Bubb	Regional Action West Midlands	Voluntary & Community Sector (Urban)
Peter Shirley	OSG	Additional Place
Patrica Fairclough	OSG	Additional Place
Roger McKenzie	OSG	Additional Place

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Where, What and How Many?

planning options for the West Midlands

From the Chairman



David S Smith

With the ongoing debate continuing into local and regional government structures, it is apparent to me that there still remains a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding around the function and role of the Regional Assembly.

The Assembly is not directly elected but a partnership organisation which fills a clear role at the regional level. It has a number of roles set out in statute: it acts as the voice of the West Midlands on strategic issues such as planning, transport, housing, sustainable development and climate change as well as economic,

environmental and health improvement issues which affect the entire Region.

Of significant relevance at present is our responsibility for region-wide 'spatial' planning which spans the gap between national and local plans - and is critical when it comes to things like roads or railways which can cross many local authority boundaries. The Assembly is also responsible for scrutinising the work of the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands to ensure that it is delivering the economic development improvements it has set out to achieve.

It is important to stress that the Assembly does not take anything away from local authorities; instead it aims to draw down powers and resources from central government to the regional and local level. The alternative is a 'one size fits all' dictate from central government which takes no account of local or regional issues and variations.

In fact, seventy percent of our membership consists of local

councillors representing all 38 local authorities in the West Midlands who ensure that the needs of their local area and people are heard. This is enhanced by our members who represent the business and social/voluntary sectors. The Assembly is therefore the only body that is able to be representative at the regional level and reflect the views and needs of the West Midlands as a whole.

Perhaps the name 'Assembly' no longer reflects the structure or work of the organisation. I think a better name would be West Midlands Partnership, but this should not become the big issue. What people should be concentrating on is what we do and deliver at the regional level, not what we are called.

David S Smith
Chairman



From the Chief Executive

Olwen Dutton

In his article our Chairman David mentions the ongoing debate into local and regional government structures, driven largely through the Treasury led Comprehensive Spending Review and reviews which will feed into that. There have been a number of consultation events held across the country in which the Assembly has been involved and a key message coming out of the consultations is our strong partnership approach and a willingness to develop this.

Given the wide range of activities described in the newsletter, I thought that it would be useful to remind people of the value they get from the Assembly. There seems to be a view that Assemblies are very costly; in actual fact the total cost of all the Assemblies across England is less than the administrative costs of some other regional bodies. We are able to deliver what we

can for so little because of the strong benefits of partnership working; and when you consider that our budget also enables other organisations to be funded I think it is difficult to argue that outstanding value is not delivered.

We are, however, committed to looking for ways in which we can enhance the value of what we do and ensure that our resources are directed in the right way. As part of this we have set up a Review of the way in which the Assembly works, what it is focused upon and the value it delivers and the same review is also looking at the broader issues across the Partnership Centre.

We appreciate your ongoing interest and support and look forward to continuing to work on an agenda which delivers the quality Region we deserve.

Skills, Money & Europe

The Assembly has recently finished gathering evidence for its Strategic Review into the Region's relationship with Europe. The final report is expected to contain recommendations in respect of strategic direction, governance arrangements, intelligent communication and influencing European Policy. There will be a formal public consultation period involving consultees and partners from 12th March to 13th April 2007 on the findings of the Panel Sessions and the final report will be presented to the full Assembly on 25th April 2007.

The next Strategic Review will be carried out in partnership with the Regional Learning and Skills Council and will look at the Region's approach to post 16 education, training and skills. It is anticipated that evidence gathering will start in April 2007.

The Assembly is also about to commence a Scrutiny Review around Access to Finance, which will examine Advantage West Midlands' broad approach to financial support for businesses, assess gaps in the market, take up and impact of support packages.

The Access to Finance Scrutiny Review will be taking evidence from early March.

For further information about any of the Reviews please contact dagmar.waller@wmra.gov.uk or daryl.davies@wmra.gov.uk

In brief

Assembly expresses bitter disappointment over Cosford decision

At its last quarterly meeting the West Midlands Regional Assembly passed a resolution expressing its deep disappointment following the Government's announcement that RAF Cosford had not been successful in securing the defence training contract from the Ministry of Defence. However, it pledged its ongoing commitment to working with partners to help secure a viable future for RAF Cosford.

The Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Cllr David S Smith, commented: "Whilst it is reassuring to hear the Secretary of State for Defence, Des Brown, promising that RAF Cosford won't close - we are still desperately disappointed that the West Midlands has been snubbed by government in not bringing this vital facility to Cosford."

"The location, facilities and resources clearly made Cosford the best choice. We offer the best communications with the rest of the Country, a skilled local workforce and a strong manufacturing base - factors which I hope will influence the winning consortium, Metrix's, proposals for a Learning Resource Centre, a National Training Research and Development Support Centre and a National Skills Academy for Manufacturing at Cosford."

The Assembly will also continue to work with local authorities and partners to look at the implications on the local and regional economy, in order to understand how best to support the area through the ongoing revisions of the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy.



Climate Change Work Hots Up

Last November Assembly Chairman, Cllr David Smith met with the Minister for Climate Change, Ian Pearson MP, to formally sign the West Midlands Declaration on Climate Change. Since then the Assembly has taken a regional leadership role on climate change and has been working with partners to develop an Action Plan. This work is being led by a Climate Change Task Group which comprises a broad base of regional Concordat Partners with an expertise and interest in climate change issues.



The Climate Change Task Group has met twice since November, and work is now in progress to produce a draft Action Plan for consideration at the April Assembly meeting before going out for wider consultation.

The Action Plan will set out priority actions for the next two years which need to be delivered within the context of the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy. It will also look at the actions needed to achieve the Region's vision of being a low-carbon region that has adapted well to the impacts of climate change by 2020.

One key issue highlighted by the Task group was the need for leadership and accountability at a senior level. The drive provided by the high level Chief Executive grouping involving the Assembly, Advantage West Midlands and Government Office should help to ensure that climate change acts as a fundamental driver in all regional decision making.

Leaders' Summit

Key figures from across the Region met at Aston University's Lakeside Centre on 25th January for the Assembly's first annual summit on Equality and Diversity. The event was hosted by the West Midlands Equality and Diversity Partnership and speakers included Meg Munn MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Women and Equality) who is responsible for overseeing the introduction of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and Michael Cashman MEP.

The Region's commitment to Equality and Diversity was evidenced at a panel session chaired by Michael Cashman MEP, where the Assembly Chairman, Cllr David S Smith and Chief Executive, Olwen Dutton, joined Trudi Elliot, Regional Director, Government Office for the West Midlands, Cllr Diane Rayner, Advantage West Midlands Board Member and Roger McKenzie, the Regional Secretary for Midlands TUC, to respond to questions on the challenges and opportunities facing the Region.

Participants contributed to lively workshop discussions which will be used to set priorities for the coming year's Equality and Diversity Partnership Work Plan. More information can be found at www.wmra.gov.uk/equalities



Where, What and How Many?

Planning Options for the West Midlands

The West Midlands Regional Assembly as the Regional Planning Body is tasked by government with producing the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. This is a statutory framework for development within the West Midlands until 2021 and beyond.

The overall objective of this strategy is to reverse the flow of people and jobs moving out of the Major Urban Areas, and in turn, achieve a more balanced and sustainable pattern of development. At the same time the strategy also seeks to tackle the challenges faced by the Region's rural areas, such as affordable housing and transport and accessibility.

When the current WMRSS was published in June 2004, it was agreed that there were several areas where issues needed to be developed further. This partial revision is being carried out in three phases.

Phase One - This first stage focused on developing a long term sub-regional strategy for the Black Country. This was then submitted to the Secretary of State at the end of May 2006. An Examination in Public into the Draft took place in January 2007 and the Panel are currently putting together a panel report. This will then be considered by the Secretary of State and subject to proposed changes, is due to be finalised later on this year.

Phase Two (where we are now) - At present, we are in the middle of the Phase Two Options stage, a public consultation which will run until 5th March. Members of the public, businesses and organisations have been invited to give their opinion on a number of 'Options' on how the West Midlands could meet current and future requirements for housing, employment land, transport and waste.

The Assembly has been keen for as many responses as possible on the consultation and to this end, has generated a lot of media interest around this important issue to raise public awareness and involvement in the important process. As well as a high profile launch of the Spatial Options at Birmingham's Burlington Hotel on 8th January, the Assembly and Regional partners have also been holding a series of



sub-regional consultation events across the Region.

The consultation has also gained coverage in around 100 articles across the Region's press reaching about six million people, plus two local television news bulletins, a 20 minute feature on the Politics Show and five regional radio stations further raising awareness. The Assembly has also printed 20,000 copies of the Spatial Options Summary leaflet which has been distributed around the Region.

All comments will be fed into the production of a Consultation Analysis Report which will highlight the range of comments and be used to inform and develop a Preferred Option. This will set out the recommended changes/additions to the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and is due to be submitted to the Government in December 2007.

Phase Two Timetable

Stage of the Revision	Timetable
Launch Draft Project Plan	November 2005
Completion of Technical Work	Ongoing process
Strategic Authorities advise Regional Planning Body	February 2006 - May 2006
Spatial Options	8th January 2007 - 5th March 2007 (8 week consultation)
Development of Preferred Option	March 2007 onwards
Submission to Government	December 2007 (12 weeks consultation)
Examination in Public	Mid 2008
Government Proposed Changes	Late 2008
Final RSS Phase Two changes published	Early 2009

Once the preferred Option has been submitted to Government, management of the final stages of the process will be led by Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM).

Phase Three - Phase Three of the RSS Revision is due to commence this spring. A number of topics have been identified for inclusion in this Phase, including critical rural services, recreational provision, regionally significant environmental issues and provision for gypsy and traveller sites. Preparatory work for Phase Three is already underway and a Draft Project Plan will be launched later in the spring.

A Scoping Study was commissioned to assist the Regional Assembly in determining the scope of Phase Three of the RSS Revision. The scoping study report was published in January and represents the consultants' independent advice on the scope of Phase Three. The report is available on the WMRA website www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=216 and will inform the Draft Project Plan which will be developed by the Regional Assembly.

For more information on the Regional Spatial Strategy please visit www.wmra.gov.uk/wmrss

Example questions - Phase Two Options Consultation

Housing: What level and type of new housing development is right for the West Midlands?

Employment: How much land should be set aside in the West Midlands for industry, offices and retail developments, and where should they go?

Waste: Should the West Midlands provide alternatives to landfill for all the waste it generates?

Transport: Should road charging be introduced to reduce traffic congestion in parts of the Region?



Are we Getting it Right?

PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

Each year, to help Government and the Region assess progress towards achieving the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the Assembly is required to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report. The latest West Midlands report, which has just been published, looks back at the period 1st April 2005 - 31st March 2006.

The Report makes broadly positive reading with distinct signs that the RSS is contributing to achieving the Region's objectives of urban and rural renaissance. Evidence includes:

- The Major Urban Areas are proving increasingly attractive for housing and employment development;
- Regeneration Zones and High Technology Corridors are now accounting for an increasing proportion of employment land development; and
- Retail development in town centres continues at a high level.

Very encouraging is the increasingly efficient use of land in the West Midlands. Key indicators here include a very high proportion (over 80%) of both residential and employment development on brownfield sites coupled with an increasing density of housing development. When viewed alongside a faster rate of reclamation of derelict land the Region is performing well in this respect.

As with last year though, the Report highlights a number of concerns. Paramount amongst these are:

- In spite of a considerable increase (+35%) in the number of affordable homes completed last year we are still some way off target - suggesting the full spectrum of housing need is still not being met;
- The proportion of office development out-of-centre continues to be too high; and
- Whilst progress towards the schemes contained within the "Transport Priorities for Investment" is good, much of the contextual information (e.g. congestion, use of public transport) points to a worsening transport situation in the Region.

The results of the monitoring are used extensively to inform the Revision and Implementation of the RSS.

For further information or to get a copy of the report please contact Paul Bayliss p.bayliss@wmra.gov.uk or 0121 678 1027



Scrutiny gets Government Seal of Approval

"The scrutiny function of Regional Assemblies delivers real changes and improvement to the activities of the Regional Development Agencies." This was the message from Central Government at the English Regions Network Annual Scrutiny Conference held in January.

Speaking at the conference, Ciara Mulligan, Deputy Director at Communities and Local Government, said, "Regional Assemblies have developed sound processes through partnership and sharing good practice and we want to continue to build on this, to demonstrate the growing maturity of the regional institutions in delivering real change for the regions."

Scrutiny is one of the core functions of Regional Assemblies and ensures that key organisations and

agencies - principally the Regional Development Agencies - are answerable to regional partners for the decisions they make, for the way they allocate resources and for their contribution to meeting a region's strategic economic development objectives.

For example in the West Midlands, Advantage West Midlands manages a total annual budget of £2.2 billion. Through the Assembly's scrutiny role, it receives comprehensive democratic oversight which is critical to ensure that it is responding to the specific needs of the West Midlands.



Cross border working

Stronger cross-border collaboration between Central Wales and the West Midlands should result from a new landmark agreement between the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the Welsh Assembly Government.

As a result, some of the problems that faced the communities living in the border areas, which resulted from differences in policy, funding and services, should become a thing of the past.

The Assembly has been working with the Welsh Assembly Government to draw up a Memorandum of Understanding for cross-border collaboration on both policy development and service delivery.

The document will be launched on 5th March at Ludlow Race Course, when it will be signed by Cllr David Smith and Carwyn Jones AM, Minister for Environment, Planning and the Countryside, on behalf of the two organisations.

The memorandum will act as a commitment to share information on policy and service development affecting border communities in the three counties, to consult each other on changes in policy and to find opportunities for joint working to produce efficiencies.

For more information contact Kate Docherty, Policy Officer on 0121 678 1061 or k.docherty@wmra.gov.uk



My Region



Adrian Passmore,

Chief Executive, RegenWM

Born and bred in Cornwall, I am often asked, slightly incredulously, "but what are you doing up here?" The short truth of it is that I came here for work at Birmingham University in 1994 and haven't left. My academic career had taken me to many world class towns and cities, living for extended periods in a host of places - Paris, Oxford, Caen - in Normandy, Baltimore, Portsmouth and Berlin, and visiting so many more for work reasons. I never thought that Birmingham was next in the sequence - its reputation said it didn't seem to fit.

However, like so many of the incoming migrants that find themselves here today, I find myself a staunch supporter of Birmingham and the West Midlands Region. What is more, it captures well so much of everything I have liked about my previous homes - the combined package of what's on offer - countryside, city centres, metropolitanism, culture, beautiful villages and towns, raw human diversity, etc, is better than anywhere I have lived before. Berlin was great but the countryside is

totally barren. Baltimore was alright but the streets are a human desert, Paris is a visual feast but crowded, polluted and expensive, and Oxford is a museum and no reflection of the diversity of Britain today.

Having been asked to contribute to this column, as I sit in my office and reflect upon what is special about this region to me, I am thinking of the layers and qualities it has added to my understanding and to my quality of life. In no particular order, here are some of the things that come to mind.

Coming from near-universally-white Cornwall I have really come to understand metropolitan mixing here more than anywhere I have lived before, because we do it better than most.

Having had a career break thrust upon me through family illness, I spent nearly two years delivering white goods to homes across the West Midlands whilst getting my life back on track: in that time I went into about 10,000 houses and fell in love with the surprise behind each front door.

Elsewhere, being a super keen cyclist I have ridden thousands of miles across the countryside of the West Midlands - I know how quiet Clun really is, how steep Edge Hill feels on a hot day, and how close we all are to some of the prettiest countryside in England.

So my role at RegenWM is a privilege amongst privileges. I get to visit all corners of the Region and to work with great people. I am part of a network of individuals and organisations that care about the qualities of our places, and who work to keep its sometimes forgotten corners from slipping through the net. RegenWM is an organisation devoted to improvement in regeneration and it offers me a chance to give something back to a region that has lent my life a beauty I didn't anticipate when I first came here. And this weekend it'll be the Teme Valley that re-instills that sense of good fortune.

Gypsies & Travellers Policy

As a result of direction from DCLG for the West Midlands Region to review Gypsies & Travellers policy at the earliest opportunity, the Regional Assembly has agreed to deliver an Interim Regional Statement on Gypsies and Travellers policy to Ministers by 31st March 2007.

Working in partnership with the Housing Corporation, the Assembly Secretariat has commissioned the University of Birmingham to draft the Statement, pulling together the most up-to-date Gypsies and Travellers research available and drawing upon examples of best practice.

A first draft of the Interim Regional Statement was provided at the end of January 2007 with key elements debated at a Roundtable Discussion event held on 22 February. This was attended by local authority Housing and Planning Officers and representatives from

a range of Stakeholder Groups. Discussion at the Roundtable focused upon the implications posed by the outcomes from the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs), for Gypsies and Travellers policy in the future.

These outcomes will need to be taken into consideration, in relation to the influences from other policy areas, for example health, education and housing-related support services, if new site provision is to successfully re-address existing issues of social exclusion. A full review of Gypsies and Travellers policy will be undertaken within Phase Three of the Regional Spatial Strategy Revision process, which is scheduled to commence in Spring 2007.

For more information, please contact **Jo Hill** at the Housing Secretariat - 0121 678 1033