

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

Date: 19 March 2008

Subject: **Regional Monitoring Report 2007**

Report of: Director of Planning  
South East England Regional Assembly

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Committee approve, subject to any further amendments, the annual Regional Monitoring Report 2007.

**Purpose of Report:**

To inform the Committee of the key findings of the Regional Monitoring Report 2007 (RMR07). The draft executive summary is attached as Annex 1 and the full draft report is attached as Annex 2. A copy of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Annual Monitoring Report (Annex 3) is also enclosed for information.

**Key Issues:**

The report looks at the progress of 103 indicators to monitor implementation of policies in RPG9<sup>1</sup> and the objectives of the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF). Overall, in terms of the indicators the region is making clear progress. Once again housing delivery has exceeded RPG9 provision and indeed that set out within the South East Plan. In addition to this, for the second consecutive year, completions of commercial and leisure development joined housing completions in exceeding the national and regional target of 60% of developments on previously developed land. There is concern, however, that this success is coming at a price; in particular the adverse impact on infrastructure and the environment (which have the highest proportion of indicators showing clear deterioration).

There are also still considerable difficulties in terms of insufficient or no comparable data available, especially for the indicators used in the economy chapter.

Against the broad positive messages it is important to pay attention to the areas where things are getting worse. The main **causes for concern** discussed in the RMR07 include:

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<sup>1</sup> The current Regional Strategy is RPG9 until the South East Plan replaces this when approved by Government.

**Climate change:** The impact of climate change and the relatively slow progress in some parts of the region in preparing for this. The South East is the largest regional producer of energy from renewable sources but achieving the necessary reduction in carbon emissions will need a significant increase in the proportion of electricity generated from renewable sources. To date, deployment has been slow.

**Socio-economic disparities:** Continuing disparities in the region, with the west and north still outperforming the east and coastal areas in GVA. Although expectations for regenerating these areas are long term, there are indications that things are getting worse, not better.

**Affordable housing:** The urgent need to tackle affordability through a targeted approach to delivering affordable housing. This will require a significant increase in funding. Despite 7,100 affordable homes being completed in 2006/07, completions of affordable homes are running around 30% below the target set out in the draft South East Plan.

**Biodiversity:** While the national farmland bird indicator shows a broad stabilisation of populations since the early 90s, the South East indicator is still showing declines. In addition to the declines in bird populations, on the basis of the recent trend it appears unlikely that the region will achieve the PSA target of 95% of SSSIs in favourable condition by 2010.

**Transport:** Distances travelled per person continue to increase. Although the policies of the Regional Transport Strategy aim to tackle this, there is a clear need for travel options that encourage residents to use more sustainable forms of transport and for more rigorous implementation of South East Plan policies in future years.

**Waste exported from London:** London continues to export large amounts of waste into the South East. With only six to eight years of landfill capacity left in the region, action is needed to reduce our own waste as well as waste coming to the South East from other regions.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The RMR monitors the current RPG9 (as amended by the adopted partial reviews<sup>2</sup>) and the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF). The first Plan monitoring report will be published in 2009, reporting on data for 2007/08. That report will also move to monitor the new Regional Sustainability Framework.

## **2. Annual Monitoring Report**

- 2.1 The RMR07 assesses the progress of indicators in relation to the previous years' or latest data and uses the key findings and commentary from the assessment of the indicators to monitor the progress of policies. That progress is represented by a simple traffic light.
- 2.2 Last year the structure of the RMR was altered to provide a first step towards monitoring the Plan. This year's report builds on that well received new structure. In addition, the Executive Summary has been reduced to include simply an introduction, key findings and conclusions and the summary tables of policy and implementation implications.
- 2.3 The report follows the chapter structure set out in RPG9, with IRF objectives and indicators included within those relevant chapters. The chapters begin with a table setting out all indicators; the latest data for each indicator; the progress of the indicator (since the previous year or previously available data); the RPG9 policy; related IRF objectives and the target for the indicator or policy. The National Core Output Indicators for regional planning are highlighted in grey in the tables<sup>3</sup>, while significant effects indicators put forward through the South East Plan sustainability appraisal<sup>4</sup> are boxed in orange. The progress of the indicator is illustrated using symbols.
- 2.4 The tables are followed by discussion of the key policy and implementation implications for each policy area, organised around three central themes - good news, mixed or uncertain progress and causes for concern. These are accompanied by a traffic light for each policy. This year an additional colour has been added to the traffic lights. Grey boxes indicate those policies where it is not possible to determine a traffic light due to one of the following reasons:
- There is a lack of data available to fully assess performance.
  - There is no detail to available to explain the trends in data.
  - Further research is required.
- 2.5 The RMR 07 references the South East Plan throughout, noting progress towards targets within it, which particular issues the Plan needs to address and how it may tackle some of those issues highlighted through monitoring.

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted amendments to RPG comprise the Regional Transport Strategy (2004), Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (2004), Tourism and related Sport and Recreation (2004), and those in respect of Ashford (2004) and Milton Keynes South Midlands (2005) Growth Areas.

<sup>3</sup> See ODPM (2005) Core Output Indicators for Regional Planning - [http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/845/CoreOutputIndicatorsforRegionalPlanning\\_id1143845.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/845/CoreOutputIndicatorsforRegionalPlanning_id1143845.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See the full sustainability report and further details on it at <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/key/sustainability.html>.

### **3. Key Findings and Conclusions**

#### **3.1 Quality of life in town and country.**

3.1.1 The supply of land available for commercial, leisure and housing development is decreasing in urban areas. The South East is again exceeding the target for the development on previously developed land but the region may now be experiencing the negative impact of this success. In the 2006 monitoring report the Assembly highlighted the issue of a compromised land supply following on from high levels of urban development - the decline of availability reported this year may be an early indication of that compromise becoming a reality. Land availability will have to be closely monitored, in particular over the next five years, when we expect housing delivery rates to remain high. If housing provision targets are significantly increased an alternative strategy for the identification of land may be required. In addition to the knock on effect on land availability, high levels of urban development will impact upon the infrastructure in those areas. At the resident level concerns are growing about the proper support of urban areas with the correct infrastructure.

3.1.2 The type and size of housing delivered also requires close scrutiny over the coming years; as pressure to provide housing at an average density of 40 dwellings per hectare builds due to the scarcity of land, the provision of family sized homes is likely to decrease.

#### **3.2 Environment strategy and the countryside.**

3.2.1 Although the condition of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) has stabilised over the last couple of years, further and faster improvements are necessary to achieve the target (95% of SSSIs in favourable condition by 2010). On the basis of the recent trend, this appears unlikely. Furthermore, the necessary improvement of site management is outside the direct influence of regional policy. It will be delivered by land managers (including conservation organisations) who will be influenced by incentives, for example Environmental Stewardships.

3.2.2 The continued downward trend of the region's bird population remains a concern. Unless support for Environmental Stewardship Schemes increases; changes to the national set-aside policy resulting in more land being taken into production will have a negative effect on farmland birds.

#### **3.3 The regional economy and social deprivation.**

3.3.1 It remains clear from the GVA performance that there are significant variations in economic prosperity as measured through GVA across the region, with the south and east of the region presently generating lower GVA per head than those parts of the region to the north and west. The regional contribution of 16% to national total GVA indicates the continued and critical strategic importance of the region to the national economy and makes clear the case for continued investment to support national GVA growth.

3.3.2 There are some signs of change for the better in the main areas of deprivation which hopefully underpin a long-term improvement. At household level, there has been a reduction in fuel poverty levels, both on past performance and in relation to other parts of England. The proportion of those claiming long-term unemployment benefits in the most deprived parts of the region has also fallen and this needs to be maintained. However, these changes are small and have to be put into a wider context. There has been no discernable reduction in levels of deprivation across the region, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, and deprivation remains largely concentrated along the coast and in the larger urban areas.

### 3.4 Housing.

3.4.1 In terms of housing completions, the overall picture is an encouraging one, with a sustained increase in housing delivery at the regional level. Data on starts and land with planning permission for housing, together with the housing trajectory, suggests this is likely to continue, at least in the short-term. However, there is a need to provide the right mix of housing in terms of type, size and tenure. There are significant challenges to be addressed if the region is to provide for planned and sustainable levels of housing growth in a way that targets housing needs. Local authorities need to consider these issues at the local level as part of their LDF processes.

3.4.2 Despite 7,100 affordable homes completed being in 2006/07, completions of affordable homes are running at some 30% below the rates set out in the draft South East Plan. A continuation of the current tenure split will not address identified needs: the region should be providing more social rented homes and fewer in intermediate tenures. Providing urgently needed family-sized homes and ensuring that affordable homes are built to higher environmental standards also add to the costs of new affordable homes. The Regional Funding Allocation for housing in the South East for 2008-2011 leaves a funding gap for affordable housing amounting to some £400m which will jeopardise achievement of the South East Plan's target of 35% of overall provision.

3.4.3 The Regional Housing Board is currently working to establish the reasons why affordable housing provision falls so far short of development plan targets and the actions that need to be taken to overcome them.

### 3.5 Transport.

3.5.1 Overall the picture relating to travel patterns is unclear. There appears to be a slight improvement in terms of the long-term ambition of RPG9 strategy (and the South East Plan) to reduce reliance on the car with a 2% reduction in the proportion of journeys to school using private car and a 1% rise in journeys made to work by rail. However, journeys to school will have to be closely monitored to see if this is a long-term downwards trend (the South East remains one of the regions with the highest proportion of school journeys by private car). In addition, overall distance travelled per person per year continues to increase. This may indicate longer distances being travelled between home and work or school for example - 85% of this remains by car and other private modes. Tackling this is the focus of the mobility management policies of the RTS (and South East Plan).

- 3.5.2 Although the trend in terms of the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents is downwards, it is looking increasingly likely that the target of reducing this by 40% by 2010 will not be reached. More worrying is the fact that although the longer term trend remains downward, the number of child casualties killed or seriously injured has increased in the past 12 months. Efforts need to remain focused on road safety education and infrastructure measures to reduce accident risk.
- 3.6 Supply and development of other infrastructure - water, waste and energy.
- 3.6.1 A number of positive trends have been observed in relation to water - a reduction in per capita consumption and an improvement in river water quality. Although these are fair reflections on appeals to use water more wisely in the last year, only continued improvements will demonstrate a change in behaviour. The South East still has the highest per capita consumption of water; it is clear that further reductions must be encouraged.
- 3.6.2 There is still a lack of robust data for waste exports available to effectively monitor the movement of waste between regions. What is apparent is that London continues to export large amounts of waste into the South East. With only six to eight years worth of landfill capacity left in the region action is required to address the volume of waste from other regions entering the South East waste stream. The Assembly continues to work with the Greater London Authority and the East of England Regional Assembly to monitor and review movements and management required.
- 3.6.3 The region is experiencing a growing challenge from the increase in hazardous waste. In light of new legislation<sup>5</sup> leading to new types of materials being classified as hazardous, the monitoring and management of hazardous waste generation is particularly important over the next few years. The 2005 legislation has made collation of accurate data and especially the analysis of trends difficult; as the regulations have only been in effect for two years it is still too early to compare years and identify trends.
- 3.6.4 The South East is the largest regional producer of energy from renewable sources and evidence suggests we continue to move in a positive direction. However, in order to bring about the necessary reduction in carbon emissions the proportion of electricity generated from renewable sources needs to significantly increase and, to date, deployment has been slow. Of particular concern is that a number of authorities are yet to develop a significant level of renewable energy capacity to contribute to the regional need.
- 3.7 Minerals.
- 3.7.1 The lower production and a 61% decline in land won sand and gravel reserves over the last 10 years could lead to a greater level of imports transported over longer distances. It is important to safeguard wharves and rail depots so that any increase in imports is by sea or rail rather than by road.

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<sup>5</sup> EC Hazardous Waste Directive and the Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005

#### 4. Provision of Data

4.1 There continue to be problems associated with both the availability and the collection of data for this report. The headline implications identified in the report relating to the way in which data is collected include:

- i) **Housing densities** - the recording of gross measure of density as opposed to a net measure is still a problem in many local authorities.
- ii) **Monitoring developments in town centres** - the collection of data on developments in town centres persists as a challenge and the Assembly continues to work with local authorities to improve this.
- iii) **Habitat change** - the South East Regional Priority Habitat Dataset was put together in 2006 using data collected locally by the Local Environmental Records Centres in the region. Although data is improving year on year there remain significant data gaps in Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex
- iv) **Commercial and leisure survey** - the Assembly needs to continue working with local authorities to improve data collection through the commercial and leisure survey.
- v) **Tourism data** - the Assembly continues to work with Tourism South East and SEEDA to enhance sub-regional and local tourism data sets in the region, which currently suffer from inconsistency and small sample sizes
- vi) **Affordable housing** - the Assembly circulated an updated and improved affordable housing survey in 2007. This survey and its' returned data is now being evaluated and will be further developed for data collection in 2008.
- vii) **Monitoring geography** - the Assembly employs a variety of monitoring geographies in its surveys, some of which cause difficulties for data providers. These will be reviewed, in consultation with data providers, in 2008.
- viii) **Flooding** - although the Assembly has sourced data for this indicator from the Environment Agency it is not possible to compare it with data for previous years.
- ix) **Waste** - there is a continued need for the Assembly to work with regional partners on the development of inter-regional waste movement data. There are also problems in the monitoring of hazardous waste, largely due to changes in the regulations governing what is classified as hazardous, making trend analysis impossible at this time.
- x) **Minerals** - research to fill the current gaps in data in wharves and rail depots is ongoing.

- xi) **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople** - local authorities need to start monitoring authorised permanent and transit Gypsy and Traveller pitches - both public and private. They also need to monitor Travelling Showpeople plots; and all unauthorised pitches and plots.

**Catriona Riddell**  
**Planning Strategy Director**

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**Contact:** Kate Aulman, Regional Analyst  
Tel: 01483 555233  
Email: [kateaulman@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:kateaulman@southeast-ra.gov.uk)