

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Board of Directors – 26th September 2007

Draft New West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy Action Plan

Report of the Chief Executive of Advantage West Midlands

1. Background

- 1.1 The WMES review has progressed through several stages including building the evidence base; developing and consulting on policy options and consulting on the full draft Strategy. This latter period of consultation closed on 31st July. Since then an analysis of the consultation responses has been undertaken and the draft Strategy and associated Delivery Framework have been revised accordingly. This paper summarises the changes that have been made and contains proposals for the remaining steps in the review process.
- 1.2 It is worth noting that since the consultation on the draft WMES, the Government has published the results of its review of sub-national economic development and regeneration (SNR). This has implications for both the Strategy and the Delivery Framework, going forward. Whilst some of the SNR recommendations are clear, others will be subject to further development and consultation. It is difficult at this point in time, therefore, to fully reflect the implications of the SNR in the Strategy and Delivery Framework.

2. Summary of headline changes to the draft WMES

- 2.1 Attached as separate papers are the latest drafts of the WMES – the Strategy and the associated Delivery Framework. They represent a development of the consultation draft WMES that was published in May. A number of major and more minor changes have been made to that original text in producing the attached documents. These changes are based on the many discussions and consultation events that have taken place across the region over the last few months, together with analysis of the 178 written consultation responses received.

- 2.2 The written consultation responses received have been reviewed on an individual basis by Agency policy leads but they have also been the subject of an overall analysis undertaken on behalf of the Agency by Regeneris Consulting. A copy of the draft final report from that work is attached. Section 3 of the report summarises the results of the analysis and identifies a number of areas for possible revision of the consultation draft. The changes to the draft that have been made in response to these suggestions are picked up in the relevant sections below.
- 2.3 The major changes that have been made to the draft are set out in the following sections. The changes are described in relation to each of the chapters of the draft Strategy.

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3. Overall structure and design

Changes	Rationale
<p>(i) Revised WMES comprises two main documents:</p> <p>Strategy – Setting out the vision, the strategic objectives and how progress will be monitored.</p> <p>Delivery Framework – Setting out the 'how' and the 'who' in relation to delivery of the Strategy.</p> <p>Plus several supporting documents, including one providing greater detail in terms of the context, evidence and rationales underpinning the WMES.</p>	<p>(i) To enable the Strategy document to be a shorter and more accessible document.</p> <p>To allow the Delivery Framework to become more of a 'living' document, updateable on an annual basis.</p> <p>Change of title from 'Action Plan' to 'Delivery Framework' to more accurately position the document as setting the broad framework for delivery as opposed to being a detailed set of actions.</p>
<p>(ii) Improved accessibility of documents, through better use of background colours.</p>	<p>(ii) The consultation draft used a mix of background colours and text that did not aid readability, particularly for the visually impaired.</p>

4. Vision and title

Changes	Rationale
<p>(i) Revised vision for the region, <i>'to be a global centre where people and businesses choose to connect.'</i></p> <p>The text that subsequently 'explains' the vision contains references to the 'invest, work, learn, visit and live' dimensions and is also strong on the diversity of the region and on the need for development to be sustainable/ based on a low carbon approach.</p>	<p>(i) Consultation feedback on the draft vision was wide ranging and proposed many competing alternative formulations.</p> <p>Work within the Agency to arrive at the proposed revised vision was based on a desire to make the vision more aspirational, distinctive and concise. Longer formulations were originally considered:</p> <p><i>'To be (recognised as) a (dynamic) global centre (/place) where people and businesses choose to connect (to invest, work, learn, visit and live)'</i></p> <p>Arrival at the final version was based on an overriding desire for the wording to be concise, as long as the explanatory text was sufficiently strong on diversity and sustainability.</p>
<p>(ii) A linked title for the WMES is also proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Connecting to success</i> <p><i>(Note: Performance measures are considered in the section below on, 'Monitoring performance')</i></p>	<p>(ii) The title is intended to echo the vision but also reflect the 'governing idea' – a brand footprint - which resides within the three interconnected themes of genius, centred and connected - it was created to offer a unique insight into those qualities attributable to our Region which make it world class. Two alternative titles were considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Connecting for success</i> - <i>Connecting to succeed</i>

5. Context

Change	Rationale
<p>Shortened the 'economic context' section but added into this chapter a short section on achievements to date. In addition, moved the section on resources available to deliver the strategy into the section (previously appeared later in the document).</p>	<p>Shortened economic context section to make the Strategy more concise. Additional information on context and evidence to be provided in a supporting document.</p> <p>Section on achievements added to help set the strategy in context.</p> <p>Resources section moved forwards as this is also information about the context within which the strategy is being delivered.</p>

6. Strategic approach

Change	Rationale
<p>Additional section added to illustrate the importance of the challenges in relation to skills, enterprise, innovation, transport and economic inclusion.</p>	<p>Response to consultation feedback that the Business, Place, People and Powerful voice themes could be viewed as too silo based. The intention is to emphasise that these challenges are important across all elements of the strategy.</p>

7. Business

Changes	Rationale
<p>(i) Objectives and priorities re-ordered and some re-focused to reflect three main strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Seizing market opportunities- Improving competitiveness- Harnessing knowledge	<p>(i) and (ii) Re-ordering and re-focusing to reflect consultation feedback, particularly the views of the Enterprise Board.</p>
<p>(ii) Greater focus on existing business survival and growth, relative to encouraging new start-ups.</p>	

8. Place

Changes	Rationale
<p>(i) Objectives and priorities re-ordered and some re-focused to reflect three main strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Birmingham competing as a global city- Improving infrastructure- Sustainable communities	<p>(i) Re-ordering to give greater prominence to the importance of Birmingham to the region.</p>
<p>(ii) Strengthening of the text in relation to the role of Birmingham to emphasise the importance of developing the city to the benefit of the wider region.</p>	
<p>(iii) Various modifications to the text to secure greater alignment with the wording of the Regional Spatial Strategy.</p>	<p>(iii) The Regional Assembly suggested further textual modifications to strengthen alignment with the RSS.</p>

Changes	Rationale
<p>(iv) Various modifications to the text to enhance the sustainability/low carbon dimensions of this theme. These include the addition of a further priority, 2.4: 'Supporting a secure, low carbon energy infrastructure for the region.'</p>	<p>(iv) Forum for the Future recommended further modifications to strengthen certain elements of the strategy in relation to sustainability/moving towards a low carbon economy.</p>

9. **People**

Changes	Rationale
<p>(i) Objectives and priorities re-ordered and some re-focused to reflect three main strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable living - Raising ambitions and aspirations - Achieving full potential and opportunities for all <p>(ii) Various modifications to give greater focus on the region's skills priorities, particularly the importance of a demand led approach.</p> <p>(iii) Various modifications to give a greater focus to worklessness/inclusion/community centred issues.</p>	<p>All three areas of change are a response to points raised by partners in consultation.</p>

10. **Powerful voice**

Changes	Rationale
(i) Greater detail in relation to the proposed actions has been included in the Delivery Framework.	Both areas of change are responses to points raised by partners in consultation.
(ii) Text modified to reflect the potential role of sub-regional and 'attack' brands.	

11. **Focus and delivery**

Changes	Rationale
(i) The two previously separate sections have been merged into a single chapter on 'Focus and delivery'.	(i), (ii) and (iii) are largely just about where in the WMES particular sections are contained.
(ii) The section on resources available to deliver the strategy has been moved to the context section, as set out above.	
(iii) Some of the delivery text has been moved into the Delivery Framework.	
(iv) Various modifications have been made to the text to secure greater alignment with the wording of the Regional Spatial Strategy.	(iv) The Regional Assembly suggested further textual modifications to strengthen alignment with the RSS.

12. Monitoring performance

Changes	Rationale
<p>(i) Work undertaken, with the assistance of the Regional Observatory, to revise the original set of results or outcome indicators so that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- are a better match for the objectives and priorities set out in the strategy;- combined with the headline measures, provide a coherent contextual monitoring framework for the strategy and- are capable of disaggregation at lower geographic levels and by different socio-economic groups, wherever possible.	<p>(i) and (ii) Response to various pieces of consultation feedback about the choice of indicators.</p>
<p>(ii) Final version of the revised WMES to be accompanied by a supporting report providing greater detail and analysis with regard to the baseline situation in relation to each indicator.</p>	
<p>(iii) The updated list of indicators now includes a measure of absolute carbon dioxide emissions.</p>	<p>(iii) The forthcoming Climate Change Bill will put into statute the UK's target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 26-32% by 2020 and by 60% by 2050, against a 1990 baseline. Further work is required to understand the merits /implications of setting a West Midlands target for reductions in CO₂ emissions.</p>

13. Appendices

Changes	Rationale
<p>(i) Removed appendices that are no longer relevant, such as the list of consultation questions and the description of the strategy review process.</p>	<p>(i) These appendices are not needed for the final version.</p>
<p>(ii) Removed the appendix on sub-regional implications of the Strategy. An updated section illustrating the relevance of the strategy in each sub-region has been included in the Delivery Framework. Further detail on sub-regions will also be contained in the supporting document on context, evidence and rationales.</p>	<p>(ii) The illustrations of how the Strategy may play out in each sub-region fit better in the Delivery Framework than in the Strategy, as they are principally about delivery. Greater detail about the regional context is best contained in the supporting document.</p>