

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
PLENARY MEETING**

Date: 5 March 2008

Subject: **Regional Sustainability Framework**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Assembly:

- Notes the successful completion of the consultation on the Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF).
- Accepts the recommendation of the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) and endorses the RSF.

**Purpose of Report:**

To inform the Assembly of:

- The successful completion of the consultation on the RSF and the resulting changes.
- The recommendation of the RPC that the Assembly endorse the final version of the RSF.

**Key Issues:**

- The consultation on the RSF was successfully completed on November 26 2007.
- As requested at the full Assembly meeting in July, the RSF was considered by the RPC at their meeting in September as a formal part of the consultation process.
- The consultation responses, including those from the RPC, have been considered by the Sustainable Futures Group (SFG) which is leading on the review on behalf of the Region.
- These have been reflected in the final version of the RSF which was presented to the RPC in January.
- At their meeting the RPC recommended that the Assembly endorse the final version of the RSF (herewith).

## **I. Context**

- 1.1 As part of the review of the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF) the South East England Regional Assembly, with partners and on behalf of the Sustainable Futures Group (SFG), has produced the Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF). The revised Sustainability Framework for the South East will guide action in the region by establishing the overarching framework within which all regional strategies and policies should be formulated and implemented. In doing this, the RSF is ensuring compatibility across regional strategies by ensuring consistency of vision and direction of policy and action.
- 1.2 To assist the preparation of the RSF, the Regional Assembly, with the support of the IRF Working Group, has completed a 12-week stakeholder consultation. The objective of the consultation was to raise awareness of the RSF and sustainable development and to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders.
- 1.3 To support the development of the RSF a high-level appraisal has also been developed which applies the Sustainability Appraisal process of testing the objectives against a sustainability framework, in this case the RSF's own objectives. This has had the benefit of highlighting conflicts between the objectives and identifying opportunities for improvement. Sub objectives were also included to inform the testing process. These ensure coverage of rural and equalities issues. To identify any gaps the RSF has also been tested against the five principles outlined in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, Securing the Future (STF).

## **2. RSF Consultation**

- 2.1 A consultation flyer and an email alert were sent out to a total of approx. 1,400 stakeholders inviting them to complete an online or hardcopy questionnaire.
- 2.2 A debate on the RSF took place at the full Regional Assembly meeting in July, the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) in September and the Assembly Executive Committee in October.
- 2.3 Members of the Youth Parliament were also involved and arranged for the completion of a number of dedicated youth questionnaires.
- 2.4 Including responses to the online questionnaire, responses to the youth parliament and written feedback from the workshops over 300 responses have been received.

## **3. The Proposed Regional Sustainability Framework**

- 3.1 A summary of all the changes made to the RSF following consultation is included in the attached Annex A. The final version was presented to the RPC on 30 January for endorsement. A few minor additional points of clarity were requested and have now been completed (the final version of the RSF is included as Annex B). The Committee expressed thanks to the SFG for the work they had carried out on behalf of the region and are happy to recommend that the Assembly endorses the RSF.

- 3.2 The RSF is also being presented to the regional partners, involved in the preparation of the RSF, for their own endorsement. These include: GOSE, Environment Agency, SEFS, SEEDA, RAISE, English Heritage and the two Strategic Health Authorities. This process will be completed by the end of March 2008.

**Moira Gibson**  
**Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee**

18 February 2008

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### **I. Changes to the Regional Sustainability Framework Following Consultation**

- I.1 This Annex details the main changes that have been agreed by the Sustainable Futures Group (SFG) in response to the consultation and the high-level appraisal<sup>1</sup>. These changes have been made to the RSF which accompanies this paper (Annex B) and is presented to the Assembly for endorsement.
- I.2 The overall size of the main body of the RSF has been reduced from 68 pages to 30 pages; this has been achieved by simplifying and merging a number of sections. The original monitoring summary has been removed from the framework but retained (with the original objectives and indicators) in the RSF as Annex I to provide a record of the original information that was used by the SFG to derive the priorities. This has reduced the number of layers in the framework making it simpler and easier to follow.
- I.3 The RSF now contains a new introduction (Section 1) and a diagram which clearly sets out the purpose of the framework and the relationship between the vision, objectives and the priorities.
- I.4 Sections 2.5 and 2.6 which explain who should use the RSF have been strengthened and detail the links to Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Development Frameworks, Local Area Agreements (LAA) the third sector and business. The Assembly monitoring team has also carried out a review of all the RSF indicators. Where appropriate the indicators are now consistent with the new LAA National Indicator Framework and are cross referenced accordingly (Table 1, Section 2).
- I.5 To reflect the specific feedback expressed by the RPC at their September meeting the vision has been amended to include reference to an economically strong South East. References to 'closing the gap' between deprived areas and the rest of the region have been amended to clarify the need to improve overall performance. The rationale for using a mix of national, regional and sub-regional indicators has also been included and Annex I of the RSF has been amended to include reference to the South East's economic performance internationally.
- I.6 It was clear from the consultation that there was confusion over the rationale for choosing the priorities. It was suggested, for example, that there needs to be parity between the number of economic, social and environmental priorities. To address this confusion the priorities are now clearly defined as areas where the South East is underperforming and where action is urgently required to achieve our vision. The framework has also been restructured accordingly (Sections 1 and 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Further details on the consultation, the high-level appraisal and the CAG Compendium of Regional Context can be found on the Assembly's website [http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/our\\_work/planning/sus\\_dev/rsf.html](http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/our_work/planning/sus_dev/rsf.html)

- I.7 To reflect serious concerns over the robustness of the Index of Sustainable Economic Wellbeing (ISEW) the concept of goals and the associated targets have been removed (Section 2). This has also addresses concerns that the RSF was too layered. It was felt, by the SFG, that the need to deliver a strong healthy and just society and one which lives within environmental limits was already expressed in the vision. The supporting text for the regional goals is retained and is used to articulate the issues and opportunities associated with delivering the vision. The Ecological Footprint target has been retained within objective 22.
- I.8 To reflect concerns over the meaning of the term 'carbon footprint', priority 2 has been amended to read:
- To reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the region.
- I.9 To target priority 4 more specifically at deprived people, the following new wording has been agreed:
- Ensuring that the most deprived people also have an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to a better quality of life.
- I.10 A number of the consultation responses stated that the quality of the countryside and biodiversity should be a separate fifth priority. However the SFG did not feel that regional performance of the relevant indicators warranted that they are included as a separate priority. However the SFG did feel that there was a need for the region to be able to adapt to likely future pressures. As a result, the RSF has been amended to include a commitment by the SFG (Section 3.3) to keep the priorities under review and to help the region adapt to likely pressures for example on our natural and built environment and our economy.
- I.11 The supporting text for each priority has been updated to include relevant RSF targets, the relevant key strategies and plans (Annex 2 of the RSF) and case studies which illustrate what success looks like in the South East.
- I.12 It was suggested through the consultation and the high-level appraisal that behavioural change should be a priority. Generally it was felt that behavioural change is a mechanism for achieving the priorities rather than a priority in itself. However to reflect these concerns Section 4 on Implementation has been considerably strengthened. The section now draws on the CAG compendium of regional context by setting out progress that has been achieved within the region, as well as key requirements for success. These include engagement with business, changing behaviour and the provision of appropriate infrastructure. Case studies are used to illustrate how behaviour can be changed.
- I.13 A number of specific changes to the objectives targets and indicators result from the high-level appraisal and the consultation. These include:
- Changes to the housing objective to reflect type and size concerns (Objective 1).

- The addition of new indicators regarding health inequality, support for the elderly and obesity (Objective 2).
- A new indicator to measure the number of young people out of work and not in training (Objective 4).
- An update to the economic growth objective which now refers to the principle of smart growth (Objective 10).
- An emphasis on improving performance as well as narrowing the gap (Objective 3 and relevant economic targets).
- Two new landscape and countryside indicators are included and the existing two have been amended to reflect concerns over robustness (Objective 7 and Objective 20).
- The climate change objective has been divided into a mitigation and adaptation objectives (Objective 18 and 19).
- The transport objective has been amended to make it clear that transport efficiency will be achieved by enhancing the proportion travelling by sustainable modes and by reducing the need to travel (Objective 21).
- The energy efficiency and renewable energy objective has been updated to include reference to energy security and diversity of supply (Objective 25).
- The heritage indicator has been replaced with one which now refers to all our historic assets rather than just to those at risk (Objective 20).