

South West Regional Assembly / South West Regional Development Agency

Regional Strategic Review and Scrutiny Protocol and Programme 2006 - 2009

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This document has been developed jointly by South West Regional Assembly (SWRA or 'Assembly') and the South West Regional Development Agency (SW RDA). It describes the ways in which the Assembly and SW RDA will conduct business in the context of the Scrutiny Programme for 2006 - 2009.
- 1.2. This protocol builds on the previously agreed protocol for the 2004-5 period.

2. Scrutiny

- 2.1. Government is keen that RDAs are seen as being accountable to the regions they serve in addition to their direct accountability to Ministers. Regional Assemblies are seen as being "well placed to work with the RDAs - and other regional partners - to help ensure that the RDAs' strategies and activities fit in with the wider framework of strategies across the region"¹. This is consistent with the RDA Act² in which regional assemblies (referred to as regional chambers) are identified as being important representative bodies for capturing the views of those interested in the work of the RDAs.
- 2.2. Through its scrutiny role, the Assembly aims to represent the views of the South West on carefully selected strategic policy issues of regional significance and assess SW RDA's response to these needs in order to influence the development and delivery of regional strategies. Scrutiny offers an opportunity to strengthen regional partnerships and increase consistency between strategies and local and sub regional plans. In this respect, the Scrutiny Programme is linked to the Assembly's role to promote better strategy integration through ongoing discussion and delivery of the South West's Integrated Regional Strategy – *just connect!*. Scrutiny can also be used as a tool for identifying and raising awareness of regional issues with the press, public and stakeholders.

3. The South West's Approach to Scrutiny

- 3.1. The Regional Assembly is committed to a collaborative approach to scrutiny. It is acknowledged that the scrutiny role has different aims from the formal reporting of SW RDA performance to the DTI through GOSW. It is also different from new Independent Performance Assessment of RDAs conducted by the National Audit Office. Accordingly, the Regional Assembly's scrutiny function is not about detailed performance management of the SW RDA. Instead, it is about providing an opportunity for:

¹ Strengthening Regional Accountability, DETR, 9 March 2001

² Regional Development Agencies Act, 1998

- the SW RDA to be accountable to the wider region by reflecting with partners on its activities in the context of regional needs and priorities;
- for regional partners to test the relevance and robustness of policy to inform future policy development; and
- for regional partners to review effectiveness of and progress on delivery against the region's agreed aims and strategic policies, especially the RES.

In exploring the connection between policy development and delivery, scrutiny can be seen as both a retrospective and forward looking activity.

- 3.2. The starting point for the scrutiny programme for 2006-2009 will continue to be **the Regional Economic Strategy 2006-15** and will examine the way in which the RES is meeting the region's economic needs in the context of the overarching aims and objectives of the South West set out in the Integrated Regional Strategy. A clear focus on the RES is consistent with the RDA Act and *Strengthening Regional Accountability*³.
- 3.3. It is recognised that the Assembly and SW RDA have a shared responsibility for agreeing regional strategies and ensuring delivery of strategies. Although SW RDA is the prime regional economic agency it is also recognised that SW RDA is one of many involved in the region's economic development and that many recommendations made by the Assembly could extend well beyond SW RDA and include the Assembly itself as well as other regional partners. In taking forward the scrutiny programme over the next three years the Assembly and SW RDA will therefore seek to engage the widest range of regional partners and assess the contribution of all key agencies in making a reality of the region's strategic objectives.
- 3.4. Engaging a wide number of partners in scrutiny, is not intended to detract from the critical role undertaken by SW RDA in developing and publishing the Regional Economic Strategy and operating as the Government's prime agency in delivering regional economic development. Equally, the particular scrutiny role provided for regional chambers by the Government with respect to RDAs will be recognised in the scrutiny process through bilateral discussions between the Assembly and the SW RDA that clearly focus on the RDA's contribution to ensuring the success of the RES - both as a strategic catalyst and as delivery agent.
- 3.5. Public accountability underpins the need for scrutiny. Accordingly, the Assembly and SW RDA will adopt an open approach by:
 - welcoming engagement from the widest range of regional stakeholders;
 - producing a written report to capture conclusions of reviews;

³ The Assembly is key signatory to the RES and has a stake in ensuring the strategy is delivered. Reviews of the RES are conducted separately – co-ordinated by SW RDA but closely involving the Assembly.

- making recommendations – whether for SW RDA, other government bodies or Government itself;
- submitting recommendations to Government Ministers, Government Office, and making these publicly available;
- maintaining an agreed and effective follow up process to track the implementation of recommendations.

Where appropriate -

- meetings will be held in public;
- the outcomes of meetings will be recorded;
- results of meetings / transcripts will be published for public viewing.

4. The Scrutiny Programme 2006 / 2009

- 4.1. The themes for the Scrutiny Programme for 2006 - 2009 will be influenced by the strategic objectives, regional priorities and key delivery activities set out in the RES. Wherever possible, themes selected will seek to inform the “Great SW Debates” on key regional issues proposed in the RES.
- 4.2. The strategic objectives, regional priorities and key delivery activities in the RES are attached at Annex 1 and provisionally agreed topics for the programme are set out at Annex 2. It is important that topics selected are timely to ensure the most effective and meaningful input of scrutiny to policy development or delivery. This protocol allows, therefore, for flexibility in the programme set out at Annex 2 should policy development or delivery work make a topic not included at Annex 2 particularly timely for review. Any changes to the programme will need to be agreed by the Regional Assembly’s Executive Committee and the Chief Executive of the Regional Development Agency.
- 4.3. The Scrutiny Panel has agreed that the process for examining the delivery of the RES will be styled ‘**Regional Strategic Review**’ ensuring that the emphasis of scrutiny activity is on strategic issues relating to policy development and delivery not detailed site specific or performance management issues.
- 4.4. The reviews will assess the contribution of relevant South West partners to the delivery of the RES and seek to assess the consistency between the RES and other regional strategies. Equally, the process will expose any ‘strategic gaps’ or inconsistencies at the regional level informed by the Integrated Regional Strategy.
- 4.5. Detailed procedures have been formalised under the following headings. These will be reviewed as appropriate to give both organisations the opportunity to address any operational issues arising.

5. Terms of reference

- 5.1 Each Regional Strategic Review will have terms of reference which set out the aims, objectives scope of the review and outline the process to be followed

with a clear timescale. The Regional Assembly will seek agreement on the terms of reference in advance of the commencement of the review in consultation with the SW RDA.

- 5.2 The terms of reference for each review will be approved by the Assembly's Executive Committee or the Assembly Leaders and the lead SW RDA Director and SW RDA board member who will lead the bilateral discussion.

6. Regional Strategic Review Process

- 6.1 The method appropriate to each review will need to be tailored to the topic. However, there are likely to be five consistent elements:

- agreement between Assembly and SW RDA of Terms of Reference;
- evidence gathering - involving questionnaires, written questions, interviews with key players and academics, site visits, independent research if required (commissioned jointly) and background reading;
- regional workshop (s) which play a valuable role in bringing together a wide range of regional experts and stakeholders - this informs the review process and aids the buy-in of other regional partners;
- direct dialogue between the Scrutiny Panel and SW RDA (Board Members and senior officers); and
- production of report and recommendations and agreement to review and follow up timetable. [See section 11 for further detail on report follow up].

- 6.2 In taking this process forward it is important to display openness and seek full public engagement.

- 6.3 Particular attention should be given to the conduct of meetings and layout and format to create a constructive and positive process.

7. Key Players

- 7.1 The review process will be led in the Assembly by Members of the Scrutiny Panel who will oversee the on-going programme and represent the Assembly in bilateral discussions.

- 7.2 Assembly Members will withdraw from the Scrutiny Panel when considering an issue in which they have a specific interest i.e. a conflict may arise where a member is particularly affected by the outcome of an issue (in line with the members code of conduct).

- 7.3 The Regional Assembly and SW RDA have agreed senior officers in both organisations who will act as the first point of contact on overarching scrutiny issues. Officers in both organisations will also be identified as key contacts for the topic under review. They will collate and distribute

information across their organisations and support regional workshops and bilateral discussions.

- 7.4 The Assembly's Scrutiny Panel chair and the SW RDA lead board member [to be confirmed] on scrutiny will undertake twice yearly liaison meetings.
- 7.5 For each topic review, bilateral discussion will be led:
- by Scrutiny Panel Members and Chief Executive for the Assembly
 - by the Chairman/Deputy Chair (and/or relevant SW RDA Board Members on the topic or SW RDA lead board member on scrutiny), Chief Executive and/or at least one Director for SW RDA as appropriate.
- 7.6 It is not anticipated that SW RDA will be present at internal Scrutiny Panel meetings. However, a Director, or appointed nominee, could be invited to meet members of the Scrutiny Panel as part of the information gathering phase to support the review and follow-up process or to clarify points raised by regional evidence.

8. Information provision

- 8.1 The Regional Assembly and SW RDA will agree what information will be provided by SW RDA to inform the review, and which SW RDA contacts will be consulted. The agreed information will be sent to the Assembly six weeks in advance of the bilateral discussion.
- 8.2 The Assembly will share its plans for the collation of regional evidence with the SW RDA and provide copies of the analysis of evidence and emerging key issues throughout the review process. The final set of issues for the bilateral discussion itself will be provided to the SW RDA three weeks in advance of the discussion. These will be based on the set of key emerging issues agreed by the Assembly and SW RDA shortly following the stakeholder workshop(s).

9. Sensitivity of information

- 9.1 In accordance with the aim to strengthen regional accountability, wherever practical, review meetings and hearings will be held in public.
- 9.2 However, the SW RDA can request that commercially sensitive material be discussed in private session. This request will normally be agreed at the outset when the terms of reference are developed.

10. Report and Recommendations

- 10.1 A report will be produced following the bilateral discussions between Assembly and SW RDA. Reports and recommendations will be endorsed by the Scrutiny Panel before formal agreement by the Regional Assembly. SW RDA will be consulted at all stages of the report drafting process. The purpose of the report is to capture the views of those interested in the SW RDA's work, summarise the work undertaken, to pull together the key evidence collated throughout the review and to provide recommendations.

Recommendations are intended to assist the SW RDA and key delivery partners in ensuring that current policy is robust for the South West's needs and that delivery is effective.

10.2 The Terms of Reference will set a timetable for delivery of report to the Assembly and RDA.

10.3 The Assembly's report and recommendations will be submitted to Government Ministers, Government Office and all stakeholders who participated in the review. Reports will also be made publicly available.

11. Follow up and review

11.1 Follow up to each review is a critical part of the process. The findings of each review will be reported to the SW RDA board and to the full Regional Assembly.

11.2 Where recommendations are made to SW RDA a written response from SW RDA will set out simply and briefly against each Assembly recommendation:

- whether the SW RDA accepts the recommendation;
- if so, what action the SW RDA intends take / or has already taken; and
- by when.

11.3 The Terms of Reference will set a timetable for the receipt of a response from SW RDA. This will be no less than 6 weeks following discussion of the report and recommendations at the SW RDA board.

11.4 The SW RDA will also be invited to report on its response to panel recommendations as part of their regular updating reports to meetings of the Regional Assembly.

11.5 A senior officer of the SW RDA will be invited to attend scrutiny panel meetings from time to time to provide updates on implementation of recommendations. At these discussions, the Regional Assembly will also provide feedback on recommendations relating to its activities and invite other partners referenced in reports to do likewise. This feedback would normally occur around 12 months after the formal delivery of report and recommendations to SW RDA but the Assembly may request additional follow up discussions as appropriate.

12. Review of Programme and Protocol

12.1 This protocol and programme will be subject to a interim review by the Scrutiny Panel and SW RDA 2 years from its initial approval. A full review will take place on completion of the current protocol and programme in 2009. A request for the review of the protocol by the RDA or Regional Assembly can be made at any time previously should a justifiable need arise such as production of further guidance on scrutiny or changes in RDA reporting arrangements.

Scrutiny Protocol – Annex 1

Regional Economic Strategy 2006-15

1. Vision

South West England will have an economy where the aspirations and skills of our people combine with the quality of our physical and cultural environment to provide a high quality of life and sustainable prosperity for everyone. Our Vision will be realised when the South West has developed an economy where:

- prosperity is measured by wellbeing as well as economic wealth
- knowledge, service quality and performance are key to business success
- more people can find jobs which fully utilise and reward their skills
- the region respects the environment as the foundation of people's quality of life and as a business opportunity

3. Strategic objectives, priorities and delivery activities

Strategic objectives	Regional priorities	Delivery activities 2006-9
SO1: Successful and competitive businesses	1A Support business Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ enhance business support for SMEs ▪ improve access to finance ▪ develop specialist support for high growth businesses ▪ ensure rural access to business support services ▪ support resource efficiency in business ▪ promote regional sourcing and the development of supply chains ▪ deliver sustainable sites and premises for business growth ▪ implement the Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming
	1B Encourage new enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ develop a culture of enterprise ▪ encourage the creation of new enterprises ▪ support new social and community enterprises ▪ promote enterprise in disadvantaged areas ▪ promote enterprise in rural areas ▪ encourage wider participation in enterprise
	1C Deliver skills for the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ encourage an efficient and adaptable labour market ▪ develop workplace skills and training ▪ inspire people to improve their employability skills ▪ ensure high-quality and flexibility training provision
	1D Compete in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ encourage and support regional businesses to

	the global economy	<p>trade internationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ attract and retain domestic and foreign direct investment
	1E Promote innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develop a culture of innovation in the region ■ increase the contribution that science and technology makes to the economy ■ encourage collaboration between business and the region's knowledge base ■ maximise the take-up and exploitation of ICT for business
SO2 Strong and inclusive communities	2A Improve participation in the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ raise individual's skills and aspirations for work and enterprise ■ ensure that there is equality of access to work, training and business advice ■ strengthen the voluntary and community sector as a catalyst for economic inclusion
	2B Regeneration the most disadvantaged areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ support areas with the greatest concentrations of multiple deprivation ■ support the communities of greatest need in rural areas
	2C Plan sustainable and successful communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ promote the renaissance of the region's largest cities ■ secure a sustainable future for rural areas
SO3 An effective and confident region	3A Improve transport networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ enhance connectivity, providing access to markets and tackling peripherality ■ reduce congestion in the main cities and towns
	3B Promote and enhance what is best about the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ improve the way the region is perceived ■ build on existing strengths to develop the South West as the leading region for sustainable development ■ develop and promote high profile regional projects and events ■ maximise the opportunities for the region from London 2012
	3C Improve leadership, influence and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ encourage an integrated approach to economic development ■ improve the effectiveness of South West representation at national and EU levels ■ improve understanding of the State of the Region

Scrutiny Protocol – Annex 2

Strategic Review Forward Programme

Agreed first topic of the 2006-9 protocol:

Quality of Employment Opportunity

Provisional agreed reserve topics for the future:

Cities and Regions

Transport