

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
JOINT EUROPE COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 22 FEBRUARY 2008

Present: Sue John, SEEDA (Chair)
Jonathan Cheshire, RAISE, Regional Assembly
John Goddard, Oxfordshire City Council, Regional Assembly
Keith House, Eastleigh Borough Council, SEEDA
Gordon Keymer CBE, Tandridge District Council,
Committee of the Regions
Alan Marsh, Kent County Council
Alex Pratt, OBE, SEEDA
Francis Robinson, OBE, Buckinghamshire County Council
Cec Tallack, Milton Keynes Council, Regional Assembly
Paul Watkins, Dover District Council, Regional Assembly
Brad Watson, OBE, West Sussex County Council

In Attendance: Paul Bevan, Chief Executive, Regional Assembly
Nick Woolfenden, Head of Policy, Regional Assembly
Ameeta Rowland, Policy Assistant, Regional Assembly
Louise Wilby, Committee Administrator, Regional Assembly
Jorn Peters, Regional Planner, Regional Assembly
Paul Lovejoy, SEEDA
Arno Schmickler, SEEDA
Janet Borgers, SEEDA
Anke Seidler, South East England Brussels Office
Helen Tipper, South East England Brussels Office
David Steed, GOSE
Vincent O'Connell, Surrey County Council
Sietske De Groot, West Sussex County Council
Barry Deller, ACTVaR
Ron Moys, Kent County Council

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Paula Baker, Cllr Helyn Clack and Cllr David Shakespeare, OBE.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Brad Watson, OBE declared an interest as President of the Arc Manche Assembly. Jonathan Cheshire (Wheatsheaf Trust) declared an interest as a recipient of European funding.

3. **Minutes of the Meeting on 7 November 2008**

Alan Marsh asked for clarification about previous discussion on the chairmanship of the Joint Europe Committee (JEC). Paul Bevan confirmed that the matter had been raised at the meeting on 13 June 2007. The Chair advised that if there were a proposal to change the current arrangements it should be submitted in writing prior to the next meeting. Alex Pratt suggested that the matter form part of an agenda item on the Sub-National Review at the next meeting.

This was **agreed**.

4. **Matters Arising**

a) **JEC Conference 7 November 2007 - final South East response to the Commission's Social Reality Consultation Paper**

Anke Seidler introduced the report and indicated that the Commission's response was anticipated at the end of 2008.

There was general agreement that the response was a good summary of issues in the region and reflected key points discussed at the conference.

Cllr Brad Watson suggested that the need for better transport infrastructure required greater emphasis. Alan Marsh commented that more consideration could have been given to migration.

Nick Woolfenden reminded the Committee of the tight time-frame which had necessitated rapid production of a final response following the conference. He advised that he understood there would be further opportunities for members to emphasise key issues to the Commission.

The Chairman noted the support expressed at the conference for the South East's proactive approach to responding to the Commission's Social Reality Consultation Paper.

The report was **noted**.

b) **Shipping Emissions - update**

Helen Tipper provided the context for the report.

Cllr Brad Watson, OBE emphasised the consequences of pollution from shipping emissions. He referred to a study of maritime emissions by the University of California funded by a number of governments including the UK. He noted that a recent United Nations report had warned that pollutants from shipping were rising faster than CO2 emissions. He noted that the consequential health issues were most acute for the UK and other countries bordering the Channel.

He advised that the Channel Arc Manche Assembly had set up the Federation of Channel Ports (FCP) which had considered the impact of climate change and emissions of CO₂, sulphur and nitrous oxide from the 600 daily shipping movements in the Dover Straits. He reported that although modern shipping is more efficient it uses cruder diesel than previously. He believed that exhaust scrubbing of ships was essential and represented a significant regional business opportunity.

Cllr Paul Watkins reported that Dover had four air quality zones and a successful retrofitting project. He believed that the Committee should take action on the Shipping Emissions Report and suggested that SEEDA also had a role to play. In response, Paul Lovejoy indicated that the issue had the potential to link with sustainable prosperity and competitiveness programmes and INTERREG funding.

Cllr Keith House believed that there were a number of wider issues which needed to be picked up by both the Regional Assembly and SEEDA and which would raise the profile of shipping emissions.

Cllr Brad Watson urged SEEDA to be proactive in educating central government about emissions from both shipping and air travel. He referred to the proactive work of the Baltic Seas Association.

Alan Marsh declared an interest as a full council member of Baltic Air Charter Association (BACA) part of the Baltic Exchange. He suggested that SEEDA should influence central government policy on key issues.

Paul Bevan suggested that a proposal should be put to the Arc Manche ports because of their interest in these issues.

Alex Pratt noted that SEEDA's resources were limited and sought to clarify whether it was anticipated that SEEDA would provide the resources or whether this would be shared across the region.

The Chair suggested that a strategic intervention was necessary to make a difference.

Helen Tipper advised that Southampton Port wanted the remarks in the report to be attributed to Southampton City Council.

The Committee **agreed** that interested parties should take work forward and provide information about future progress to the committee as appropriate.

5. Feedback from Commissioner Visit 28-29 January 2008

Arno Schmickler provided a verbal report on the Commissioner's visit to the East of England, London and the South East. The visit included the signing of the Competitiveness and Employment Programme for the South East. The Commissioner visited a number of projects in the Thames Gateway and was impressed with the partnership working in the South East, in particular the correlation between public and private sector partners and the delivery of social and economic opportunities.

He reported that the East of England, London and the South East had been invited to host a low carbon economy conference in the second quarter of 2009. The Chair suggested that the conference be added to the JEC's work programme for sustainable Europe.

Cllr Brad Watson raised concern that he was not aware of local authorities being invited to attend the events organised for the Commissioner's visit. The Chair understood that local authorities had been invited to Ebbsfleet. She undertook to check whether this had been the case.

The report was **noted**.

6. European Structural Funds 2000-2006 - Progress Reports

a) European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

David Steed advised that all the spending targets for 2007 had been met. He reported that outputs appeared promising and that plans were well advanced for closure.

The report was **noted**.

b) European Social Fund (ESF)

David Steed reported that it was likely that the full allocation for the first part of the programme would be spent. The outcomes of the programme appeared promising providing a strong intervention for the provision of skills in the most deprived parts of the region. The end of direct bidding was noted with regret by members as they felt this had readily enabled funding to be allocated to areas most in need.

Responding to a question about dissemination of successful outcomes David reported that a major conference on ESF in November 2007 had been well attended and a further regional event is planned for September 2008.

He confirmed that Global Grants will be replaced by Community Grants. Copies of "The Impact of ESF in the South East 2000-2006" providing details of grants will be circulated with hard copies of the minutes.

In response to a question about the definition of an 'N+2 programme' he explained that this means it is a seven year programme in which all spending needs to be completed within two years of the close of the programme.

The report was **noted**.

7. European Structural Funds 2007-2013 - Progress Reports and Updates

a) i) South East European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Competitiveness Programme

Paul Lovejoy provided a verbal update on the second meeting of the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) on 6 February 2008. Issues relating to the establishment, role and focus of the Programme Selection Committee (PSC) had been reviewed to ensure robust scrutiny mechanisms governing arrangements where SEEDA was both the managing authority and in receipt of funding. He confirmed that SEEDA and GOSE each had one seat. Additional attendees from these organisations would be as secretariat without voting rights. The next meeting of the PMC and the launch event for the programme will be on 14 May 2008 at Winchester Guildhall.

Paul Bevan reminded the Committee that a further local authority representative, in addition to the two who had been originally nominated, had been agreed. The political balance of two Conservatives and one Liberal Democrat had also been agreed. The Chairman of the Conservative Group had advised that the nomination would come from Kent County Council.

During the ensuing discussion Cllr Brad Watson proposed there should be four local authority representatives to give a balance between the weaker and more prosperous parts of the region.

The Chair noted that it was not within the Committee's remit to agree the number of places. Paul Lovejoy advised that the matter should be decided at the next meeting of the PMC.

Cllr Paul Watkins drew attention and concern to the omission of district councils from the arrangements.

The Chair noted that the Committee would be informed of the final outcome and hoped that the PMC's operations would be well linked to the JEC.

The progress on implementation of the ERDF Competitiveness Programme was **noted**.

ii) Minutes of first meeting of the Competitiveness Programme PMC

The minutes of the meeting on 12 December 2007 were **noted**.

b) European Social Fund (ESF) Programme

David Steed reported that each of the three co-financers had made good progress with their tenders ensuring that there were no gaps in the simplified programme. It was anticipated that the N+2 targets would be achieved at the end of 2009.

Cllr Brad Watson drew attention to local government being disadvantaged by the new arrangements which resulted in West Sussex no longer being able to participate. Responding, Paul Lovejoy reported that SEEDA had unsuccessfully argued this point in the consultation and advised that local authorities use Local Area Agreements (LAAs). He noted that Jobcentre Plus was also keen to engage.

The report was **noted**.

c) INTERREG IVa Cross Border Cooperation Programme

David Steed reported that the North and South Programmes will be adopted in June 2008 and represent a significant opportunity to bring forward cross-border economic, social and environmental projects.

Cllr Brad Watson expressed concern about the nature of the local authority representation. Responding to a question from the Chair about the current position, Paul Bevan reported that he understood representation was determined by central government. He advised that the Assembly Executive Committee had made a response on the matter. Four places were available across the two PMCs and the Executive Committee took the view that representation should include county, district and unitary authorities. The Assembly had made this recommendation to GOSE who had consulted with other strategic authorities and partners. GOSE had subsequently recommended rotational representation with no direct district representation.

The Chair noted the contribution of local authorities and hoped that this would be recognised in future arrangements.

The report was **noted**.

d) INTERREG IVb/c Transnational/Transregional Cooperation Programmes

David Steed reported that GOSE and SEEDA were working closely together to maximise opportunities for the region. He undertook to report to the next meeting on the lessons that had been learned from the region's unsuccessful bid in the first round.

The report was **noted**.

8. Update on Slovenian EU Presidency Priorities

Anke Seidler presented the report and emphasised the challenging agenda faced by Slovenia in implementing the work programme until June 2008.

The Committee **noted** the report.

9. JEC Priorities and Focus for 2008 Including Future Meeting Dates

Anke Seidler suggested that the Committee would most effectively participate and influence policy by focusing attention on territorial cohesion, the budget review, the strategic review of better regulation and climate change. It was also noted that work on migration was already being taken forward by partners.

She suggested consideration of two dates for the meeting in Brussels. A reception with MEPs could be arranged to coincide with a meeting on 10-11 June 2008. A different programme would be required for 17-18 June 2008 when MEPs will be in Strasbourg.

Anke confirmed that the JEC annual conference and meeting will take place in London on 28 November 2008 and suggested that emerging priorities might provide a suitable theme.

The Committee considered a number of priorities including the budget review and the European rebate, engagement with people through the putting the citizen first agenda and better regulation. Cllr Gordon Keymer suggested that the latter was a challenging area which would benefit from the region's attention.

Cllr Cec Tallack suggested that a number of transport issues be considered within an overall theme.

Nick Woolfenden recommended that the Committee distinguish between areas for JEC's primary focus and other work being taken forward by partners in the region. He suggested making the necessary linkages between these areas in order to make best use of resources.

It was agreed to note current activities and to revisit sustainable transport and regulation after the consultation. It was **agreed** to circulate a draft response to the Budget Review consultation electronically in advance of the deadline of 15 April 2008 to seek JEC endorsement.

This was **agreed**.

Following the discussion the Committee:

- i) **agreed** to hold the June JEC meeting in Brussels on 3-4 June 2008 to coincide with Green Week;
- ii) **agreed** suggested priorities and activities for 2008; and
- iii) **noted** that the JEC annual conference will be held on 28 November 2008.

10. **Current Progress and Future Plans on Networks and Projects**

- b) GROW

The report was **noted**.

- c) HST

The report was **noted**.

- d) ESPACE

Jorn Peters reported that consideration was being given to extending the current project due to end in May 2008. The intention was to broaden the core partnership to consider a wider theme of climate resilient communities. A project workshop in Brussels was planned for 3 March 2008.

The report was **noted**.

e) The Channel Arc Manche Assembly

Cllr Brad Watson advised that the Channel Arc Manche Assembly annual conference will now be held in December 2008 at an easily accessible venue.

He drew the Committee's attention to the Arc Manche's "Vision for the Channel" which was available from Sietske De Groot, West Sussex County Council.

Cllr Paul Watkins reported that Dover, Aberdeen, Belfast and Liverpool were submitting a bid for a stage of carrying the Olympic torch from Beijing to the United Kingdom on 24 August 2008. He asked for the South East to endorse the bid which was the subject of current discussions with the Arts Council, Dover Pride and Kent County Council.

The report was **noted**.

f) ChangeLAB

The report was **noted**.

g) Smart Economic Growth (SEG)

The report was **noted**.

11. Committee of the Regions Report

Cllr Gordon Keymer advised that the Plenary meeting of the Committee of the Regions will take place on 9-10 April 2008. He reported that the Board of Auditors had been invited to speak on this occasion.

The Chair thanked Cllr Gordon Keymer for his report.

12. Any Other Business

Cllr Brad Watson requested that the Regional Assembly check that its website was up to date regarding the Joint Europe Committee. This was **noted**.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 13.00.