

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

REGIONAL FUTURES GROUP

8 November 2007

Regional Environment Strategy Review

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the Environment Strategy Review.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members accept the recommendations made by the Regional Environment Network (REN) for reviewing the Regional Environment Strategy as set out in section 2.1 of the attached report (Appendix 1).

3 Background

- 3.1 There is a commitment in the Regional Strategy for the South West Environment (REnvS) to review the Strategy in 2007. Members agreed at the Regional Futures Group meeting on 7 November 2006 that the Regional Environment Network (REN) would undertake the scoping for the review in 2007.
- 3.2 REN established a Task and Finish Group in January 2007 to oversee this work. Research was commissioned with the help of funding from the Regional Assembly and the Environment Agency. This included telephone interviews carried out by consultants with 74 key regional stakeholders, and an online questionnaire was available for two months.
- 3.3 In summer 2007, Government signalled through the publication of its Sub-National Review the dissolution of Regional Assemblies, an enhanced role for Regional Development Agencies, stronger scrutiny roles for local government, and the development of a 'Single Regional Strategy'. Against this background, the current REnvS is already embedded in the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy and influencing other regional strategic frameworks.
- 3.4 REN has considered the implications of the Sub-National Review and the outcomes of the empirical work in their recommendations for a review of the REnvS. The recommendations are also based on further input from REN Members. REN's report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

3.5 The preparation of a Regional Priorities document would be the first step in reviewing the REnvS. This document could feed environmental objectives and priorities into a future Single Regional Strategy. The evidence base for the Priorities document would be founded on allaying a description of environmental assets of the region with the South West Regional Observatory's annual 'State of the South West Environment' reporting. This would fit into current arrangements between the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) and the Regional Observatory on monitoring the Regional Spatial Strategy.

4 Next Steps

4.1 REN and SWRA officers will have an early discussion with the Environmental Agencies and Government Office South West how to take forward a Regional Priorities document.

4.2 The Regional Priorities document would come to Members for agreement at a later stage in 2008.

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Appendix

1. Scoping the Regional Environment Strategy Refresh