

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
PLENARY MEETING**

Date: 5 March 2008

Subject: **Regional Scrutiny**

Report of: Assembly Deputy Chair

Recommendation:

That the Assembly notes this report.

Purpose of Report:

To update members on our scrutiny work since my report at the Assembly plenary in November 2007. This report also highlights a number of our other accountability activities.

Key Issues:

Two select committees have been held since my last report. We considered the region's efforts to stabilise, and in time reduce, the ecological footprint. We have also met to consider SEEDA's Corporate Plan, which is the subject of item 9 on today's agenda.

Select Committees planned for 2008-09 will consider SEEDA's Coastal Strategy, labour force and employment, and SEEDA's relationship with sub-regional partnerships.

Our engagement with other regional organisations has continued, with our annual Environment Agency Dialogue in December 2007.

1. Select Committee on the South East's Ecological Footprint

- 1.1 This select committee considered efforts to stabilise, and in time reduce, the region's ecological footprint, a key target in both the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy. This select committee took a different format to our usual select committees. Given the need for concerted activity by a range of organisations to achieve the region's target, it was felt appropriate to consider the actions of a range of regional organisations including, but not limited to, SEEDA.
- 1.2 We commissioned a scene setting 'context and issues' paper from the consultants CAG. This report was used as a consultation document to prompt responses from external bodies prior to the select committee, and provided context for our committee's deliberations.
- 1.3 The select committee meeting itself consisted of a day-long workshop with stakeholders from regional organisations on 19 November 2007. This provided an opportunity to debate activities within the region, the various organisations' strategies and the impact of action so far, and what more should be done. We then developed recommendations to provide focus on priorities for action.
- 1.4 The committee's report and recommendations were agreed by our Executive Committee on 25 January 2008. Our final report and supporting documentation are available on our website¹. The committee's recommendations included the need for clarity of roles and responsibilities, a coordinated approach to communication, and the need for the public sector to lead by example. Sector-specific recommendations were also made regarding housing, transport and food.
- 1.5 We expect initial responses to our recommendations to be available for our April Executive Committee.

2. SEEDA's Corporate Plan

- 2.1 As agreed by our Executive Committee in December 2007, we altered our scrutiny programme to accommodate a meeting focusing on SEEDA's Corporate Plan consultation. I chaired this select committee on 13 February, which involved high level representation from both Assembly members and SEEDA executive officers. This select committee was also a departure from the normal pattern of our scrutiny work, focussing on corporate strategy rather than a discrete theme. Our key findings have informed our proposed Assembly response to the consultation document, which is the subject of item 9 on today's agenda.

¹ http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/meetings/select/eco_footprint.html

3. Forthcoming Scrutiny Topics

- 3.1 Our scrutiny programme for 2008-09 was agreed by the Executive Committee in December 2007². In the spring/early summer we will consider SEEDA's Coastal Strategy; in late summer, labour force and employment; and finally, SEEDA's relationship with sub-regional partnerships at the end of the year. Further information on these will be available on our website during the course of the year³.

4. Other Accountability Activities

- 4.1 The Assembly also engages with a range of other regional organisations to ensure our priorities are aligned and that we are working collectively in the most effective way. The Chairman's report (Agenda Item 2) includes updates on the Health Summit and discussions with the Learning and Skills Council at Executive Committee.
- 4.2 Our annual Environment Agency Dialogue took place in December, focusing on the Water Framework Directive and its implications for the South East. Members also took a tour of the Environment Agency's Red Kite House, in Wallingford, to examine the building's environmental features, such as natural ventilation and cooling and solar thermal panels. Minutes of the meeting are available on our website⁴.

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Deputy Chair

15 February 2008

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² http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/meetings/exec/2007/141207/agenda_item_9-scrutiny_programme_2008-09.pdf

³ http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/our_work/accountability/select.html

⁴ http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/meetings/other/2007/ea_dialogue.html