

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

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 7 NOVEMBER 2007

Present: Sue John, SEEDA (Chair)
Paula Baker, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council,
Committee of the Regions
Jonathan Cheshire, RAISE, Regional Assembly
Helyn Clack, Surrey County Council, Southern England Local
Partners
Gordon Keymer CBE, Tandridge District Council,
Committee of the Regions
Sophie Stos, University of Surrey, Southern England Local
Partners
Alan Marsh, Kent County Council
Cec Tallack, Milton Keynes Council, Regional Assembly
Paul Watkins, Dover District Council, Regional Assembly

In Attendance: Paul Bevan, Chief Executive, Regional Assembly
Nick Woolfenden, Head of Policy, Regional Assembly
Louise Wilby, Committee Administrator, Regional Assembly
Paul Lovejoy, SEEDA
Barbara Hammond, SEEDA
Arno Schmickler, SEEDA
Tiziana Boyland, SEEDA
Lydia Rochelle, South East England Brussels Office
Kathy Vuillaume, SEEDA
Helen Tipper, South East England Brussels Office
David Steed, GOSE
Vincent O'Connell, Surrey County Council
Marie Dancourt-Cavanagh, Kent County Council

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr John Goddard, Rob Douglas, Cllr Peter Martin and Cllr Brad Watson. The following substitutions were declared: Cllr Helyn Clack for Cllr Peter Martin and Dr Sophie Stos for Deborah Lock substituting for Cllr Brad Watson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none

3. Minutes of the Meeting on 13 June 2007

Helen Tipper requested that the wording of Agenda Item 5c paras 7 and 8 be amended. (New text in bold).

The following wording to replace the second, third and fourth sentences of para 7: **Helen Tipper explained that shipping was not included in the ETS. There will be flanking legislation to accompany the forthcoming inclusion of aviation in the ETS, since there is a tipping point in aviation technology after which NOx increases as CO2 is reduced.**

The following wording to replace para 8: **Brad Watson referred to the business potential of industries seeking to reduce emissions in shipping in the South East. He agreed to investigate further through his membership of the Arc Manche Assembly. Helen Tipper undertook to produce a paper for the next Committee meeting on the EU legislation and policies relevant to the issue.**

This was agreed.

The minutes were then agreed, subject to amendments above.

4. Matters Arising

Following the discussion in relation to the previous meeting minutes, it was suggested that the Committee make a strong case for the reduction of shipping emissions which was a particular concern for coastal ports. Helen Tipper offered to explore opportunities to influence policy with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Cllr Paul Watkins offered the assistance of environmental health officers from Dover District Council and officers from the Port of Dover with this piece of work.

Paul Bevan offered the expertise of Assembly's Regional Planner, Jorn Peters, on environmental issues and maritime planning policy. It was noted that the Committee's link with the Channel Arc Manche Assembly, through Cllr Brad Watson, would also be helpful.

The Chair thanked Helen Tipper for her report.

5. Conference Feedback and Actions Arising

Helen Tipper reported that feedback from the conference will help refine the response to the Commission's consultation and clarify actions required of the Commission.

She summarised key issues arising from the morning as:

- Skills
- Migration
- Economic regeneration
- Regional disparities
- Young people
- Community Engagement
- Voluntary sector

Nick Woolfenden confirmed that attendees will receive an electronic reminder encouraging them to contribute prior to finalisation of the response by 31 December 2007. He noted that whilst it was important to reflect on the breadth of issues raised at the conference, the response needed to be suitably focused. He undertook to circulate the final submission to all who attended the conference.

The Chair noted guest speaker Sarah Lambert's observation that the South East's approach to responding to the social agenda consultation was substantially more significant than other English regions.

6. European Structural Funds 2000-2006 – Progress Reports

a) European Social Fund (ESF)

David Steed advised that spend on the programme was on target with 67% positive outcomes matching the national percentage. He undertook to find out how this compared with the rest of Europe. He also reported that targets had been exceeded for employment, further training and participation by women.

Plans were now in hand for closure following an evaluation event in September.

The report was **noted**.

b) European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

David Steed reported that this programme had finished and that spend was estimated to be on target with the possible exception of Objective 2 where delays in planning permission had resulted in some projects not starting as quickly as anticipated. He confirmed that any under spend will be returned to Europe.

He advised that the programme had achieved positive outcomes relating to the creation of jobs. Preparations for the closure of the project were now in hand.

A typing error was noted at the end of the first sentence on page 2 para 1 of the report. The figure should read €8m.

The report was **noted**.

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

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

Paul Lovejoy reminded the Committee that the European Commission had signalled the need to concentrate on particular areas of the programme and in particular to focus on the single objective of sustainable consumption and production. The Commission also required that the document complied with its standard format.

He advised that the final submission was made in July and following confirmation of admissible status SEEDA had attended a negotiation meeting in September when it was confirmed that there were no major issues requiring further development.

The purpose of the meeting had been for the Commission to seek greater understanding of the transfer of the programme management arrangements from GOSE to SEEDA. The Commission had also sought to understand the potential impact of the programme's actions particularly in reducing carbon emissions.

Paul Lovejoy reported that a further draft had been submitted. He confirmed that the South East programme will be signed off in the first tranche. It was anticipated that formal approval will be received in December and, therefore, a shadow Programme Management Committee (PMC) had been scheduled for 12 December 2007. He advised that SEEDA and GOSE were currently working on the constitution of the PMC. He anticipated that representation would be two local authority member representatives and one Regional Assembly representative; the latter having been formally requested by the Committee.

He indicated that work was in progress to agree terms of reference, establish selection criteria and process arrangements for projects.

He hoped that the programme would be signed off by Commissioner Danuta Huebner during a visit to the South East on 29 January 2008. Details were to be finalised and information sent to the Committee in due course.

During a discussion about how membership of the PMC would be decided there was considerable concern that due to there being no regional local government grouping as such for the South East this should not be determined by the Local Government Association nationally.

Paul Bevan suggested that if possible local authority representation should be drawn from the Joint Europe Committee in order to provide a forum for reporting back. He also noted that the Assembly representative could be either a local authority representative or stakeholder.

It was **agreed** that SEEDA, GOSE and the Assembly provide a working proposal to be discussed by the shadow PMC on 12 December 2007.

b) European Social Fund (ESF) Programme

David Steed confirmed that, following confirmation of their status as co-financers, invitations to tender had been sent to SEEDA. Invitations will be sent to the Learning and Skills Council in the near future and to the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) in 2008. He anticipated that provision of funding would be made in late February 2008 in time for first bids.

Paul Bevan asked for an update on the transfer of arrangements for European funding from GOSE to SEEDA. David Steed explained that under the 2007-13 programme the Regional Skills and Productivity Alliance (RSPA) had been given the responsibility of agreeing an ESF framework for the period 2007-10. In future GOSE would have a more strategic role than under the 2000-6 programme and would be required to report on progress against the output and result targets in the South East Regional Framework to the regional committee, the RSPA and the European Social Fund Division (ESFD).

He further explained that the ESFD of DWP was both the managing authority and the certifying authority. The RSPA had strategic oversight to ensure the programme met spend targets for basic skills and initial qualifications. Consideration was being given to a new role for SEEDA in assisting with the INTERREG IVa Cross Border Cooperation Programme.

Responding to a request for clarification about this role, Paul Lovejoy explained that the UK Government remained the managing authority requiring project management to be chaired by the Government Office Regional Director. He advised that responsibility for administering funding and management of projects will be transferred from GOSE to SEEDA. This included the transfer of relevant staff.

David Steed confirmed that the detail was to be agreed but was likely to include support for developing projects, membership of the PMC and monitoring. He confirmed that payment of funding would be undertaken by the Joint Technical Services in France.

c) INTERREG IVa Cross Border Cooperation Programme

David Steed advised that the consultation had recently closed and noted that the programme focused more sharply on the Lisbon Agenda and specifically on the creation of employment opportunities.

The Chairman noted that the programme was also linked with the Regional Economic Strategy and the South East Plan.

Responding to a question about representation David Steed advised that there would be four representatives on each of the PMCs for the North and South programmes, one of these being a SEEDA representative.

Paul Bevan reported that in responding to the recent consultation the Assembly Executive Committee had taken the view that each local authority tier should have PMC representation across the two programmes. He explained that a report to the Executive Committee suggested a split across unitary and county councils but that district authorities believed they should also be represented. It had, therefore, been agreed that local government representation across the two (North and South) PMCs should be shared between unitary, county and district councils, as well as a stakeholder place on each.

David Steed answered a question about potential scope for broadening representation by advising that a balance would be sought within the four places. He also clarified the timetable advising that approval of the operational programme was expected in April 2008 enabling the programme to be operational in summer 2008.

It was **agreed** that in the interest of transparency a further report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

The report was **noted**.

d) INTERREG IVb/c Transnational/Transregional Cooperation Programmes

The report was **noted**.

e) Regional Support for FP7

Tizania Boyland reported that the focus of the programme had been to help Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to engage with Framework Programme 7 (FP7).

She identified the key issues being to increase the capacity of the business skills support network which had highlighted a need to increase the skills of the South East Knowledge Network Programme.

She reported that a positive outcome had been the added value of sharing good practice and the successful bid for the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme.

In response to a question about further opportunities to engage in business with universities she recommended consideration of the European Commission's suggestion to ensure that funding of innovation was used strategically to obtain maximum impact. It was agreed that a report on this issue will be presented at a future meeting.

The report was **noted** and ongoing joint working between partners on the FP7 bid facilitation was **endorsed**.

8. Rue du Commerce 45: Progress Report

Marie Dancourt-Cavanagh reported on the arrangements to launch both the new premises and new partnership at a reception at 6.30 pm on 28 November 2007. The keynote speaker was to be confirmed. There will be an opportunity for each of the partnerships to address the guests prior to a formal dinner.

In addition a team building exercise was planned for December to consider a joint business plan. Arrangements will be finalised once the head of the Southern England Local Partners (SELPs) was in place.

Cllr Helyn Clack provided an update on SELP. She reported that several meetings had taken place to agree priorities. Partners were trying to recruit new members.

Dr Sophie Sos referred to current discussions with the University of Southampton and highlighted the importance of encouraging universities to join SELP.

9. Current Progress and Future Plans on Networks and Projects

a) GROW

Kathy Vuillaume provided an overview of the achievements of GROW during two and a half years of inter-regional co-operation. She reported that a mid-term evaluation of the project revealed that 60% of participants had no previous experience of inter-regional co-operation and 100% of participants expressed interest in the continuation of the project.

She drew attention to three projects. Suspurpol concerned with sustainable construction which had attracted interest from the Prime Minister, FEW working to overcome the barriers faced by women's enterprises and RAMEA focusing on resource management in which the Commission had taken a particular interest.

Kathy Vuillaume reported that GROW acted as a catalyst for future, broader inter-regional co-operation and confirmed that Stockholm had joined the partnership.

The intention was to take the project forward by responding to societal changes through focusing on two priorities: advice to low ecology economies and innovation to address societal change. Proposals will be submitted to the Commission by 15 January 2008 with a first draft to be completed by the end of November. She advised that the outcome will be announced in June 2008 with the first call for bids expected in autumn 2008 and the second call in 2009. Maximum funding of €5m was being sought.

Kathy Vuillaume **agreed** to circulate the proposal to the Committee.

The report was **noted**.

b) ESPACE

The report was **noted**.

c) HST

The report was **noted**.

d) European Waste Management - update

The report was **noted**.

e) PURPLE

The report was **noted**.

f) The Channel Arc Manche Assembly

The Chairman thanked Cllr Brad Watson for his report, in his absence, and acknowledged the key influence of Arc Manche Assembly and its work on the Espace Manche Development Initiative (EMDI).

Marie Dancourt-Cavanagh reported that the chairmanship of Arc Manche would soon pass to West Sussex.

Cllr Helyn Clack requested that reports on SELP's Change Up project and SAFE Smart Economic Growth project be included in the networks and projects agenda item for future meetings. This was **noted**.

10. Committee of the Regions Report

Cllr Gordon Keymer asked that the words "and United Nations" be removed from his report. This was **noted**.

He highlighted recent success by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) influencing the Commission. He acknowledged the difficulties he had encountered in ensuring that fundamental issues on co-operation were understood and adopted by the European Parliament.

He announced a joint meeting with members of the Irish region on 10 December 2007 in Belfast. He undertook to provide a report for the next meeting.

Responding to a question about his view on the role of regional airports Cllr Gordon Keymer acknowledged the importance of air travel in the EU. He believed that direct and indirect employment opportunities at airports provided economic benefits.

He also referred to the challenge to long term planning especially in relation to house building on surplus airport land. He suggested that legislation would be beneficial to encourage air travel using new aircraft particularly the A380 airbus which had both lower noise levels and fuel consumption than current aircraft. He suggested that the inclusion of representatives from local

businesses on airport consultative management committees was constructive in facilitating greater understanding of the economic benefits of airports.

Cllr Helyn Clack spoke as a ward councillor for a community close to Gatwick. She stressed that a balance needed to be sought between the needs of residents, the building of new houses and the 24/7 economy associated with airports. It was noted that these issues were also relevant to ports.

The Chair thanked Cllr Gordon Keymer for his report.

11. JEC Programme 2008 and future dates of meetings

Helen Tipper suggested that the programme of meetings in 2008 should broadly follow the same, successful pattern of 2007. This was **agreed**.

Alan Marsh requested close liaison with the Brussels Office to ensure the best use of the facilities.

It was suggested that consideration be given to linking the Brussels visit with another event possibly Employment Week during the first week in June 2008.

The report was **noted**.

12. Any Other Business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15.25.