

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 11 NOVEMBER 2005

Present: Cec Tallack, Regional Assembly (Chair)
Michael Chater, Regional Assembly
Gillian Ferguson, Regional Assembly
Roger House, Regional Assembly
Rob Douglas CBE, SEEDA
Keith House, SEEDA
Sue John, South East Partners
Francis Robinson OBE, Thames Valley Partners
A Marsh, Kent Partnership
Brad Watson OBE, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex
Partnership
Tony Moore, Higher Education South East

In Attendance: Paul Bevan, Regional Assembly
Pam Palmer, Regional Assembly
Anke Seidler, Regional Assembly/SEEDA
Stella Bellem, SEEDA
Jan Stephenson, GOSE
Rachel Gapp, West Sussex County Council
Hilary Lowson, Surrey County Council
Frances Martin, Kent Partnership
Roy Moys, Kent County Council
Nicole Badham, Regional Assembly

1. Apologies for Absence

Liz Brighthouse, SEEDA
Peter Jones, SEEDA
Alex King, Kent Partnership (A Marsh attended as substitute)
Gordon Keymer, Committee of the Regions
Susie Kemp, Committee of the Regions
Paul Lovejoy, SEEDA
James Elles, MEP
Barry Deller, ACTVaR

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3. Minutes of the Meeting on 18 February 2005

The Minutes were **agreed** as a true record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

- a) Item 4a: It was noted that the publication was still awaited of an updated version of the booklet produced by GOSE showing a comprehensive picture of EU funding in the region.
- b) Item 5: It was agreed that the next annual forum, which will provide an opportunity to engage with stakeholders in the region, should be held in November 2006 or thereabouts.

5. Priorities for the forthcoming year – 6 September Ashford event

Anke Seidler updated on the joint Regional Strategy Europe/Annual JEC event, which she felt had been useful and had benefited from a high level of stakeholder participation.

Jan Stephenson considered the think piece commissioned for the event to be an important overview of the South East's relation to Europe. The following areas were identified in the report for further engagement with the EU:

- Develop a strategic approach to funding instruments
- Ensuring that the South East's interests are represented in Brussels
- Engagement with other regions
- EU research
- Labour force development
- Rural development
- Transport

The Committee heard that progress had already been made in some of these areas, but that there was still a need for consideration by this Committee. Areas identified for further engagement now needed a focussed action plan.

It was **agreed** that the report on key priorities that had been presented to the SEEDA Board would be circulated to members for information.

It was **noted** that environmental issues, such as waste management and climate change, needed to be made more explicit.

It was **agreed** that officers would draw up an action plan for early circulation by email so that clear proposals could be brought to February's meeting.

6. **Lisbon Agenda**

a) National Reform Programme

Anke Seidler reported on the National Reform Programme, which will inform the European Council on how member states plan to achieve the Lisbon targets. She explained that the UK is already exceeding the employment targets.

b) English Regions Project

Paul Bevan's report was **noted**. Attendance at the 30 November event in Brussels would comprise Cec Tallack, Rob Douglas, Jim Brathwaite, Paul Bevan and Pam Alexander.

c) Verbal report by Rob Douglas

Rob Douglas highlighted examples of good practice from other countries that he had gleaned from their National Reform Programmes. Entrepreneurship for example has been added to Finland's national curriculum. Belgium on the other hand provides young people with placements in businesses.

The Committee thanked Rob Douglas for the report and welcomed the proposal to learn from other countries but also appreciating each country's priorities and problems.

7. a) **Regional Policy: Community Strategic Guidelines**

The Committee endorsed South East England's response to the European Commission on Community Strategic Guidelines.

There was some uncertainty on the development framework and the consultation timetable. Jan Stephenson explained that the consultation period will run from mid/late December for 12 weeks. An update will be brought to the February Committee.

b) **Possible Changes to EU Urban Policy**

The Committee noted the paper from Kent explaining the latest situation regarding the future of the EU urban programme. There was agreement that the South East should seek to ensure that urban funding would not become restricted to metropolitan areas. The Committee agreed that this concern should be played into the city regions agenda currently emerging. It was not considered that a political delegation was appropriate at this stage.

c) **National Strategic Reference Framework**

Stella Bellem reported that a draft response had been sent to ODPM.

The Committee endorsed the report.

8. Networks

- a) **PURPLE (Peri-Urban Platform Europe):**
Hilary Lowson reported on a conference sponsored by SEEDA, the Assembly and the Countryside Agency in October. The conference report will be available for distribution to members next month. The network now includes 12 major European regions and further events are planned in the future to raise awareness.
- b) **Entrepreneurship and Education**
Anke Seidler gave an update on setting up an entrepreneurship education network. A further update will be brought to the next Committee meeting.
- c) **Transport**
Anke Seidler introduced the paper explaining that the international round-table discussion would now be held in February.
- d) **Education to Sustainability**
The Committee expressed some scepticism about the purpose of this network. Anke Seidler agreed and explained she would maintain a watching brief only.

9. Committee of the Regions Report

The Committee **noted** the CoR nominations for the next mandate, which have been submitted to Government but are still awaiting confirmation. Members recorded their thanks to Cllr Keymer for his report and congratulated him on his appointment to the Restaurant Committee.

10. South East England House (SEEH) Report

Stella Bellem informed members that the SEEH Partnership Group (SPG) would be discussing arrangements at SEEH at its next meeting. She explained that in view of the costs of retaining SEEH and the availability of alternative premises relocation was now being seriously considered. It was agreed that sub-regional partnerships should see relevant reports prior to the SPG meeting.

Members felt that they did not as yet have sufficient information and felt it would be important for the JEC to discuss the options for the future at its February meeting. A full evaluation of the alternatives would be required for consideration.

The report was **noted** but the Committee asked that its concerns about the lack of information to date be recorded.

11. GOSE Report on Structural Funds

- a) ESF Objective 3 Programme Progress Report update
Jan Stephenson introduced this paper on behalf of John Pinnell advising the Committee that the majority of money had been allocated and that most programmes were doing well. The report was **noted**.
- b) ERDF update
The report was **noted**.

12. Future Meeting Dates

It had already been **agreed** that the annual meeting with stakeholders from across the region should be held in November or thereabouts.

It was further **agreed** that one of next year's meetings should be held in Brussels, and that this should be timed to coincide with another event. April should be avoided for this purpose because of local elections.

With these provisos the following meeting dates were **agreed**:

17 February 2006
21 April 2006
14 July 2006
10 November 2006

13. Any Other Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 12.40.