

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

Date: 21 May 2008

Subject: **Items for Information**

- 1. LDD Conformity - Statistics**
- 2. Major Planning Applications - Statistics**
- 3. Defra Consultation on River Basin Planning Guidance Volume 2**

Report of: See individual items

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report.

I. LDD Conformity - Statistics

- I.1** Between 1 March and 30 April 2008, Assembly officers provided comments on the submission drafts of the Reading Central Area Action Plan and the Re-advertisement of the Spelthorne Development Plan and Allocations DPD's and informal comments on the Preferred Options for the Dartford, Havant, Test Valley and Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPDs and further Preferred Options for the Oxford Core Strategy. Officers provided informal advice at the Issues and Options stage on the Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Fareham and East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPDs and further Issues and Options for the Isle of Wight Core Strategy DPD. We were also consulted and provided comments on a number of site allocations and development management DPDs at Issues and Options stage and on 14 SPDs.
- I.2** As of 1 May 2008, there were outstanding requests for informal comments on the Preferred Options for the Dover Core Strategy DPD and for the Surrey Minerals Plan Core Strategy and on the Issues and Options for the Elmbridge and West Oxfordshire Core Strategy DPDs.

Catriona Riddell
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6 May 2008

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2. Major Planning Applications - Statistics

- 2.1 In the period from 1 March to 30 April 2008, 20 consultation requests were received from local planning authorities on applications of regional significance. All of those where the consultation period ended before the end of April were provided with a response within 21 days or an alternative deadline agreed in writing between the Assembly and the relevant local planning authority.
- 2.2 All of the responses were considered and agreed by the member sub-group. The majority of applications did not give rise to any issues that would materially conflict with RPG9 or draft South East Plan policies. Observations were made, however, in relation to an application for housing that could affect the integrity of a nearby SPA and would involve the loss of recreational facilities and a proposal for a data centre in the green belt and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

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6 May 2008

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3. Defra Consultation on River Basin Planning Guidance Volume 2

- 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.1.1 The consultation document covers the approach which the Environment Agency should take in relation to environmental standards and criteria, objectives, natural conditions, technical feasibility, cost effectiveness and disproportionate costs when developing the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) required by the Water Framework Directive (WFD). And whilst the Environment Agency has overall responsibility for drawing up the RBMPs, it has to work in partnership with a wide range of organisations to achieve the integration of water management issues across the hydrological cycle and with other environmental, social and economic priorities.
 - 3.1.2 The consultation closed on 19th May 2008. Selected aspects of the consultation, including the Regional Assembly's officer comments, are set out in the following paragraphs.

3.2 Criteria for Environment Agency Regulation

3.2.1 The WFD aims to prevent deterioration in the status of all water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries broken down in small local units). If the assessment of compliance with environmental standards indicates that a water body is unlikely to be able to accommodate further activities or developments, the Agency should not normally authorise such activity without a detailed environmental assessment. However, the Agency may authorise activities that would cause deterioration in the status, if the benefits of allowing the activity would outweigh the adverse environmental consequences.

3.2.2 The Regional Assembly agrees with this approach.

3.3 Setting WFD Objectives

3.3.1 The Environment Agency is proposing WFD objectives (based on the results of a classification process of the water bodies) as part of the development of the RBMPs.

3.3.2 The Regional Assembly agrees that the Environment Agency should indicate a level of certainty / confidence with each WFD objective it proposes. This will be necessary for a transparent understanding of the objectives. The Agency should only consider giving preference to extending deadlines of meeting WFD objectives over the setting of less stringent objectives, where the confidence in the objective is low.

3.4 Policy Trends

3.4.1 A range of policy trends has to be taken into consideration in preparing RBMPs.

3.4.2 The Assembly recommends that further work on policy trends regarding future development should be undertaken in co-operation with the planning sector.

3.5 Infeasibility to achieve WFD Objectives

3.5.1 The Environment Agency will have to consider whether it is feasible to meet proposed WFD objectives.

3.5.2 We agree that feasibility considerations should not be confined to technical issues. WFD objectives may for example be infeasible to reach when they are in conflict with other objectives that are considered important.

3.6 Cost Effectiveness of Measures

3.6.1 The WFD requires making judgments about the most cost effective combination of measures (actions helping to achieve WFD objectives).

- 3.6.2 The Assembly agrees that it is important for the Environment Agency to consider the inter-relationships and synergies between different pressures (challenges) and measures. We also agree that the Environment Agency should take into account possible wider economic, social and environmental benefits when selecting measures.
- 3.7 Disproportionate Costs to achieve WFD Objectives
- 3.7.1 The Environment Agency will have to consider whether the costs of meeting a WFD objective are disproportionate.
- 3.7.2 We agree that this is not just about the overall balance between costs and benefits, but also about the distribution of these costs and benefits (who pays and who benefits). We also agree that an objective is not necessarily disproportionate if the costs exceed the quantifiable benefits. However, guidance may be needed to make judgments about the significance of benefits, which cannot be quantified.

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8 May 2008

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