

Agenda Item No. 7

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS –FRIDAY 2nd JUNE 2006

Support for RAF Cosford

1. Purpose of the report

To build on the agreement made on 5th April for the WMLGA and WMRA to have a more active role in supporting RAF Cosford as the location for a new defence training 'supersite' and request support from members in some specific areas of work.

2. Recommendations

- (a) That senior regional representatives, including Leaders/Chief Executives of local authorities in the Region, be asked to formally express their support for RAF Cosford via a written testimonial. These will be placed on the Lets Fly Cosford website and also used by AWM in other promotional activities relating to the Lets Fly Cosford Campaign.
- (b) That a number of senior regional representatives, including Leaders/Chief Executives from across the Region (and particularly outside the Shropshire area) come forward as Spokespeople in order to demonstrate that the entire West Midlands is behind RAF Cosford. This role to include talking to the media and attending MP briefings in London over the summer.

3. Report Details

- 3.1 At the WMRA and WMLGA meetings on 5th April there was agreement to provide more active support for the bid to develop RAF Cosford as a MOD training 'supersite', which is in direct competition to a bid for the St Athan site in South Wales. The MOD decision on the bids has been put back until the Autumn so there is continuing opportunity to promote the West Midlands proposal.
- 3.2 This was agreed although there were some concerns expressed about the possible prejudicial implications of the Assembly supporting a major project where there was a possibility or likelihood of the Assembly as Regional Planning Body having at some stage to deal with a related planning issue.
- 3.3 There is general agreement that the Assembly's Planning Role should not prevent it from fulfilling its role as a regional voice and therefore expressing opinions on regionally significant developments. The issue is how best to represent and operate the separation of functions. This

is not solely an issue for the Cosford proposal but would for instance relate to other developments for instance New Street Station.

- 3.4 Pending clarification of this position, and this will be raised as an adjunct to the work being carried out by the English Regions Network on probity in Regional Planning, The simplest form of separation is for those members with formal roles in the planning conformity process refraining from engagement in any Assembly discussions or debate, if necessary by leaving the meeting.
- 3.5 In relation to the Cosford campaign, and taking into account the above issues, initial activity on behalf of WMRA/WMLGA has focused on contact with AWM to establish how we can support/enhance their work.
- 3.6 It is proposed therefore that senior people around the region, particularly in local authorities, might formally endorse the value of the Cosford proposal outside of the local or sub-regional context. Also that a number of senior colleagues be sought to act as champions for RAF Cosford including dealings with media and MPs etc.
- 3.7 Information packs containing copies of all promotional material relating to the Lets Fly Cosford Campaign have been obtained from AWM. Copies will be available at the Board meeting.
- 3.8 Representatives from AWM's 'Let's Fly Cosford' working group are available to carry out individual briefings with any Leaders/Chief Executives/members who would like to have a more in depth discussion about any elements of the campaign.

Michael Frater
Secretary