

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 23 May 2001

Subject: **South-East Climate Change Partnership**

Report of: Director of Planning and Transport

Recommendation:

That the Committee agree to the Assembly becoming a member of the South-Climate Change Partnership on the basis indicated in the report.

1. In 1998 an informal grouping of local authorities and other bodies came together to produce a report on the possible implications of climate change for part of the South East Region. The group was led by Surrey County Council and its work did not cover the whole of the present South East Region, but as confined to the counties of Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire.
2. The group's report, published in 1999, attracted considerable media interest and wider attention. It predicted that over the next 50-100 years the South East Region would be significantly affected by climate changes and that there was consequently a need to begin to prepare for those changes. Following on from that initial report, the informal group became quiescent. With the recent renewal of political and public interest in climate change issues, partly prompted by the unprecedented wet autumn and winter 2000/2001, the group has reconvened and commissioned a report on how it might move the changed agenda forward.
3. The report has recommended that a more permanent grouping of organisations interested in climate change issues now be established, in the form of a Regional Climate Change Partnership. The group would need to involve all significant agencies across the whole of the South East Region. Its purpose would be to disseminate information about climate change issues, and encourage appropriate bodies to begin the process of adaption, which will involve responding to both threats and opportunities. Thirdly, the Partnership would seek to raise general awareness of the issues.
4. The Regional Assembly was not in existence when the earlier working group took place and was therefore not involved. It has, however, now been invited to become a member of the new Partnership. The report suggested that the Assembly's involvement was particularly important, given its role as Regional Planning Body.

5. There is no doubt that climate change is an important issue, which will require attention over the coming years. Many aspects of climate change remain uncertain, and it is important to emphasise that there may be as many opportunities for business changes in lifestyle and social practice, as well as threats. Nevertheless, an improved understanding of climate change issues will be valuable to the work of the Assembly, especially in its role as Regional Planning Body as it evolves forward and reviews future Planning Guidance.
6. One of the new Advisory Groups established to assist the work of the Planning Committee is specifically focussed on issues relating to natural resources and climate change. It will therefore be helpful for that Group to be able to draw on the expert advice and assistance that should be forthcoming from the Climate Change Partnership.
7. In principle, therefore, it would make good sense for the Assembly to become closely associated with the Partnership's work. The form of that relationship, however, needs careful consideration, given the Assembly's particular role and responsibilities as Regional Planning Body. This might mean that it would be more appropriate for the Assembly to be associated with the work of the Partnership, rather than to be a formal member. In terms of information from the Partnership about relevant issues, the Assembly would undertake to draw on the Partnership's expertise in assisting the work of the Natural Resources and Climate Change Advisory Group and, through that channel, the wider work of the Planning Committee and Assembly. In return the Partnership would provide ready access to their research and information.
8. It is recommended, therefore, that the Planning Committee agree, on behalf of the Assembly, to become associated with the work of the new Climate Change Partnership, and also authorise your officers to discuss with the Partnership the most appropriate way to achieve that association, whilst respecting the special role of the Assembly as Regional Planning Body.

Mike Gwilliam
Director of Planning and Transport

14 May 2001