



Assembly News

South West Climate Change Action receives Ministerial backing

Members voted unanimously to sign up to the South West Declaration on Climate Change at the full Assembly meeting on Friday 16 March, signalling the region's commitment to tackling this issue and formally making combating climate change the cornerstone of the South West Regional Assembly's work.



Ben Bradshaw MP addresses the Assembly

Minister of State, Ben Bradshaw MP, co-signed and witnessed the Assembly signing the Declaration, and welcomed the Assembly's work in the fields of renewable energy and low carbon development.

Ben Bradshaw said "I was delighted to be able to take part in the Regional Assembly debate on climate change, and join the panel in discussing these issues. Members made some interesting points, many of which I will be raising with Cabinet colleagues.

It was especially encouraging to hear consensus from the region and that the South West has signed up to its own declaration on climate change.

Through joint working and developing ambitious policy, the South West must work to not only reach its targets but also benefit from developing renewable

technologies and growing biomass and biofuels."

The Minister addressed the Assembly, and then joined a panel consisting of Colin Skellett (Chairman, Wessex Water), Alan Davies (Head of Planning and Development, Bristol International Airport), Julian Brooks (Sustainable Construction), Richard Cresswell (Regional Director, Environment Agency) and Andrew Slade (Deputy Regional Director, Government Office South West) and took questions from the floor.

Members unanimously approved the development of a Regional Climate Change Strategy and Action Plans. Members also proposed to refresh the Climate Change Declaration next year to reflect progress in the region.

Jane Henderson, Chief Executive of the South West RDA welcomed the Assembly on taking the lead on Climate Change in the region.

In recognition of the importance of transport for the South West, the full Assembly also agreed in principle to establishing a dedicated transport group.

The next full Assembly Meeting will be on Friday 13 July 2007.



Left - Right: Cate Le Grice-Mack, Cllr Pat Ferguson, Cllr Chanel Stevens, Ben Bradshaw MP, Cllr Jill Shortland, Bryony Houlden, Cllr Sir Simon Day

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Assembly Review of Membership: 12 week consultation underway

The consultation on the Regional Assembly's review of the Social Economic and Environmental Partners (SEEP) membership runs until 2 May 2007.

This comprehensive review of membership has been undertaken to ensure the SEEPs continue to be fully representative of the South West region.

As a key part of the review, opinions from across the region have been sought with questionnaires sent out to a wide range of regional organisations, interest groups, current SEEP and Local Authority Assembly Members, SEEP nominating bodies and Chief Executives of the 51 Local Authorities in the South West. Members of the public have also been invited to contribute their views.

Analysis of the responses will be undertaken during April and May, with final recommendations going to the full Assembly Meeting on 13 July 2007.

For more information call 01823 270101 or visit www.southwest-ra.gov.uk

Regional Government: Reports Published



March 2007 saw Government publish two reports around the regional agenda.

Last year, a number of Assembly Members gave evidence to a Select Committee from the Communities and

Local Government Department (CLG) in the preparation of **'Is there a future for Regional Government'**, published on 14 March.

The report outlined a number of recommendations relevant to Regional Assemblies, these include:

- The establishment of formal scrutiny powers for Assemblies
- The proper assessment of the Regional Funding Allocations exercise in influencing Government expenditure.
- A more thorough and consistent scrutiny of the regions at Westminster
- Government to commit to a clearer City-Regions policy

The second CLG report, published on 28 March, entitled **'Evaluation of the Role and Impact of Regional Assemblies'** is based on research undertaken over the period from early 2004 to early 2006. It contained a

number of interesting findings on the work of Regional Assemblies, including:

- Significant advances have been made in developing more strategic approaches to spatial planning. Assemblies have adopted an approach that is more wide-ranging, integrated and regionally and sub-regionally more specific than before, with greater focus on implementation.
- Scrutiny has been established as a core Assembly function in all regions. Most Assemblies have forged constructive and positive relationships with the RDAs, providing valuable policy advice and input through scrutiny activity.
- Assemblies are playing a strategic role in helping co-ordinate regional policy across a range of different organisations and policy areas, increasingly thinking and acting as 'Regional Strategic Partnerships'. They have a vital function in bringing together partner interests, forging strong relationships with regional partners and stakeholders.
- Assemblies are continuing to come under pressure from some partners to get involved in new areas of work, beyond their core responsibilities. With this in mind it has been recommended that Assemblies manage expectations, and maintain a clear focus in their work to avoid spreading their effort and resources too thinly.

Reports available from: www.southwest-ra.gov.uk

South West Energy Action Plan

In response to the impending energy crisis, the Assembly is taking the lead in creating a sustainable future for the South West through developing an Energy Action Plan. Already leading the energy agenda nationally, the Action Plan will draw together the key priorities for the region.

The South West already has a number of strategies and action plans on specific energy issues, but the Assembly recognised that the region still lacked a clearly identified Energy Action Plan. With this in mind, Members agreed to create an Energy Task and Finish Group at October's Assembly meeting, and the group met for the first time on 6 March 2007.



The South West has already taken significant steps in pushing forward energy issues including:

- Strong planning policies for renewables in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).
- Low or zero carbon policies for new developments in the Draft RSS (an area where central Government is now following the Assembly's lead)
- Developing wave and tidal resources (such as the Wavehub project off the north coast of Cornwall, backed by the South West RDA)

The group will also look at and respond to issues such as the Energy White Paper and the nuclear power debate, plus the impending report from the Sustainable Development Commission on tidal energy, which will include a study on the feasibility of a Severn Barrage.

Formed by Assembly Members who sit on the Regional Futures Group, the 'Energy Task and Finish Group' also includes representatives from key organisations including SW RDA and the Environment Agency.

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Rail issues: Assembly Meets with Transport Minister



Tom Harris MP

Having already expressed deep concerns over changes to the region's rail services threatening links to the rest of the country, representatives from the Regional Assembly were invited to meet with Transport Minister, Tom Harris MP on his visit to Exeter on Tuesday 20 March 2007.

The meeting was a chance for the Assembly, business and community groups to have their say about rail services in the region and their hopes for the future. The meeting comes ahead of a long term rail strategy, due to be published in July 2007, which will be looking at issues of capacity, performance and passenger requirements.

Having already met the Minister in Westminster last year, Chris Irwin, Assembly Member and Chairman of TravelWatch travelled to Exeter to continue pushing Government to provide adequate rail services for the South West.

Following the meeting, Chris Irwin said :

"Although the meeting itself was inconclusive, we have made sure that the South West is firmly on the Transport Minister's agenda. The proof will be in what is published in the new long term rail strategy. Whatever the outcome, the Assembly will continue to campaign for improvements to our transport network."



Assembly Member Chris Irwin

Jill Shortland shares conference platform with London Mayor

Assembly Chairman Cllr Jill Shortland was one of the key speakers at the English Regions Network (ERN) Annual Conference in March.

The event, entitled 'The Regional Agenda: Future of Regionalism' took place in London and was attended by both Members and Officers from the nine English Regions. Guest speaker on day one of the two day conference was Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone.

Cllr Shortland's address to the conference explored issues around developing the Assembly's pivotal role as 'Regional Partnership', opportunities to build upon the positive experiences of the Regional Funding Allocations and the

promotion of a 'best broker' role with local authorities.

Jill Shortland and Assembly Vice Chair, Cllr Sir Simon Day met with Ken Livingstone to discuss South West issues, and also invited the Mayor to visit the region.

Cllr Jill Shortland with Mayor of London Ken Livingstone



Draft Regional Spatial Strategy: The next phase

The Examination in Public (EiP) of the Draft RSS is fast approaching. Beginning on 17 April 2007 and lasting around 10 weeks, the panel will be hearing evidence from invited participants at Exeter's Thistle Hotel.

The examination will be conducted by an independent Panel appointed by the Secretary of State. Members of the public and the media can observe at the EiP hearings, but only invited participants will be allowed to speak.

More information about EiP timetable or the Draft RSS visit either www.southwest-ra.gov.uk or www.southwesteip.co.uk or call the South West Regional Secretariat on 01823 270101.



Key Contacts

Chief Executive - Bryony Houlden

Deputy Chief Executive - Richard Payne

Director of Policy and Planning - Peter Brown

Deputy Director: Employment and Learning - Russ Symons

Deputy Director: Housing, Local Government, Skills & Social Inclusion -
Lorraine Chicken

Deputy Director: Central Services - Karen Stone

Deputy Director: Policy and Partnership - Clare Reid

Deputy Director: Policy, Partnership and Integration - Hannah Hickman
(Maternity leave)

Regional Policy Managers

Housing - Abbe Hayward

Conformity and Research - Keith Woodhead

Strategic Planning - Mark Newey

Transport - Chris Mitchell

Waste, Energy and Minerals - Craig Frost

Scrutiny and Sustainability - David Fletcher

Integration and Implementation - Stuart Todd



Secretariat offices at Dennett House,
Taunton

THE REGIONAL SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat is based in Taunton. There is also an office at Tormarton Training Centre, near Bath, from which specialist training services are delivered.

The Secretariat supports three organisations:

- The Regional Assembly is a partnership between all the Local Authorities in the South West. It also includes representatives of Social, Economic and Environmental Partners, including the Trades Union Congress, business, the voluntary sector and others.
- The South West Provincial Employers provides training, development and guidance on all employment issues to Local Authorities.
- The South West Local Government Association represents and promotes the interests of all South West Local Authorities.

The three organisations are supported by a shared secretariat, but continue to carry out their own functions, working together wherever possible in the best interests of the region.



Tormarton Training Centre

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