

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

Date: 8 November 2004

Subject: **South East Plan – publicity programme**

Report of: Head of Communications

Recommendation:

That the Committee approve this programme of publicity activity during the 13-week consultation period for the South East Plan.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 As part of the preparation of the South East Plan, PPS1 I requires the Assembly to produce a 'Statement of Public Participation', explaining how and when the Regional Planning Body (RPB) intends to involve the public in the preparation of the Plan.
- 1.2 The initial draft of that statement was discussed at RPC on 29 September 2004. Following changes to reflect the RPC discussion, the statement was endorsed by the Executive Committee on 22 October 2004.
- 1.3 This report sets out the materials that the Assembly will produce to support and promote the consultation. The consultation period will run from January to April 2005. Following this, the bulk of the Plan will be submitted to Government by the agreed deadline of 31 July 2005.
- 1.4 A second period of consultation will be needed in summer 2005, specifically on district level housing allocations before these are submitted to Government by 31 October 2005.

2. Strategy Outline

- 2.1 As set out in the Statement of Public Participation, the Assembly's aim is to promote awareness of the South East Plan consultation process to the maximum number of adults in the South East region. This is a significant task, as the region comprises 6.5 million residents aged over 15.

- 2.2 Principal aims are to:
- Raise awareness of the South East Plan;
 - Inform citizens about the key topics in the Plan;
 - Make residents aware of the opportunities available to give their views on the Plan;
 - Channel input to the Plan preparation as much as possible through local authorities, umbrella bodies and other stakeholders;
 - Complement these responses with a further wave of public opinion research.

3. The Role of the Assembly

3.1 The Assembly will organise and fund the following consultation support materials to support the January-April consultation. In addition to these publicity materials, the Assembly is also expecting to organise a series of meetings for key regional stakeholders (similar to the spring debates) where the Plan's options can be discussed in detail.

3.1.1 Printed information:

- An awareness-raising leaflet in December 2004 – distribution via Assembly and partners
- A leaflet giving an overview of the Plan and its options (including consultation questionnaire) – delivery to every household in the region, plus distribution via Assembly and partners
- Winter 2005 edition of 'Voice' magazine including Plan information – distribution via Assembly and Business South East magazine
- Coverage of the consultation process in editions of the 'Bulletin' and 'South East Plan Update' newsletters – distribution via Assembly
- Copies of the full Plan and a separate Executive Summary

3.1.2 Paid promotions:

- Advertising in paid-for weekly and regional daily newspapers throughout the region
- Radio advertising on the most popular commercial radio stations in the region
- Audio support materials to encourage editorial coverage of the consultation process on both BBC and commercial radio stations
- A consultation launch event

3.1.3 Public relations work carried out by the Assembly's in-house team:

- Proactive work to attract media coverage by broadcast and print media
- Articles for partner magazines/ newsletters
- Consultation support material available online on the Assembly's own websites, alongside the full Plan and Executive Summary available for downloading
- Links from partner websites

- Use of the Assembly's email alert service to raise stakeholder awareness of the consultation
- 3.1.4 Opinion polling
- A third stage of face-to-face surveys by MORI focused on the options included in the Plan targeting a representative sample of the region (around 2,000 people)
 - Workshops or focus groups organised by MORI to gather qualitative data
- 3.1.5 Partner resource pack. This will be a pack of printed and online resources to assist all local authorities, Assembly members, partner organisations and representative groups to cascade the consultation message to their own audiences. The pack will include:
- Copies of the printed leaflet to be delivered to every household (including consultation questionnaire)
 - Factsheets on key topics covered in the Plan
 - A powerpoint presentation on the Plan
 - Copies of print adverts
 - A sample newsletter article explaining the Plan
 - Copies of the Plan Executive Summary
 - Contact details explaining how to get more information (eg web addresses, email inquiry address, phone information line etc).

4. The Role of Assembly Members and Partners

- 4.1 Crucial to the success of the consultation process is the involvement of Assembly members, partners and stakeholders in promoting awareness throughout the region. The Assembly aims to equip stakeholders (particularly local authorities) to hold meetings with their constituencies, whether the general public or particular interest groups. The partner resource pack to be distributed to all local authorities and stakeholder organisations will assist in this.
- 4.2 County and unitary councils are deemed by Government to be resourced to support regional planning work and will be asked to support the consultation by committing to:
- Editorial, an advert and consultation questionnaire in their residents' magazine;
 - Web editorial and a link to the South East Plan site;
 - Widely displaying South East Plan leaflets in libraries and public buildings under their control;
 - Providing access to public deposit copies of the consultation draft of the Plan;
 - Holding public consultation meetings, in every district and unitary council area;
 - Engaging with LSPs, and with town and parish councils to consult local communities on the regional and sub-regional policy proposals of the Plan;

- Circulating leaflets to all secondary schools in their areas;
- Encouraging youth cabinets to debate the South East Plan and respond to consultation.

The South East County Councils have indicated they are broadly able and willing to comply with these requests. This will include consultation meetings, although the County Councils have asked for discretion on whether a meeting is held in every district area. They have also undertaken to involve district councils, town and parish councils and LSPs in the consultation process. A similar agreement is being sought with the region's unitary councils.

- 4.3 It is recognised that many district councils are keen to become involved in the consultation process. We will assist this by provision of partner resource packs to all local authorities, and encouraging districts to use their own networks and initiatives to supplement the core programme above – for example in respect of parishes and LSPs.
- 4.4 RAISE is being asked to help cascade consultation information to voluntary sector groups in the region. They will also be asked for advice on provision of material in minority languages, large print etc.
- 4.5 Discussions with independent charity Planning Aid are underway to secure their support for community and difficult to reach groups.

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