

The South East Regional Sustainability Framework

Towards a better quality of life



Annex 3: Background to the RSF Priorities

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1 Introduction


Context for Monitoring


1.1 This report provides information for each of the indicators in the Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF – May 2007 draft). This enabled regional progress towards sustainable development to be measured. It has been retained (with the original objectives, indicators and targets) as Annex 3 to the RSF to provide a record of the information used by the Sustainable Futures Group (SFG) to derive the regional priorities at their meeting in May 2007. The RSF priorities, objectives and targets have subsequently changed following the RSF Consultation.

Structure of the Report


1.2 The report summarises the information available in the RMR 2006 for those RSF objectives and indicators that have remained unchanged. It also provides information for the new indicators that have been included as part of the review of the framework (May 2007 draft).

1.3 Section 4 of this report sets out all the goals, objectives, indicators and targets, the latest data, a summary of regional performance and progress against each indicator. In keeping with the RMR 2005 and 2006 a traffic light system is used to summarise the progress of each indicator as follows:

 **Green:** targets and objectives have either been met or data indicates progression towards them

 **Amber:** this can be for a number of reasons:

- Significant regional disparities exist
- There has been some progress but regional performance still remains a cause of concern
- There is a lack of data available to fully assess performance
- There is no detail to explain the trends in data
- Further research is required

 **Red:** the data indicates failure to progress against targets and objectives set out regionally or nationally.

1.4 Section 2 summarises the key messages that can be drawn from this report. The priority issues, identified by SFG, are set out in Section 3.

Data Within the Report

1.5 Many of the indicators reflect those set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy *Securing the Future*, particularly the headline indicators. This helps to show how the region will contribute to sustainable development at the national and international levels. Other indicators are drawn from the relevant regional strategies and are specific to the region.

1.6 Targets have been added where they exist. As more work is carried out to develop indicators, targets will be added or amended. As new data becomes available the indicators will be revised to provide as meaningful a picture of sustainability as possible. Accordingly the indicators and targets will be reviewed in the light of any new information emerging from the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07).

2 Key Messages

2.1 The following sections summarise regional performance in terms of the progress of each indicator using a traffic light system and are based on data from the region's 2006 monitoring report.


Key Regional Targets

- Between 1994 and 2004 the Index of Sustainable Economic Well-Being (ISEW)¹ increased by over £3,500 while Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita increased by around £4,500 per capita over the same period. Furthermore, the gap between the ISEW per capita and GVA per capita increased by around 12% over the period. Despite having a higher rate of increase than the national ISEW the region is currently not on target to close the gap between the ISEW and GVA.
- At 6.09 global hectares per capita the ecological footprint² in the region is the highest in the UK, 17% higher than the national average (5.36 global hectares per capita) and equates to over 25 times the actual land area. Research shows that the ecological footprint is growing by as much as 1.1% per year. This is reflected in the level of imports required to support the lifestyles within the region – the South East is the largest material importer from other UK regions with 68.6m tonnes and the second largest from the rest of the world.

- When looking at the yearly figures for those emissions associated with consumption within the South East, the figure of 13.4 tonnes per person is 14% higher than the national average. The emissions associated with domestic sources and road transport are of particular concern.
- Woodland birds have declined by 12% in the South East since 1994. This is compared to 3% across England. Reasons for the decline are not well understood but could include lack of woodland management and/or the impacts of climate change.
- Motor vehicle flow in the South East remains comparatively high. However whereas the longer term trend shows increasing numbers of trips per day and total numbers of kilometres travelled they are increasing at a lower rate than other regions. The number of trips per person has increased slightly since 2004, with the most significant increase being in trips by car. During the same period the number of trips made by public transport and on foot has decreased.
- The higher proportion of freight transported by road in relation to that which travels by rail is also a cause for concern.

Regional Underperformance

- Data on housing need is complex with different indicators painting a slightly different picture. Nevertheless the South East is one of the most expensive regions in which to buy or rent a home. The cost of housing is a potential barrier to economic growth and has potentially serious social implications.
- The percentage of people from the most deprived areas claiming unemployment benefits is approximately four times higher than the regional average (0.20%) and has increased from last year's figure of 0.57% to 0.88%.
- When looking at those carbon dioxide emissions from within the South East, the region has the highest overall level of emissions in the UK although per capita performance is lower than some other regions.

 Regional Underperformance
Average house price compared against average earnings
Households on the Housing Register
Proportion of people, in the most deprived areas, claiming unemployment benefits who have been out of work for more than one year
Regional Ecological Footprint
Climate Change – emissions of greenhouse gases from energy consumption, transport and land use and waste management
Population of wild birds
Motor vehicle traffic by road class
Trips per person by mode
Freight transported by road
Regional material inputs and consumption – the level of imports required to support the lifestyles in the South East

FOOTNOTES

¹ The ISEW is an index which includes substantial economic, social and environmental adjustments which are incorporated in the recent UK Measure of Domestic Progress.

² Ecological footprint is an indicator and communication tool that provides an estimate of how much 'bio-productive' land and water area is required to support our lifestyles, – including consumption of resources and assimilating wastes and emissions such as carbon dioxide. Ecological footprint is expressed in terms of "global hectares" (gha) and "global hectares per person" (gha/cap).

Mixed or Unclear Regional Performance

- Despite a welcome increase in grant-funding for affordable housing provision, it still remains well below that required to meet need and the affordable housing targets set out in the draft South East Plan and the RSF – 25% social rented houses and 10% intermediate housing.
- While the South East is one of the healthiest parts of England, significant inequalities in health are found across the region – for example, there is a 5.2 year gap in life expectancy between Thanet (75 years) and Hart (80.2 years), and significant differences are also found in early death rates from circulatory disease and cancer, as well as for a range of health risk factors such as smoking, binge drinking and teenage pregnancy.
- The South East has the third lowest death rate for accidents in England (15.2 per 100,000 persons compared to 16 for England), but is currently unlikely to meet the target of a 20% reduction by 2010.
- The South East has the second lowest under 18 conception rate in England (34.2 per 1,000 females aged 15-17 compared to 41.1 for England), but is currently unlikely to meet the PSA target of a 50% reduction by 2010.
- The figure for alcohol related hospital stays has remained relatively static since 1999, although there has been an increase since 2003-04 which is a cause for concern.
- Regional averages in terms of economic performance, skills and education are high. However significant sub-regional disparities exist. For example the South East's inner and central districts tend to have significantly higher skills profiles than coastal areas. This is reflected in higher economic activity and employment rates, higher earnings and higher productivity. Coastal areas tend to have relatively low skill levels. This is not just in relation to the South East but also in relation to the national average. Almost a third of all districts in the South East (22 districts) have a lower proportion of working age population educated to NVQ level 4 (or equivalents) than the national average.
- Performance in terms of access to key services in rural areas is mixed. While rural accessibility to a bank or building society has decreased access to cash points has increased. Access to primary and secondary schools has remained largely unchanged.
- Female self-employment accounts for around 30% of total self-employment which alongside London is the highest proportion in the country. However business start-up rates amongst women are significantly below the rate for men. This is reflected in the low proportion of women-owned businesses/proportion of self-employment.

- Unlike UK manufacturing export per head, which has risen overall from 2001 to 2005, South East manufacturing export per head has declined.
- While there are increased levels of recovery and recycling, the general long term trend continues to be one of increasing waste generation within the region. This reflects the national trend and is a cause for concern as regional and national policies aim to reduce the overall amount of all types of waste generated.
- Although water consumption in the South East appears to be stabilising, it is still the highest regional average rate for both metered and unmeasured households.
- The remaining indicators under this heading are classified as such due to a lack of comparison data and/or specific issues with the data itself which make performance mixed or unclear.

Mixed or Unclear Regional Performance

Index of Sustainable Economic Well-Being
Affordable housing completions
Health inequalities
Death rates for accidents
Teenage pregnancy
Alcohol related hospital stays
Proportion of children under 16 who live in low-income households
Percentage of population of working age who are claiming key benefits
Proportion of population who live in areas that rank within the most deprived 20% of areas in the country (Indices of multiple deprivation)
Number of households experiencing financial exclusion
Proportion of 19 year olds with Level 2 qualifications (5 GCSEs A*-C or NVQ equivalent)
Proportion of adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills
Percentage of rural households at set distances from key services
Access to and use of the countryside
Participation in cultural activity
Proportion of people of working age in employment
Change in the economic activity rate
Change in the number of businesses run by women
Real productivity per employee (total) growth rate
The value of manufacturing exports per head
The expenditure on R&D as the proportion of GVA
Percentage of population of working age qualified to NVQ Level 3 or equivalent
Percentage of population of working age qualified to NVQ Level 4+
The proportion of employers reporting skills gaps and shortages
Properties at risk from flooding
Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency
Extent and condition of key habitats for which BAPS have been established

Mixed or Unclear Regional Performance

Extent of ancient woodlands
Time taken to travel to work (average time taken per journey)
Satisfaction with public service provision (% of users satisfied with service)
Total types of all waste arisings and method used for its management
Inter-regional movement of waste
Per capita consumption (PCC) of water
Energy use per capita

Clear Progress Towards Achieving Regional Targets and Objectives

- In terms of housing provision the overall picture is an encouraging one, with a sustained increase in housing delivery at the regional level. The vast majority of dwellings in the South East provide satisfactory living conditions with the number of unfit homes decreasing year on year since 2002. However meeting the regional objectives is not just about the overall level of housing provision. They also require that the right mix is required in terms of size, type and tenure. Evidence suggests that the output of larger dwellings has fallen in percentage terms which could have significant implications in terms of meeting housing need for families.
- Early death rates for the major killers – circulatory disease and cancer – are the second and third lowest respectively in England, but while the region is likely to achieve the PSA targets, the significant inequalities in death rates that exist across the region remain a cause for concern.
- The infant mortality rate in the South East is the lowest in England and over 20% better than the national average.
- The proportion of households living in fuel poverty has improved significantly between 2001 and 2003 and the South East continues to be the least affected region in the country. However with 5% of households still affected, a significant problem still remains.
- The South East remains one of the safest regions in the UK. However, whilst crime levels in the region have stabilised in recent years, there is still a need to focus on interventions to begin to lower these levels. There is also a need to tackle the levels of worry about crime particularly in those parts of the region where the rates are above the national average.
- Overall nearly nine out of 10 (88%) residents report that they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
- Local authorities are embracing on-line service delivery. On average, 96% of services that can be delivered on-line are operational.

- The number of businesses per 1,000 residents has steadily increased since 2000 and is now second only to London.
- Over the past few years, in spite of the global slowdown, the South East economy has performed well in comparison to other UK regions. Internationally the South East currently ranks 16th in the EU competitiveness index (out of 69) behind London which ranks 9th.
- The South East is behind London in terms of the percentage of total business turnover attributable to new (new to market) products and is ahead of London in terms of turnover attributable to significantly improved products. Globally the South East ranks 55th on the World Knowledge Competitiveness Index (London ranks 56th).
- In terms of work-based training the South East is one of the best performing regions in the country.
- Completion of homes on previously developed land were at 79% in 2005-06, considerably exceeding the regional target at 60%. For the second year running there has been a drop in the amount of derelict land available and a reduction in the amount of empty properties.
- The number of additional properties protected from flood risk has risen from 2,000 in 2003-04 to 11,300 in 2005-06.
- In 2006 79.6% of the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the South East were in a favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. This is an increase of 12.2% since October 2004.
- Air quality at urban sites within the region has improved since 2004 and the majority of monitoring sites recorded lower levels of pollution than 2003. However given the number of sites monitored (just four) comparisons with previous years should be treated with some caution and no overall trend is obvious at rural sites where ozone is the main cause of moderate or high pollution levels. The decrease in levels of ozone between 2003 and 2005 largely reflects the summer weather conditions, with higher levels recorded in periods of hot still weather.
- The number of buildings at risk entries in the South East has fallen from 138 to 116 (16%) since 1999.
- Water quality including groundwater has improved since the 1990s. Major pollution incidents have decreased and bathing water quality has improved meaning no beaches in the South East consistently fail the imperative standards.
- The provision of renewable energy within the region continues to increase, albeit slowly.

Clear Progress Towards Achieving Regional Targets and Objectives

Net additional dwellings for the current year
Number of unfit homes per 1,000 dwellings
Early death rates for circulatory disease and cancer
Infant mortality
Percentage of households in fuel poverty
Level of domestic burglaries, violent offences and vehicle crimes
Fear of crime
Percentage of people who say they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
Percentage of local services offered online
The business stock per 1,000 inhabitants in the area
Real GVA per capita growth
The percentage of total South East business turnover attributable to new (new to market) and significantly improved products
The proportion of labour force receiving training
Development on previously developed land
Amount of derelict land and empty properties
Number of additional houses where flood risk has been reduced
Number of days when air pollution is moderate or high
Condition of SSSIs
Buildings of Grade I and II* at risk of decay
Rivers of Good or Fair chemical and biological water quality
Compliance with EC Bathing Waters Directive
Nitrate status of groundwater / % of sites not meeting standard
Incidents of major and significant water pollution
Installed capacity for energy production from renewable sources

Significant Data Gaps

- Currently there is only one indicator available at the regional level which allows us to measure progress towards achieving the sustainable and vibrant communities’ objectives. Indicators are available at the local level and national level but are not collected at the regional level. To measure progress towards this objective there is a clear requirement for more data to be collected.
- Local authorities are currently working to collect information regarding the percentage of new development within 30 minutes of a key service. However this data, as yet, is not compiled at the regional level.
- A number of data gaps exist with regard to climate change. For example we are currently unable to monitor the delivery of low carbon homes or the likely impact, in terms of carbon emissions, of new housing.

- As part of delivering the expected new requirements of the draft supplement to PPS1 the South East England Regional Assembly will investigate how to monitor such emissions by producing a regional carbon trajectory.
- Similarly regarding adaptation to climate change, data exists regarding flood defence, but gaps exist in terms of measuring the provision of sustainable drainage schemes and our ability to provide water during ‘critical periods’ without restrictions.
- A number of economic and social indicators highlight significant regional disparities within an average figure that is meeting regional or national targets. Currently national data exists for average annual percentage income growth. This indicator is currently not available at the regional level. The indicator could potentially quantify the wealth ‘gap’ within the region and indicate whether or not it is closing
- The South East England Biodiversity Forum and its partners have been collating information on the extent and condition of key habitats for which Biodiversity Action Plans have been established within the region. However gaps exist for the habitat data. Irregularities also exist within the data that has been collected. Significant work is currently being carried out to address these issues. The regional biodiversity strategy is currently under review and will include regional targets for restoration and creation of priority habitats.

Significant Data Gaps

Percentage of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds and communities can live together harmoniously
Percentage of people who have undertaken on average at least two hours of formal volunteering per week/Percentage of people who have undertaken formal or informal volunteering at least once a month
Percentage of new development within 30 minutes of key services
Percentage of new build and retrofit homes meeting EcoHomes Very Good standard or equivalent Code for Sustainable Homes
Regional carbon trajectories
Land covered by agri-environment schemes
Average annual percentage income growth – Bottom 20%, 2nd quintile, 3rd quintile, 4th quintile, Top 20%
The provision of sustainable urban drainage and our ability to provide water during ‘critical periods’ without restrictions
Extent and condition of key habitats for which BAPS have been established

3 Regional Priorities

- 3.1 Having used the information within this report to carry out an appraisal of the region’s performance the following priorities were identified by SFG:
 - Achieving sustainable levels of resource use
 - Reducing the region’s carbon footprint
 - Ensuring that the South East is prepared for the inevitable impacts of climate change
 - Ensuring that everyone, including the most deprived people, has an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the region’s sustainable prosperity.
- 3.2 Achieving progress against these priorities will urgently require the timely provision of the right kind of infrastructure within the South East.
- 3.3 The group also recognised that addressing the data gap regarding the sustainable and vibrant communities’ objective represents a priority.