

**MINUTES OF MEETING
OF THE
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT GROUP
WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2002**

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| PRESENT: Pat Hockey (Chair) | S Gloucestershire Council |
| Noel Cartwright | West Devon BC |
| Steven Pugsley | West Somerset |
| Malcolm Hanney | Bath & North East Somerset Council |
| Nolan Clarke | Dartmoor National Park |
| Caroline Dudley | SEP |
| Ann Clitheroe | SEP |
| Sandra Fryer | Bristol City Council (Chair, Environment Support Group) |
| Wendy Lutley | CPRE (observer) |
| Clare Brooke | SWRA |
| Cheryl Cowlin | SWRA |
| Vivien James | SWRA |

Apologies: Martin Ross, Julian Johnson, Andy Blackwood, Claire Gibson

1.0 Minutes of Meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved. **It was agreed that these would be included with papers for any future meetings.** The various action points had been acted upon.

2.0 Regional Environmental Strategy

- 2.1 An update was given on developing the Regional Environmental Strategy. This was based on earlier discussions and the outcome of the workshop held 2 September. A complete draft is not yet available as it is taking longer than anticipated to draft. The document is structured around key issues based on the 15 Regional Sustainable Development Framework themes. Specialist groups were being asked to provide information to fill in any gaps. Key objectives had been identified and priority regional actions to help deliver these. **It was agreed that target dates for actions would be added.**
- 2.2 Noel Cartwright thought the document should be more proactive and suggested 1) promote non fossil fuel energy production and use; 2) support and extend designated areas such as AONB's, SSSI's and the protected built environment and 3) Assembly should promote and promulgate long term environmental and climatic studies which affect the region.
- 2.3 Members were asked to provide comments to Officers.
- 2.4 Members felt the Environment Strategy should feed into the Regional Spatial Strategy. Links to other strategies needs to be set out clearly in the document.

- 2.5 It was felt that a “Promoting Best Practice” section should be included giving at least one example of case studies per issue (more to be available on website). It is proposed to include a case example for each issue. Members felt this would aid representatives of local authorities to include environmental issues in their decision making.
- 2.6 Various specific themes were discussed. Caroline Dudley agreed to assist with EV12 – Culture and Heritage and Steven Pugsley agreed to nominate an agricultural specialist to assist with Food and Farming. Information on health issues could be obtained from the Regional Observatory. The National Parks asked to be listed in tables on pages 26 and 27.
- 2.7 Members felt that farmers should be encouraged to produce food for local markets, although it was acknowledged only 30% of production could be utilised. It was felt more emphasis should be placed on local food processing thus avoiding the need to transport raw materials out of the region and to then bring back as the processed product.
- 2.8 Page 27 item 4 – Rural Development – to read “Promote sustainable rural communities” (to afford sustainable housing).
- 2.9 Delivery of the document was discussed and Members felt the Sustainability Champions should take an active role in promoting the document at every opportunity. Also where links between this document and the Regional Spatial Strategy existed these should be recognised and promoted.
- 3.0 Strategic Environmental Assessment**
- 3.1 The paper was presented to update Members on work being undertaken with funds from the ERN. Phase 1 had been completed and Phase 2 was underway. Consultants for Phase 2 had been appointed and an executive summary was included in the papers.
- 3.2 5 pilot schemes were running and reports were being prepared for each which would highlight key areas plus a detailed annex.
- 3.3 Clare Brooke reported that ODPM had issued draft guidance on SEA for land use plans for consultation – closing date 24 January. It was agreed that the Regional Assembly response would be circulated to the Chair before submission.
- 3.4 Phase 3 – once information was collated it would be made available to those who need to undertake assessments. A training course for Officers (practitioner level) was planned for March. The information would also be available on the website.

4.0 Renewable Energy

- 4.1 Paper to Members for information. The draft Strategy produced by Regional Renewable Energy Group had been to the Assembly in March and endorsed. The results of the consultation in the summer were being considered for the final Strategy. A Sustainability Appraisal is also being undertaken, and interim results have shown that, subject to some changes to the aims and objectives to incorporate social, environmental and economic considerations and how actions support the objectives, it was fairly in line with the Regional Sustainability Development Framework. A more detailed appraisal is due at the end of this week which will feed into the final Strategy. The Strategy is due to be completed February 2003 with launch in March 2003.
- 4.2 It was felt that although there was provision for negative scoring in the appraisal, negative impacts should be highlighted in the same way as positive ones. **It was agreed that the relevant parts of the full report be extracted and circulated to Members.**
- 4.3 A Renewal Energy office has been set up with funding from the RDA to support delivery of the Strategy and a Chief Executive has been appointed and 2 officers will be recruited shortly. The RDA will fund the offices for a period of 3 years. The office will be located at the RDA prior to relocating to the new Science Park at Exeter University. The Chief Executive has come from Greenpeace and is Mr Matthew Spencer. **It was agreed that Mr Spencer should be invited to a meeting of the Group.**
- 4.4 Currently the Regional Assembly and GOSW have observer status on the Board of the Office. Concern was expressed over the membership and accountability of the Board. It was felt that a report should be made to the Regional Assembly, perhaps on an annual basis, if the Board was taking on a regional role.

5.0 Energy Savings Trust

- 5.1 The Regional Assembly had submitted a bid for pilot work to this national Government Body, following approval by Group Leaders and Chair of Environment Group, but had been unsuccessful. The North East Assembly had submitted the successful bid.
- 5.2 It was felt that some good ideas had come from the bid discussions and that a meeting in the New Year would be useful to consider way forward as this was important for IRS and RSS work and Regional Housing Strategy. The Energy Savings Trust were also keen to work with the Region on specific areas. It was suggested that pilots could be run in Objective 1 and 2 areas and the results could then be expanded to cover the whole region. Some work was already being undertaken by Sustainable Energy Partnerships and these experiences could be shared at this meeting.

6.0 AOB

6.1 Planning Bill

It was agreed summary of Planning Bill be brought to next meeting, together with timescale for lobbying. This would enable Members to highlight points for consideration by Planning & Transport Group.

6.2 Integrated Regional Strategy

Consultation of the Cooper Simms report generally showed support for an Integrated Regional Framework to pull together existing regional strategies. Various specific comments had been made in relation to particular issues and interests. The next steps will be to complete the IRF incorporating key regional policy statements, then move on to Futures work and assessment of baseline strategies to inform the development of the IRS itself. **The outcomes of these pieces of work will be brought to future meetings.**

6.3 RSDF Conference

The launch of the Progress Report on the Regional Sustainable Development Framework was well attended and provided positive and productive feedback. Some good progress has been made in the region towards the RSDF objectives, although there are still some problem areas that need to be addressed. **It was agreed a report of the Conference would be made available to Members.**

6.4 Proposal for meeting with statutory environmental bodies

Clare Brooke proposed that the Directors of key partners (English Heritage, Environment Agency, English Nature and Countryside Agency) be invited to the next meeting (5 February 2003) to discuss their contribution to the Regional Environmental Strategy and to give Members an opportunity to engage them in their role in delivering the Strategy. **It was agreed to invite the Directors of the 4 main bodies. GOSW and RDA representatives would also be invited, and the chairs of other Assembly Groups. It was also agreed that Members of the Group be informed now** so that they can make arrangements to attend and to decide who should lead the questioning as it was important that the Group obtained as much information as possible from the meeting.

6.5 Youth Involvement

Members raised the issue of how to ensure that young people had an opportunity to input to the setting of environmental objectives and priorities. **It was agreed to invite James Fortune to the meeting on 5 Feb to discuss youth involvement and representation** and to encourage the Youth Parliament to comment on environmental issues that are important to them, so that these can be fed into the Regional Environmental Strategy.

6.6 Joint Statement on Protected Landscapes

A copy of the Statement of Intent was circulated to Members. This was prepared in response to a request from Minister Alun Michael as part

of the Rural Revival Conference. The Statement has been approved by Assembly Leaders and Chair of Environment Group. The South West Branch of the LGA has also approved the document.

6.7 Press Release – SWARMMS

A press release commenting on the Government transport announcements was circulated. This reiterated the Assembly's decision on SWARMMS in July. Members commented on the disappointment at lack of any funding for rail investment was felt as this is an essential requirement for the Region. Members also questioned whether further work was needed on sustainability appraisal of the outcomes as the full package of measures agreed in SWARMMS had not secured funding.

6.8 Climate Change

The draft report on the Impacts of Climate Change was considered the last meeting. The study is being launched on 22nd of January at Bristol Zoo to which the Regional Assembly has been invited. The Chair was unable to attend so Noel Cartwright was nominated. Sandra Fryer also reported that she would be attending.

7.0 Dates of future meetings

Members were asked to note these.

8.0 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Group will be at 10.30 am on Wednesday 5th February 2003. The venue for this meeting will be confirmed as it may be necessary to find an alternative venue to accommodate a larger meeting in the light of para 6.4.