

THE STRATEGIC FORUM FOR CENTRAL WALES AND THE WEST MIDLANDS



West Midlands
Regional Assembly



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



**FIRST REPORT ON PROGRESS OF
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
ON CROSS BORDER COLLABORATION
AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND STRATEGIC
FORUM HELD AT NEWTOWN ON 2ND APRIL 2009**

**CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION
REV'D NICK READ**



Welcome to our first Report.

In March 2007 we launched the Central Wales – West Midlands Memorandum of Understanding on Cross-border Collaboration and on April 2nd 2009 we welcomed over 150 people to the Hope Community Church Conference Centre in Newtown to reflect on the progress made and explore the key priorities for the future.

With the help of those many organisations that have signed up to the principles of the Memorandum, the Welsh Assembly Government and the West Midlands Regional Assembly are continuing to promote stronger and more effective cross border collaboration between all key organisations in Central Wales and the West Midlands.

Rev'd Nick Read
Chairman

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BACKGROUND**

The West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum (WMRAF) was established in 2000 to ensure that policy makers, particularly at a regional level, took account of rural issues in policy development and delivery. In 2003 a small working party was established to look at the effectiveness of service provision and policy development across the English-Welsh border. Anecdotally the feeling was that people who lived and worked in the border region were disadvantaged as a result. A consultancy, Rubus Consultants, was funded to produce a report on the issues that affected the border communities and the effectiveness of policy development, and service delivery that impacted upon them. The report identified that many issues, transcending the social, economic and environmental, were affected by the border.

The working party continued to meet and the publication of the Wales Spatial Plan in November 2004 gave a significant political boost to its activities. The plan talked about the need to work with neighbouring English Regions (an aspiration confirmed in its most recent reiteration in 2008), but was less clear about how this was to be achieved. Consequently the working party developed the idea of a document that would be signed by those expressing a commitment to greater cross-border dialogue and structures to facilitate this and to monitor progress. On 5th March 2007, at the first Strategic Forum for Central Wales and the West Midlands, held at Ludlow racecourse, the Cross Border Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Carwyn Jones, Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside in the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and David Smith, Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA).

The area of interest, which the MoU was designed to support, in practical terms comprises the counties of Powys, Herefordshire and Shropshire, which encompasses around 60 Parish Councils (English) and Community Councils (Welsh) in some of the most remote parts of England and Wales. About 56,000 people are directly affected by the cross-border issues under discussion. The range of issues are all-encompassing, thus whilst WAG and WMRA represented the initial signatories (as the two strategic planning authorities on either side of the border) the intention was that other Local Authorities, organisations and businesses would sign if they wished to commit themselves to greater cross-border dialogue. A full list of signatories as of May 2009 appears later.



Left to Right: Cllr David Smith, Rev'd Nick Read, Alun Ffred Jones AM and Cllr Roger Phillips

MECHANISMS FOR EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE

THE MoU ALSO OUTLINED THREE MECHANISMS TO HELP FACILITATE DIALOGUE AND MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DOCUMENT. THESE STRUCTURES ARE ABLE TO IDENTIFY ISSUES THAT PREVENT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND WORK WITH THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES/ORGANISATIONS TO OVERCOME THESE. THE THREEFOLD STRUCTURES PUT IN PLACE WERE:

A. A CORE OFFICER'S GROUP

Representing the major statutory, private and voluntary sector organisations which meets twice yearly and helps to identify areas where "border proofing" should take place i.e. areas of policy development taking place on one side of the border which will have an impact on the other side, and which would should be subject to scrutiny by partners from across the border. The group has also established a number of thematic working groups that focus on more detailed issues and which are responsible for developing their own work programmes, aims and objectives. These are detailed below. The Core Officer's Group has an independent Chair.

B. A STRATEGIC FORUM SUB-GROUP

This is a more focused group that meets more frequently and comprises representatives of the major statutory agencies on both sides of the border. It has the task of ensuring that momentum on cross border issues is maintained, and therefore it helps to co-ordinate the activities of the thematic working groups.

C. THE CROSS BORDER STRATEGIC FORUM.

This was intended to be an annual conference to which all "stakeholders" could be invited with an interest in cross border issues, both to receive reports on the progress of the MoU and to engage in discussion and debate on issues topical at the time. For various reasons it was not possible to hold a Forum in 2008 so the Forum held on 2nd April 2009 was the first since the signing of the MoU in 2007.

THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

TO DATE, THERE ARE SIX THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS, SOME WELL ESTABLISHED, WHILST OTHERS HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO MEET. THE PRIORITISATION OF CROSS-BORDER ISSUES WAS A MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE FIRST FORUM MEETING HELD IN 2007, SO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GROUPS HAS FOLLOWED A LOGICAL PATTERN.

STRUCTURE OF THE CROSS BORDER GROUPS



THERE IS ALWAYS MORE THAT CAN BE DONE, AND AREAS OF ACTIVITY WHICH ARE NOT BEING COVERED, BUT GIVEN THE CONSTRAINTS OF TIME AND RESOURCE THE GROUPS HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON ROLLING OUT THE MoU AND ITS OBJECTIVES. WHILST AN OUTLINE OF THEIR ACTIVITIES IS INCLUDED BELOW, THE WORK OF THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE GROUP IN PARTICULAR IS EXPLORED IN MORE DETAIL AS PART OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE STRATEGIC FORUM. THE SIX GROUPS ARE:

TRANSPORT. TraCC, the Mid-Wales Transport Consortium, co-ordinates with relevant local authorities a cross-border transport forum which meets quarterly in Newtown, Hereford or Shrewsbury to discuss issues of common interest and to look at ways of working together on local transport delivery.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE. This was established on 20th March 2008 and with a pattern of quarterly meetings since. It has sought to develop and promote closer cross-border working and collaboration specific to health and social care and developed a work programme to support this. Sharing information on population profiles and health needs has identified synergies across the border area. The group is a multi-agency group looking at health, social care and well-being and it has been effective in developing a single voice on border issues in response to government consultations.

ENVIRONMENT. The group first met on 2nd April 2008 and has identified a wide range of issues in which cross-border activity is already taking place, and also the areas which are rising in significance in policy terms. Established agenda items include water resources and security of supply, drought, flood management and enhancement of biodiversity. The legal framework within which these take place is often different on both sides of the border which can cause problems where the habitats etc., transcend the border area. Climate change, adaptation and mitigation have risen in significance and there needs to be harmonisation of habitat management policies on a landscape-scale.



The Forum gave delegates a chance to talk directly with Speakers, Cllr David Smith and Cllr Roger Phillips



The Forum's Organising Team; Ross Hedley, Lynda Wilcox, Sara Roberts, Sue Simpson and Rev'd Nick Read



THE WORK OF THE CROSS BORDER HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE GROUP JO NEWTON, CHAIRMAN HEREFORDSHIRE PCT

The Health and Social Care Task Group was established in March 2008 to develop and promote closer cross-border working and collaboration specific to health and social care. It recognises that policy differences across the border impact on patient experiences, and that there is a need to "rural proof" as well as "border proof."

Membership of the group comprises: NHS Commissioners from Powys Local Health Board (LHB) and Herefordshire and Shropshire Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), elected representatives from the local authorities with responsibility for health and social care, members of the voluntary sector, the Institute of Rural Health (IRH), Community Health Councils (CHC)/LINKS, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) and Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM). The group has been able to share information and policies, as well as look ahead at issues becoming significant, such as bowel cancer screening and changes to the National Health Service (NHS) Constitution. It has helped to create a profile for cross border issues on health and social care.

The group has wrestled with the demographic challenges to our rural areas and the problems of delivering services to dispersed populations. This can be exacerbated by the idiosyncratic impacts of divergent health and social care policies across the border though health care delivery is no respecter of political boundaries. There is a need to gather evidence and the problems of health care have a potential impact on the economy of the area as well.

The future requires stronger linkages from the local into the Department of Health and the Welsh Assembly Government with a rural voice at National/Board level in these organisations. The Group wants to widen its membership in order to increase its impact and to continue to develop its work plan. There is a need to audit the impact of health care provision in some cross-border towns and to develop protocols to share information between health and social care providers.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT. The inaugural meeting was held on 15th October 2008, drawing delegates from Parish and Town Councils in England and Community Councils in Wales. "One Voice Wales" and the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils (HALC), which represent the first tier of local government, reported on their activities and identified areas for collaboration. Of interest was the developing partnership between Herefordshire Council and Hereford Primary Care Trust as a model of integration, and of the policing agreement initiated between Powys and the West Mercia police forces.

FOOD. An exploratory meeting was held in December 2008 comprising representatives of the farming, food and tourism sectors, together with policy makers and those involved in local food initiatives. The group is undertaking a mapping exercise of food-related activity on both sides of the border and exploring opportunities for collaboration in marketing and procurement.

ECONOMIC REGENERATION. Perhaps less a working group, and more of an initiative, the "Offa's Dyke Country Regeneration Strategy" is a funded project to identify opportunities for economic regeneration which transcend the border along the length of Offa's Dyke. The study was commissioned in January 2009 and the Strategic Forum was used as a venue for scoping and discussing some of the options, and hence these are presented more fully later in this report.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Forum exists in a changing environment and, in particular, the future will bring political and structural changes – some of which have already been identified whilst others remain unknown. For example, in England the government has instigated a "Sub-National Review" which has examined the agencies which operate across the English regions at a regional level. The review has recommended the abolition of the Regional Assemblies, and their replacement as strategic planning authorities by a different structure, to be determined by each region as it sees fit. It has also recommended that there should no longer be separate regional economic strategies, and spatial strategies, but a single Integrated Regional Strategy.

In practical terms, therefore, by 2010 we expect to see the end of the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the development of a new body to oversee the production of an integrated West Midlands Regional Strategy, to be called the Joint Strategy and Investment Board. This will be made up of representatives from Advantage West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency with responsibility for economic development, and from the newly created Local Authority Leaders Board, which comprises the leaders of the 33 local authorities within the region. Since the Regional Assembly was the first English signatory to the MoU and took on the responsibility for its oversight within England, this has important implications for the sustainability of cross-border dialogue. One of our objectives is to ensure that the cross border dialogue continues, and the MoU remains important, whatever structures emerge on either the English or Welsh side.





MINISTERIAL ADDRESS

As host Minister, Alun Ffred Jones AM, Minister for Heritage, Welsh Assembly Government, gave a brief presentation to the Forum, followed by a panel "Question and Answer Session" with Cllr David Smith, Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, and Cllr Roger Phillips, Chair of the West Midlands Leaders Board.

MINISTERIAL ADDRESS, ALUN FFRED JONES AM.

Both the Wales Spatial Plan and the Cross Border MoU exist to fulfil long-term strategic aims and objectives, and we are here today to celebrate the achievements made since the original signing. We are mindful that setting long term aims is comparatively easy, but managing our way towards them is not. Current local issues are important, and require careful attention, but these should not deflect us from achieving the long term goals.

Work is taking place in the context of the maturing of devolution within Wales. Thus the Welsh Assembly Government has increasing powers for decision making and legislation though structural changes in England mean that the West Midlands Regional Assembly is facing major changes in the coming months and years. An enhanced dialogue points to how decisions about cross-border activities can be managed successfully in the future. Both sides are coping with change in the political landscape, but both are demonstrating their commitment to future working and, as a result, we are carving a piece of history in the governance of the United Kingdom.

One can pose the question: what progress have we made? - or make the comment, what progress we have made! There are many areas in which progress has been made though from my point of view, as Regional Minister, there are still critical issues around the economy, environment, transport, employment and skills. The Wales Spatial Plan update was published in the Autumn of 2008 and building on the particularly strong economic drivers and benefits accrued through the West Cheshire/North East Wales Sub Regional Spatial Strategy, the Welsh Assembly Government are keen to ensure that issues are addressed throughout the whole length of the border area.

Likewise, with the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, the Phase 2 and 3 Revisions also emphasise the need for sustainable rural communities, local housing for local workers, access to critical rural services and protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment. Transport represents a major area of activity where improvements to the Cambrian Rail Network will result in increased frequency of services. Trains from Wales are now running to Birmingham International Airport, providing a better integrated transport network. People coming from the West Midlands and the Borders will be able to get to the seaside, to Aberystwyth University, and to many lovely towns and villages (and back) on an hourly service. Recently, Arriva trains have submitted a bid to run direct services from London to Aberystwyth and back.

Through closer collaboration and cross-border working we look to add value in terms of employment opportunities, skills provision and other services through the increased focus and strategic leadership given by the cross border scrutiny. For example, skills provision is a fundamental driver of economic performance on either side of the border and we must therefore ensure that skills strategies are fully integrated and can be delivered, ensuring that the border economy strives for higher value.

People still live in a "porous" border environment and "border proofing" is essential to ensure that they have access to the local services they need. We must highlight and increase opportunities for service access, whilst militating against any adverse impacts in service provision. Improved communications have benefits for England and Wales, not least in order to address the economic challenges that are posed by globalisation and technological change.

There are real opportunities to develop cohesion over the coming years. We have reached agreement for a new jointly funded post to facilitate co-ordination. The person will be on the staff of the Welsh Assembly, working in the Wales Spatial Planning Team, but will focus on cross-border collaboration, thereby strengthening the impetus to move the work forward. Today we can celebrate our early achievements and also set the agenda for our future work together.





THE OFFA'S DYKE COUNTRY REGENERATION STRATEGY CLARE FILDES, SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB PARTNERSHIP

The Offa's Dyke Regeneration Partnership is a programme encouraging sustainable regeneration along the English/Welsh border, leading to a long term sustainable economy and helping to conserve and sustain the unique landscape of the area. It hopes to build on existing good practise, and enable the communities to identify and implement specific initiatives which add value to the area.

"Offa's Dyke Country" is deliberately ambiguous. It includes an area each side of the Offa's Dyke National Trail which incorporates a number of special landscapes, clusters of towns and villages and various economic and transport hubs. The impact of the area, however, potentially extends beyond central Wales and the West Midlands. Because of its physical location the area can justly be characterised as "on the edge". There are many shared issues but no coherence to addressing them and the landscape and communities are split by artificial boundaries. The area is characterised by sparse populations with poor access to services, low wages and high house prices, hidden poverty and a limited data base from which to develop a response. This is the area recognised by the MoU in which greater collaboration and efficiency would be beneficial.

The area also has some of the most attractive scenery in Britain, a high degree of community spirit and community activity in festivals and events, a rich tapestry of history, myth and legend and a strong regard for the environment. It also boasts tranquillity and lots of existing good practise. The regeneration strategy aims to build on that to create more community-led development that generates sustainable economic growth and which connects with the landscape. Hence the project brief is "to assess the opportunities to develop a more sustainable rural economy based on the high quality natural and cultural assets of Offa's Dyke and the surrounding landscape."

PLENARY QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Both David Smith and Roger Phillips emphasised that the Forum was as much about the future as the past. The provision of public services was under pressure, which would only grow in intensity, and the MoU had a critical role to play in ensuring sensible working arrangements across the border. There were still some concerns that it was not embedded as fully as it should be in national and regional authorities, and that "rural proofing" was a fundamental part of the approach that was needed. What was certain was that the issues to be addressed in these intensely rural and somewhat deprived areas remained.

The session raised a number of issues, some of which it was felt were being addressed by the MoU and its working parties, whilst others remained unresolved. Of particular significance in a time of economic downturn were the problems being faced by small businesses in the area. There was felt to be a lack of investment, especially in North Powys, and businesses had seen rising input and transport costs. In response, the panel felt that more could be done to reduce the bureaucratic burden on businesses and that regional and local government should be more involved in supporting the business sector. Public procurement policies did not exclude cross-border co-operation (50% of all WAG contracts are placed outside Wales) and these were important levers in the process.

Also of concern were the "successor" arrangements for the MoU as political and structural changes took place. It was felt important that town and parish councils also needed to understand the significance of the MoU and "own" it in some way and that they should be given more empowerment to deliver services. The MoU was such common sense that it ought to be in the bloodstream of all who deliver services. Local government had a significant role to play, and there were also opportunities as well as challenges, especially as the proposed house building programme was rolled out and as the green agenda rose even higher. Whilst there were no expected changes in governance on the Welsh side, the issues they faced were similar, especially in health and transport. The sustainability of rural communities was a common theme not only to England and Wales, but across Europe.

Specific questions were asked about transport links between England and Wales and whether there were any plans to improve road links between central Wales and the West Midlands. Whilst some improvements were being discussed it was generally acknowledged that central Wales and the rural west of the West Midlands were not priority areas and that more needed to be done.

In their concluding remarks the panellists emphasised their commitment to further cross-border collaboration and the need to widen the scope to include the voluntary and community sector more. They also acknowledged that pressure needed to be maintained to ensure that the MoU applied throughout Westminster, WAG and regional authorities and that greater emphasis on coherent cross-border policies was needed. The response to bovine TB was cited as an example of an un-coordinated approach and an issue still to be resolved.



WORKSHOP RESPONSES

The Strategic Forum provided an opportunity to unpack the potential for regeneration along Offa's Dyke in a series of workshops. The workshops were organised thematically around the issues of: rural business and the economy, communities and public services, transport, cross border strategic opportunities, tourism, and land management.

In each case two questions were posed: First, what would sustainability mean for each of these thematic areas in twenty years time?, and secondly, what needed to change in order to make this happen, what would be achieved and what steps can be taken together to achieve this?

RURAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMY WORKSHOP: Facilitator, Cath John

A sustainable rural economy and business sector in 20 years time would have the following characteristics: resourceful, vibrant, carbon efficient, innovative, diverse and enterprising with high levels of profitability. The businesses would probably be small scale and well connected to networks and markets. Of these attributes the top three were enterprising, innovative and connected, to include both cross-border and beyond and also connected via broadband.

If this could be achieved, business would become more profitable and more innovative, farmers would be better linked into the food supply chain and young entrepreneurs would stay in the area.

To make this happen:

- Support would need to be focussed on business networks, supply chains and one-stop shops.
- Partnerships would need to be strengthened and funding programmes would need to be longer than two years.
- Lobbying at European, national and regional level would be needed to develop broadband infrastructure;
- Building on existing initiatives such as Farmhouse Breakfast Week and the gains made during the Year of Food and Farming.

COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES WORKSHOP: Facilitator, Helen Fairweather

The characteristics of sustainable communities and public services in 20 years time would include: self-reliance, confidence, cohesion, informed choice, accessibility, and local delivery and engagement. The three most important were considered to be self reliance, informed choice and engaged with the issues.

If this could be achieved communities would be stronger and more active, there would be a level playing field for everyone and inequalities would be reduced.

To make this happen:

- Training and skills development is needed in local schools and in communities in leadership and citizenship;
- Local authorities need to empower communities; until local people see that they are truly listened to they will never engage;
- The "silo" approach to public services needs to be replaced with a less bureaucratic, flexible approach.
- Access and rural isolation need to be addressed;
- Strategic organisations need to set policies to make this happen.

TRANSPORT WORKSHOP: Facilitator, Katy Anderson

Sustainable transport in 20 years time would include the following characteristics: an emphasis on community transport schemes, though these may differ depending on geography. Technological advances would aid information awareness about integrated transport and systems both locally and beyond. There would be a high emphasis on fuel efficiency with awareness of climate change. Information would be brought in real time to the



traveller and would be readily understandable. The infrastructure would have to cope with increased car usage and a development of sustainable tourism. Such systems would need to be affordable, both to transport providers and end-users. The five most important issues were felt to be: community schemes, technological advance, affordability, and low environmental impact with infrastructure to match.

If this could be achieved, it would provide better value for money and increased access to services both for rural people accessing urban services and as well as for urban people to access the countryside.

To make this happen:

- Commitment is needed from the government to work together nationally and regionally and invest outside of their administrative areas.
- Community transport services need support in succession planning to become more sustainable;
- Multi-purpose transport such as a post bus has a key role.

CROSS BORDER STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES: Facilitator, Steve Evison

Sustainable cross border working means understanding the differences between the two areas and co-operating across these. It requires an action-orientated approach which joins up to achieve results. Both sides need to understand and appreciate what is unique about the area – the "cultural" landscape, and what can be achieved economically. Actions need to be monitored and lessons should be learned and digested. One would envisage a future in which there were: shared services, integrated methods of working and service delivery, good political representation from the border area, good infrastructure and where "border proofing" would be a normal part of policy analysis. One idea would be to create a linear "Kingdom of Offa" committee that had the authority to represent the area to deal with issues. The agenda would be significant, including flooding and waste disposal, transport policies, education and healthcare. The most significant issues were to understand, protect and enhance the unique character of the area.

If this could be achieved it would ensure that services would run to the benefit of communities regardless of the boundaries, that transport access would be improved and that farming and the landscape can be sustained into the future.

To make this happen:

- Programme delivery needs to be simplified and aligned;
- Cross-border issues need political clout and a clear system for border-proofing which is embedded in statutory duties (e.g. engagement with public sector providers across borders”
- Need recognition that services cost more to deliver in border areas and adaptation of funding and procurement policies;
- Buy-in from local authorities will be crucial.

TOURISM: Facilitator, Alison Caffyn

Sustainable tourism would have certain characteristics: Accessible – easy to access and ease of travelling around, joined up/packaged; Green – low carbon and less need to travel round by car; Sense of place – rooted in the locality offering distinctive experience; and A learning experience – about the place, landscape and heritage. The underpinning factor would be the high quality of tourism on offer. The area has a Unique Selling Point and offers plenty of opportunity for different experiences, ranging from walking, food, crafts, heritage, cycling etc. The quality of the welcome and the packaging of what is available are the key determinants.

If this could be achieved it would increase community cohesion, encourage new business development in tourism and in local supply chains, and provide a stronger economic and environmental future for our children.

To make this happen:

- Better packaging of holidays and better information for visitors are needed to make it easy;
- Offa’s Dyke should be used as a way to complement existing destination brands;
- Visitors should be encouraged to buy locally, with local authorities supporting local supply chains;
- Sustainable transport good practice should be spread, for example the Beacon Bus and the Hay Festival Bus.

LAND MANAGEMENT: Facilitator, Irene Evison

Sustainable land management in 20 years time would include a better understanding of natural processes and more joined-up natural resource supply chains. Economic prosperity should be in sympathy with the natural environment so that inter-relationships are understood and protected. There will be a greater emphasis on local markets and local self sufficiency with due regard for profitability and the landscape of the area. There should be more use of branding and accreditation to help local farmers reach local markets, including environmental accreditation, and a better understanding of the relationship between regulation and land management.

If this could be achieved it would provide a more secure and better return for farmers, it would localise food production, with benefits for climate change adaptation, enabling communities to become more sustainable and self-sufficient.

To make this happen:

- Improved education and communication are needed to improve understanding between regulators and land managers;
- Farmers need to work together, with public sector support.
- Individual farm brands and local brands such as Shropshire Hills and Wye Valley need to be strengthened and accredited with support for infrastructure (e.g. abattoirs) and marketing.
- Access and political will need to be strengthened.

APPENDIX A SIGNATORIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Welsh Assembly Government

Advantage West Midlands
Arriva Trains Wales
Brecon Beacons National Park
CADW
CCW
Ceredigion County Council
Ceredigion Local Health Board
Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire & Worcestershire
Coleg Powys
Community Council of Shropshire
Community First
Conwy Local Health Board
Country Land and Business Association
Dyfed Powys Police
English Heritage
Environment Agency
Environment Agency (Wales)
Farmers Union of Wales
Forestry Commission
Freight Transport Association
Government Office for the West Midlands
Gwynedd Local Health Board
Heart of Wales Line
Hereford Diocese
Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust
Hereford Voluntary Action
Herefordshire Association of Local Councils
Herefordshire Council
Herefordshire NHS
Herefordshire Partnership
Job Centre Plus North & Mid Wales District
Learning & Skills Council
Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Authority

West Midlands Regional Assembly

Mid Wales Manufacturing Group
National Farmers Union
Natural England
NFU Cymru
One Voice Wales
Powys Ambulance Service
Powys County Council
Powys Local Health Board
Powys Chamber of Commerce
Powys Fire & Rescue Services
Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust
Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital PCT
Severn Trent Water Authority
Shrewsbury & Telford Hospitals NHS Trust
Shropshire Association of Local Councils
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Shropshire Council
Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service
Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership
Shropshire County NHS
Shropshire Partnership
South Shropshire District Council
The Institute of Rural Health
Welsh Local Government Association
Welsh Water
West Mercia Constabulary
West Midland Ambulance Service
West Midlands Area of Young Farmers Clubs
West Midlands Local Government Association
West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum
West Midlands Association of Parish & Town Councils
West Midlands Learning & Skills Council

For more information please contact Sara Roberts via email on s.roberts@wmra.gov, by telephone on 0121 352 5278 or 07917 168844 or visit www.wmra.gov.uk

APPENDIX B BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS, STRATEGIC FORUM SPEAKERS



REV'D NICK READ

Nick is a non-parochial Anglican Priest in Hereford Diocese whose remit encompasses agriculture, environment and rural life. He has degrees in agriculture and forestry and worked previously in academic research, as an adviser with the National Farmers' Union, and establishing and running a charity that support farmers suffering from stress, for which he was awarded the OBE. He was a member of the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum since its inception, and chaired it from 2005-2008. He is also Chairman of the Institute of Rural Health and was appointed a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Societies in 2009.



ALUN FFRED JONES AM

Alun was born in Brynaman in 1949 and is a graduate of the University of Wales. He is Minister for Heritage and lead Minister for the Central Wales spatial plan area within the Welsh Assembly Government. Previously he had been a television director and producer, a Welsh teacher and a journalist. He was a former leader of Gwynedd County Council and chair of Antur Nantlle and is Chairman of Nantlle Vale Football Club.



CLLR DAVID S SMITH

David has been Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly since 2005, and the leader of Lichfield District Council for ten years. He was previously Chairman of the West Midlands Local Government Association. He is a Justice of the Peace and a member of the Criminal Justice Council for England and Wales. He also sits on the West Midlands Marketing Board and the West Midlands Enterprise Board.



CLLR ROGER PHILLIPS

Roger was elected to Herefordshire Council in 1997 and has been its Leader since 2003, he also serves on the Board of the West Midlands Regional Assembly and chairs the Regional Transport Partnership. In 2007 he was appointed Chairman of the Regional Forum of Leaders. He is Vice-Chair of the Board of Local Government Employers and the NJC, which has responsibility for all pay and workforce issues in local government. He has a background in agriculture and the voluntary youth sector and was appointed a Fellow in the Royal Society of Arts in 2006.



JOANNA NEWTON

Jo is Chair of NHS Herefordshire and of the West Midlands Strategic Commissioning Group, and a former Chair of Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service NHS Trust. She also chairs the cross border Health & Social Care Group. She was previously a non-executive director of Herefordshire PCT and has senior management experience in the pharmaceutical industry. Her voluntary work includes chairing the Board of Governors at her local school and chairing the Parish Plan committee.



CLARE FILDES

Clare is Development Officer for the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, with particular emphasis on the promotion of sustainable approaches to business within the AONB. She has responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the LEADER programme within the Shropshire Hills and also manages the contract for the delivery of the sustainable regeneration strategy as part of the "Offa's Dyke Partnership." Previously she worked in the private sector, in agricultural sales, and running a cafe and bistro in Shrewsbury.

