

INFORMATION NOTE 1

Draft RSS Issues, Strategy Vision and Aims

**South West Regional Assembly
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SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

INFORMATION NOTE 1

Draft RSS Issues, Strategy Vision and Aims

1. Introduction

1.1 PPS11 (para 1.7) sets out the requirements for Regional Spatial Strategies. Amongst these, it specifies that RSSs should:

- *articulate a spatial vision of what the region will look like at the end of the period of the strategy and show how this will contribute to achieving sustainable development objectives;*
- *provide a concise spatial strategy for achieving that vision, defining its main aims and objectives, illustrated by a key diagram, with the policies clearly highlighted;*
- *be consistent with and supportive of other regional frameworks and strategies, including the RSDF and the regional cultural, economic and housing strategies;*
- *contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in line with section 39 of the Act.*

1.2 This Information Note sets out how the Draft RSS for the South West meets these requirements in terms of its vision and aims, including its contribution to sustainable development, and the issues it seeks to address.

2 Key issues and challenges facing the Region

2.1 Section 1.4.3 of the Draft RSS identifies the major challenges the region faces, and highlights those from *Just Connect!* which the spatial strategy has a particular role in responding to.

“the region is growing and we anticipate an extra half a million people in the region by 2016.”

“climate change is a serious global issue already affecting the South West.”

“we have a significant problem with housing affordability resulting from high demand and relatively low wages.”

“we have high employment rates but relatively low productivity; we also have marked contrasts within the region and the widest variations in overall economic performance of any English region.”

“we have a dispersed population, which is a challenge for the effective delivery of services.”

“we are losing our young people and university graduates, partly because of the relatively poor career prospects in management and high value added sectors.”

“we are producing waste at a rate disproportionate to our population.”

“the environment is under pressure exemplified by loss of and damage to natural and historic assets, increasing demands for natural resources and poor local environmental quality.”

“we often find it difficult to get around, because the distances between places are large; the infrastructure is often inadequate, and traffic congestion has increased.”

“in stark contrast to the perceived high quality of life offered by the South West, we have significant and persistent pockets of deprivation and inequality.”

3 Vision, Aims and key challenges in the Draft RSS

3.1 The Draft RSS is seen as the spatial expression of the region’s policies and will play its part alongside other plans and programmes in addressing the key challenges.

3.2 Section 1.42 of the Draft RSS sets out the vision for the region from the Regional Sustainable Development Framework, as endorsed in *Just Connect!*.

“The South West must remain a region with a beautiful and diverse environment. By working together, applying the principles of sustainability, we can achieve lasting economic prosperity and social justice, whilst protecting the environment. This approach will secure a higher quality of life now and for future generations”

3.3 The aims of the Draft RSS, taken from *Just Connect!*, are set out in section 1.5 of the Draft RSS:

- *To harness the benefits of population growth and manage the implications of population change;*
- *To enhance our distinctive environments and the quality & diversity of our cultural life;*
- *To enhance our economic prosperity and ensure quality of employment opportunity;*
- *To address deprivation and disadvantage to reduce significant intra-regional inequalities;*
- *To make sure that people are treated fairly and can participate fully in society.*

3.4 The broad regional vision and aims of the Draft RSS are translated into strategic planning terms with a statement about the broad regional development outcomes for 2026 (section 1.3):

“The regional future this Strategy is working towards can be summed up as one where:

- *all communities enjoy the benefits of further development and where housing needs are satisfied;*
- *the economy continues to prosper;*
- *rural parts of the region fulfil their economic potential with vibrant market towns at their core;*
- *Bristol becomes a major European city;*
- *Plymouth continues its renaissance and becomes the economic hub of the far South West;*
- *Swindon, Exeter, Cheltenham/ Gloucester, Bournemouth/ Poole, Weston-super-Mare and Taunton develop as important focal points for economic growth;*
- *regeneration of the Cornwall towns, Forest of Dean and Torbay and other priority areas continues to have effect;*
- *growth is supported by necessary infrastructure in step with development”.*

3.5 Sustainability principles and policies are given in section 1.6, following the four themes in *Securing the Future* the national sustainable development strategy and resulting in the four sustainable development policies – SD1-4:

- *SD1 - The Ecological Footprint*
- *SD2 – Climate Change*
- *SD3 – The Environment and Natural Resources*
- *SD4 – Sustainable Communities*

3.6 Chapters 6-10 of the Draft RSS are based around the five aims of *Just Connect!*. They include a series of policies which provide more detail on how the spatial strategy can help deliver these aims and the four sustainable development policies SD1-4.

3.7 In particular, SD1 – the Ecological Footprint is supported by the overall spatial strategy which aims to balance jobs and homes and thus reduce the need to travel (Development Policies A-C), Development Policy G on sustainable construction, demand management (TR1), renewable energy (RE1-5), and waste (W1-4).

3.8 Policy SD2 – Climate Change, is supported by the policies on flood risk (F1), renewable energy (RE1-5), coastal planning (Co1-2), and the spatial strategy set out in sections 3 and 4.

3.9 Policy SD3 – the environment and natural resources is supported by policies in section 7 on the natural and built environment (ENV1-5), and natural resources (RE1-12).

- 3.10 Policy SD4 – Sustainable Communities is supported by policies in section 6 on housing (H1, GT1), services (SC1), healthcare (HE1-3), skills (SK1), culture (LCF1, C1 section 7) and green infrastructure (GI1), employment (E1-5 in section 8), the priorities for deprivation in section 9, and policies in section 10 on equality (SI1-2)

4 Process

- 4.1 In understanding the vision, aims, and issues the Draft RSS is seeking to address, it is important to refer to work undertaken previously to prepare the Regional Sustainable Development Framework and the Integrated Regional Strategy.
- 4.2 The RSDF was produced in September 2000 following consultation, led by Sustainability South West (the South West Sustainable Development Round Table) and endorsed by the Regional Assembly. This set out a vision for the region, and identified a series of key challenges.
- 4.3 In addition to this, the Government's Regional White Paper, "Your Region, Your Choice" published in 2002 identified Regional Assemblies as having a key role in improving the integration of regional strategies, and in encouraging regional agencies to work together to coordinate their activities towards the achievement of a common set of regional objectives and outcomes. In response to this, the South West Regional Assembly has promoted the concept of an Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) for the South West. The intention was to encourage more coordinated working in the region in the future by providing a common set of broad objectives and priorities for the region. The IRS is intended to guide and help coordinate the preparation of regional and sub-regional strategies, and, by highlighting the inter-dependence of strategic objectives and priorities, emphasise the need for greater co-ordination of policy making and delivery. The IRS complements the RSDF by providing a focus on priorities for the region to address, underpinned by the sustainability principles in the RSDF.
- 4.4 In developing the IRS, the Regional Assembly undertook an analysis of existing regional strategies and, working with the South West Regional Observatory, the current state of the region. This work led to consultation on a report "*Trends and Challenges for the South West – Key Issues for the Future of the Region*" (Technical Report 10.03) in November 2003. This report was intended to stimulate a debate on the region's key issues as a basis from which to identify key priorities for inclusion in the draft Integrated Regional Strategy for the South West. Alongside this consultation, work was also carried out on an analysis of locally generated priorities expressed in community strategies, a public opinion survey of residents in the South West, a benchmark analysis of the performance of the South West relative to other English regions, and the development of a series of future scenarios for what the South West could be like in 2026.
- 4.5 The work on the IRS and key issues facing the region formed an early input to development of the draft RSS. The review process for the Draft RSS was launched in Spring 2004 at two events across the region. These were set up to allow an early engagement with a wider constituency of partners and other

stakeholders at the start of the process. Both sessions focussed on a number of linked themes including:-

- how effectively is RPG 10 being implemented?
- how 'fit for purpose' is RPG 10 to become the Regional Spatial Strategy?
- what are the main messages coming from the recent Integrated Regional Strategy consultation on broad regional issues and priorities, and how do these translate into the spatial planning issues which need to be dealt with to deliver a new style Regional Spatial Strategy?

4.6 The events consisted of presentations on the themes outlined above, followed by a facilitated debate, focusing on the spatial planning issues. Delegates were also asked during the breaks to place their views on "Post-It Note" boards as to how the RSS might best address the broad regional priority issues already identified by the Integrated Regional Strategy. The afternoon session comprised workshop discussions organised around three key topics, with a further plenary session to close the day.

4.7 The results of this consultation confirmed the close link between the issues identified in the IRS, and those which the draft RSS needed to address, and led to close alignment between the two strategies as they were developed. This included a debate with RSPTG Members discussing contribution of Draft RSS to IRS objectives/key challenges.

4.8 The work for the Draft RSS moved on to consider the options for how the spatial strategy could help address the key regional issues, (see Information Note 2 on RSS Strategy). Further work was undertaken during the drafting of the Draft RSS to align the policies with the IRS, including structuring the RSS chapters along the five IRS aims.

5 Evidence base

5.1 *"Trends and Challenges for the South West – Key Issues for the Future of the Region"* (IRS Issues Report) in November 2003

5.2 *Just Connect!* - The Integrated Regional Strategy http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/media/SWRA/IRS/Just_Connect.pdf

5.3 Further information about regional strategies and partnerships is available on the *Just Connect!* website - http://www.justconnect-sw.co.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=1666

5.4 The Regional Sustainable Development Framework "*A Sustainable Future for the South West*" (2001)
<http://www.oursouthwest.com/RegiSus/framework/framework.htm>

5.5 *Securing the future* – The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (2005) <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/index.htm>

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