

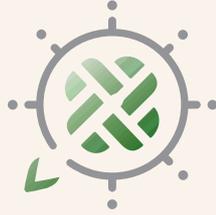


SOUTH WEST
Regional Assembly

SOUTH WEST
Local Government Association

SOUTH WEST
Provincial Employers

South West
Regional Secretariat
Annual Report 2004/05



SOUTH WEST
Regional Assembly

SOUTH WEST
Local Government Association

SOUTH WEST
Provincial Employers

South West Regional Secretariat

Annual Report
2004/05

South West Regional Secretariat

Annual Report 2004/05

Introduction by Bryony Houlden, Chief Executive

This has been an interesting year for the South West Regional Secretariat with pensions high on the agenda for South West Provincial Employers, planning at the forefront of Assembly activity and providing affordable homes a major priority for the Local Government Association.

Though each component Member organisation has different responsibilities, there is one clear cut vision and a range of objectives that are shared by all:

“To improve the quality of life of all the people in the region and make it an even better place to live, work and visit”

Throughout 2004/05 Secretariat Staff, working at the direction of Members, were committed to:

“Listening to the views of people in the region and working with partners in a way which is open and transparent, and serves the needs of Members and through them the needs of the South West”





Assembly and South West Local Government Association Leaders sign Olympic Bid Flag 2005 (left to right) Cllr Tony Phillips, Cllr Sir Simon Day, Cllr Gil Streets, Chair Jackie Longworth and Cllr Chanel Stevens

Members set us seven main objectives:

Work with others to get agreement on the most important issues for the region, then act in partnership to get the right outcome.

Maximise the benefits of the geographical, sectoral and political makeup of the three organisations to build consensus and act as the voice of the region.

Anticipate and react to policies created nationally or internationally that might have an impact on the region.

Carry out our statutory Regional Planning duties in a way which helps achieve regional priorities.

Keep people informed about our work, and share relevant information and best practice with organisations working in the region.

Support improved performance and capacity in Local Authorities by giving them high quality employment and technical advice and guidance; promote the common interests of Local Government as a major regional employer.

Base all our activities on the principles of equality of opportunity, sustainable development, partnership, transparency and professionalism.

This Annual Report provides a short summary of what we have achieved this year under each of those objectives. Shorter reports will be prepared for each of the three organisations.

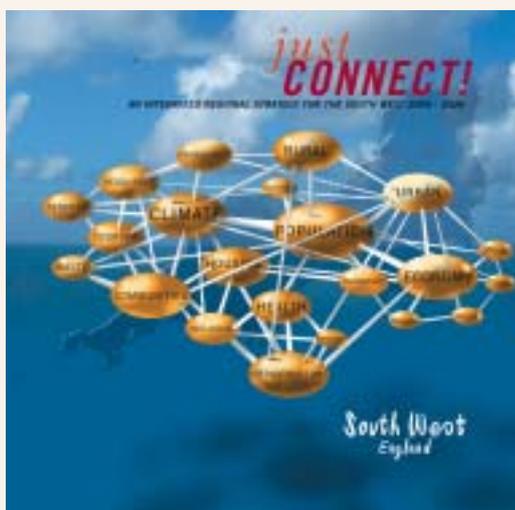
Getting agreement...

The South West is a diverse area, geographically, politically and culturally. Getting agreement on the key issues involves a complex mix of research, workshops, interviews and consultations.

We set the foundation for consensus with the Regional Emphasis Document (RED) early in the year. It sets out what we, and our partners, thought most needed to be done in the region. This document was sent to the Treasury to help build understanding of the specific needs of the South West. One of the big impacts of the RED was to provide a focus for lobbying which led to a massive increase in expected funding for housing, an additional £87.5m above the previous figures, and the biggest increase for any of the English regions.

RED also helped create the basis for a much more ambitious project: the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS). The Government's White Paper invited regional chambers to look at all the strategies covering their area, identify gaps or contradictions and create one 'overall regional strategy', that brings together all the others in a coherent way. The first priority for this work was getting agreement about the top issues facing the region and the most important objectives. This went beyond the essential policy and funding priorities in RED to look at complex subjects with very many elements, like inclusion and sustainable development.

Following two years of research and debate, those priorities have been identified by the people who live, work and travel in the region. Once the priorities had been set, the purpose of the IRS was to develop one overall regional strategy that was designed to achieve those priorities.



This work, published as *'Just Connect!'* in November 2004, was endorsed by other regional agencies, the Government Office, the Regional Development Agency and the Environment Agency. Following the launch in 2004, other organisations began to contact the Secretariat to see how their work could contribute to the region's own objectives.



A full Regional Assembly meeting

Since publication, the Regional Assembly has been working with all the regional organisations that signed up to and supported '**Just Connect!**' to talk about what delivery of the aims and objectives as expressed in the IRS really means for the region. Work on a delivery plan is one component part of this discussion, and cross-agency work on that is now moving ahead at a pace. Publication of a sister document - '**Now Connecting!**' - is planned for the Summer of 2006.

Already, there are many examples of the influence of the IRS in encouraging greater consistency of policy making in the region. Several regional strategies that have been published since, or are emerging currently, clearly set out their role in the context of the South West's overarching priorities. Recent national research has also hailed the South West's IRS as being "beguilingly short and concise" and this is certainly impacting positively on the readiness of regional organisations to respond to the agenda set.

The voice of the region

From Swindon to the Isles of Scilly, communities across the South West have different needs and opportunities, but most have similar aspirations: affordable housing, good transport and a high quality environment.

Both the South West Local Government Association (SWLGA) and the Assembly have been actively campaigning for a better deal for the South West on housing during 2004/05. Currently, the difference between wages and house prices mean that in many parts of the South West, the affordability gap is similar to that faced by the South East. During 2004/05, it was estimated that six of the least affordable districts in the country are in the South West. Members of SWLGA and the Assembly lobbied contacts in Whitehall throughout the year and provided evidence to Ministers and wrote to MP's. The concerted lobbying, especially by the SWLGA, bore an extra £87.5m worth of fruit when the Government announced a total of £137m for affordable housing in the South West, at 43%, the biggest increase for any region. The SWLGA also led the way on the Future of Funding debate. Sir Michael Lyons met with Leaders to discuss some of his ideas and to seek their feedback and input.





During 2004/05 we also represented the voice of the South West at a regional level in our scrutiny activity. The Assembly's approach to scrutiny, praised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, has been developed over the last four years. The aim of scrutiny is to ensure that the South West Regional Development Agency (SW RDA) is developing and delivering investment programmes that meet the region's own needs in the right way.

This year, the work on scrutiny became more focussed: the starting point was the Regional Economic Strategy, (RES) drawn up by SW RDA in partnership with organisations and individuals across the South West. Under the new Scrutiny Protocol, this tighter focus enabled all bodies in the region to explore the links between regional priorities set out in the IRS, the RES, and specific elements of SW RDA's work.

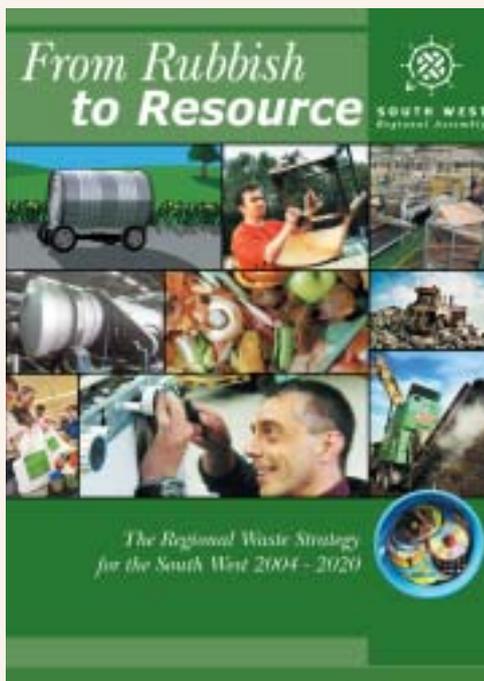
As part of that activity, the scrutiny process has been expanded and enhanced to get greater involvement from regional experts and interested parties. This year, we put a great deal of effort into getting comments and contributions from groups that are regarded as hard to reach. On topics as diverse as broadband and tourism, major regional workshops were held, attracting around one hundred attendees each. Sixty six written submissions were made to the Scrutiny Panel and two days of discussion were held between the Scrutiny Panel and high level representatives of the SW RDA. Scrutiny Panel members also held talks with organisations such as BT, the National Trust and Central Government Departments.

The Scrutiny Panel's reports and recommendations highlighted the benefits of partnership working in the region and the importance of ensuring that limited resources were co-ordinated effectively on agreed priorities. One of the key recommendations from the work on scrutiny was the need to build better, more effective working relationships with Local Authorities. The SWLGA has already been instrumental in facilitating and creating improved relationships with SW RDA, South West Tourism and other bodies involved in the scrutiny process.

Anticipate and react to policies created nationally or internationally that might have an impact on the region

At the end of 2004 we were the first of all the English regions to gain a face-to-face meeting for our Members with Sir Michael Lyons. SWLGA Members were able to put the case for the South West, and issues of concern, directly to the man in charge of the Inquiry, which is reviewing local government funding including the reformation of Council Tax. The SWLGA responded to ODPM on the draft 2005/06 finance settlement, following consultation with Local Authorities across the South West. During their Branch meeting Members also received advice and information on a range of local government finance issues from a regional finance expert and ODPM.

During 2004/05 we also developed a more detailed response to policy created at a European level. We have worked with partners to implement the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive that requires consideration of environmental impacts and sustainability appraisal to be at the heart of policy development and to inform decision making throughout the production of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). As part of this process we have built on the existing Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF) and have used the principles to appraise the development options that provided the basis for the initial consultation on the RSS. We have supported the core work of Sustainability South West and in particular their 'Fit for Purpose' study of the RSDF. We will continue to work together and with other partners to update and 'refresh' the RSDF in order to ensure that the framework continues to be effective, delivers the requirements of the new UK Sustainable Development Strategy and supports the objectives of *'Just Connect!'*.



Sustainability has been at the heart of SWLGA's efforts to reduce needless waste. SWLGA sponsored regional awards for innovation for reduction in packaging. Because the South West aims to become a minimum waste producer, the SWLGA worked in partnership with Sustainability South West, the Environment Agency, and the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) to create the *Pioneers of Packaging Awards*.



We have supported the continued development of the South West Climate Change Impacts Partnership (SWCCIP) and in particular the appointment of a new full time partnership co-ordinator. This has enabled the profile and awareness of climate change issues to be improved across the region and has contributed to climate change proofing of the RSS to ensure that relevant issues are embedded throughout a range of planning policies.

Members and Officers from all three organisations have been looking ahead at policies, not yet in place, which are likely to affect the South West. To that end, the Assembly and the Local Government Association have been working closely with the Government Office for the South West, SW RDA and others to ensure that the South West's voice is heard in Europe. For example, the impact of cohesion and the change to the funding streams could have a significant impact on the region. Both Assembly and Local Government Association Members are involved in action to ensure the South West can influence and prepare for change. The communication flows two ways: LGA Members have been invited to attend the EU's Committee of the Regions (CoR) to ensure that decision-makers in Brussels are clear about the priorities for Authorities in the South West. Councillors sitting on the CoR report back to the full Assembly meeting on a range of different issues.

The Assembly Chair sits on the South West Steering Committee, which will monitor, then create a co-ordinated response to the opportunities and challenges created by cohesion. Though it is unclear how the new funding streams will work, both Assembly and LGA Members are working to ensure that the South West can make the best and most constructive use of any new approach to grant funding.

The Assembly is also a minor funding partner in the South West's Brussels Office. Working with the County Councils and SW RDA, the Assembly has access to briefing papers, information and early alerts about forthcoming policy development.

*Carry out our statutory **Regional Planning duties in a way which helps achieve regional priorities***



In September 2004, the Assembly was designated as the Regional Planning Body, with responsibility for delivering the statutory document called the Regional Spatial Strategy. This document will guide the scope and nature of development from 2006 to 2026. It will set the basic framework for how people live, work and travel in the region over the next twenty years. So far this year, we have concentrated on consultation, gathering evidence, data and opinions about development strategies from a wide range of organisations and individuals.

We have approached the work in a range of different ways. Local Authorities have been working at a local level, sharing their expertise and knowledge about opportunities and issues affecting their areas. One of their key areas of activity has been working across administrative boundaries to develop a realistic picture of how people work, commute, enjoy leisure and use services. This work will provide the foundation for decisions about housing, transport and other facilities at a local level over the next two decades.

Although media coverage of the Regional Spatial Strategy has focussed on housing requirements so far, the RSS will be the framework for planning in its widest possible sense. The Assembly and partners have already published several documents that will help to deliver a Regional Spatial Strategy that works for the region as a whole. No single document will deliver the necessary results in isolation; the RSS will reflect each of these policy documents within an integrated and coherent framework.

➔ **Developing Regional Transport Priorities** builds on earlier planning requirements, but takes into account new studies and data, particularly the Highways Agency work on the South West Area Multi Modal Study and the Bristol-Bath to South Coast Study. The Transport Priorities document will feed into the final RSS, shaping the approach to transport infrastructure for the next twenty years, and supporting the Sustainable Communities agenda, the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy.

- 
- 
- **The Environment Strategy** published in July 2004, brings together the region's ambitions for the environment in its broadest sense, incorporating the historic environment, landscape, natural resources and wildlife. It builds on work already completed on sustainable development and provides a structured Action Plan for the future. The Strategy is already having an impact on delivery in the region, and the first Progress Report is being prepared, highlighting how delivery organisations are taking forward actions in the Strategy, and where further joint work is required.
 - **'Revision 2010'**, produced on behalf of the Assembly and GOSW. It sets county-level targets for renewable electricity within the South West over the next five years. Further work commenced on 'Revision 2020', to establish renewable electricity targets for 2020, renewable heat targets for 2010 and 2020 and targets for the inclusion of building integrated renewables in new developments.
 - **The Waste Strategy**, was published in October 2004, building on the Vision, originally published in 2002. The Strategy aims to move the region towards a sustainable approach to waste management, and further work has been undertaken to incorporate the relevant parts of the Waste Strategy into the Regional Spatial Strategy. 2004 saw the first annual decline in the amount of municipal waste produced in the region and in the amount going to landfill. The South West Local Government Association have been actively lobbying the Government for a change in the funding regime designed to support a more effective and efficient approach to waste management.
 - **The Regional Housing Strategy** has been a joint project between a range of organisations, and the Assembly has been a crucial contributor. Assembly Members debated and responded to the draft Regional Housing Strategy for 2005-16. In addition to a range of points on affordable housing, they pressed for more equitable funding for rural areas, addressing the needs of the 54% of the South West population that live outside urban areas. They also called for a broader interpretation of the phrase 'key workers', allowing access to the scheme for those outside the public sector. One of Members key concerns was the need for linking initiatives on housing to other policies, like health, poverty and access to education and training: housing, in their view, played a central role in meeting these other South West priorities. They concluded by calling for clear targets and a realistic delivery plan so the needs of all South West communities could be met effectively and sustainably.
 - Throughout the development of the RSS we undertake comprehensive strategic sustainability assessments and we are also supporting the first stages of the review of the current Regional Sustainable Development Framework.



As part of the preparation for the Regional Spatial Strategy, we are anticipating more work on the Waste Strategy, designed to give guidance on locations for waste management units, and targets for waste. During 2004/05, we began work with Local Authorities, the waste management industry and other interest groups to provide a basis for the guidance.

As Regional Planning Body, the Assembly also has a duty to help ensure that the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) produced by Local Authorities and development proposals of regional significance are in general conformity or “in line” with the RSS. The role assessing LDFs commenced on 28 September 2004. This role will help to ensure that the RSS Strategy and policies are properly implemented at the local level and that appropriate development is delivered in the right places.

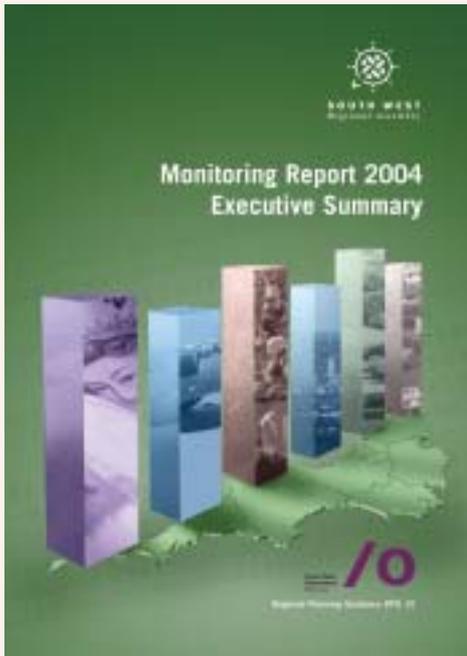
In the first year since the commencement of the duty to consider LDFs, around 120 LDF related documents have been sent to the Assembly for consultation by Local Authorities across the region. The Assembly prioritises the documents to which it responds and has responded to around 90 of this total.

To assist in these duties the Assembly has been working closely with County Council Officers to secure their expert assistance in undertaking technical officer based assessments, providing advice on the appropriate strategic response to consultations on General Conformity. The Assembly will continue to encourage these partnership arrangements, utilising the skills and knowledge of Strategic Planning Officers around the region where possible and anticipates them commencing shortly after the proposed changes to the development control system.

Whilst most responses have been dealt with through delegated authority by Officers, the Assembly is setting up a small Member Panel to consider proposed responses to documents and consultations, which are not considered to be in general conformity with the RSS.

An advice note has been produced by the Assembly which provides further details of these duties and how the Assembly is responding to them, which is available on the Assembly’s website.

We also developed new ways to test planning ideas against the region's own objectives, as set out in the IRS. For example, working together with the South West Regional Development Agency, Assembly Members appointed some experts in the use of future scenarios to help them create a series of four realistic, evidence-based scenarios for what the South West could be like in 2026. These were based on exploring the way different current trends and forecasts could impact the region in the future. These scenarios have been used to examine the robustness of emerging planning strategies against different possible futures.



The Assembly is also responsible for ensuring that existing planning activity followed the guidelines of the current planning requirements, formerly known as Regional Planning Guidance 10 (RPG 10).

Separate from, but related to our role as Regional Planning Body, we have been involved in progress on 'The Way Ahead – Sustainable Communities Plan'. The Assembly played a pivotal role in bringing together a consensus view of how already planned growth in the region could be accelerated if the necessary investment in infrastructure can be delivered. The Plan

was launched and well received at the Sustainable Communities Summit in February. The Plan sets out ways of working to deliver quality development in a well planned way.

The Regional Assembly has been at the forefront of monitoring nationally and is cited as an example of best practice in the RSS Monitoring Guidance published by ODPM. The Assembly has built on initial work and has successfully promoted an Internet based data collection system that greatly reduces the burden on Local Authorities (LAs) with regard to the provision of data for monitoring purposes. The Assembly has successfully delivered a high quality Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to ODPM and continues to promote best practice and stakeholder involvement.



The Assembly chairs a Strategic Information Providers (SIP) group whose membership representation consists of County, Unitary and District Councils, GOSW, Environment Agency and the South West Regional Observatory. This group is pivotal in assisting the Assembly develop both the monitoring indicators and data collection process. It also comments on nationally and regionally significant publications and developments.

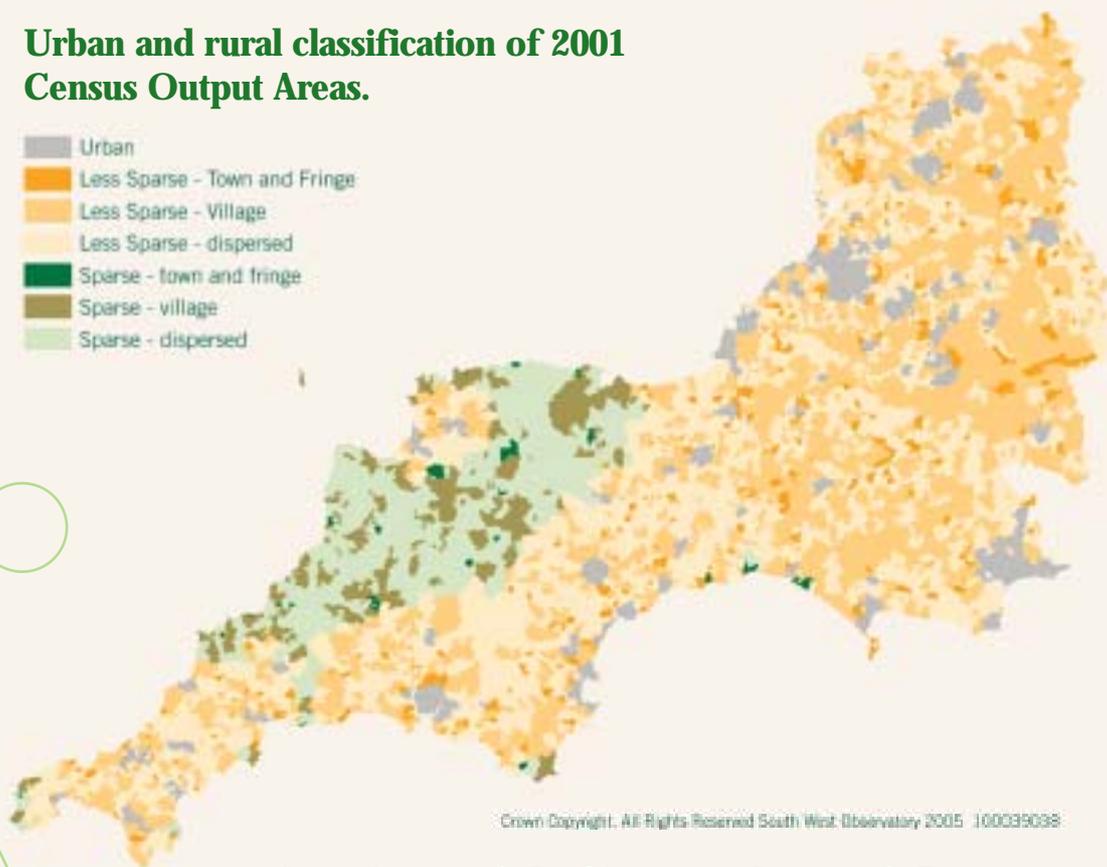
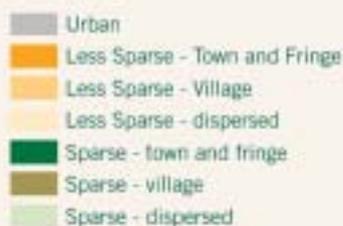
As part of the monitoring process the Assembly is committed to consulting at all stages with stakeholders and works very closely with the South West Observatory (SWO). The Observatory undertakes some aspects of the reporting and analysis for the AMR and also provides input and feedback for the development of an implementation and monitoring framework for the IRS and RSS. At the end of each annual monitoring period the Assembly will conduct consultation meetings with each county and its relevant LAs, to obtain feedback and to further understand resource and technical issues that the Local Authorities may be experiencing.

The Assembly has also assisted the Local Authorities with the development of their Local Development Frameworks by running sub-regional workshops and obtaining clarification from ODPM on some of the definitions in the monitoring guidance that has been issued. An outcome of this is the setting up and promotion of county led Monitoring Groups to enable the Local Authorities to meet on a regular basis and share knowledge and best practice. This greatly assists cross boundary networking and planning.

Keep people informed about our work, and share relevant information and best practice with organisations working in the region

The South West Observatory Core Unit is funded principally by the South West Regional Development Agency, but with significant contributions from others in the South West including the Assembly. In the year 2004/05 the Core Unit brought together nine different regional institutions to produce a comprehensive 'encyclopaedia' of the State of the South West 2004, which provides contextual information on the region's economy, society and environment to support policy making. This is published on an interactive web site at www.swo.org.uk, alongside over 1,000 documents and datasets in the on-line library at www.southwestid.org.uk. In addition, the Core Unit undertook specific work on behalf of the Assembly in analysing population mobility from the 2001 census, both in migration to and from urban areas, and the travel-to-work patterns of people employed there. This research contributes to the evidence base for the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Urban and rural classification of 2001 Census Output Areas.



© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved South West Observatory 2005 100039038

Source: Commission for Rural Communities, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Welsh Assembly.

We have carried out a wide range of consultations. A major engagement and consultation exercise has been undertaken during the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy, working with regional partners on developing policies and strategy for the RSS. A public consultation on the spatial strategy options was held during the Autumn of 2004, with over 2,400 full consultation documents and 8,800 summary documents distributed to about 1,600 organisations including all Local Authorities, Parish and Town Councils in the South West and neighbouring regions, all MPs and MEPs in the region, as well as a wide range of public and private sector organisations, voluntary and community groups. A series of consultation events have also been run at significant stages in the RSS process, including during the options consultation.

The Assembly also supported consultation on the South West Regional Housing Strategy 2005/06 run by the Regional Housing Body. A series of consultation events were held around the region giving around 250 delegates the opportunity to discuss the draft and input to the final Strategy.

This year, we also launched a Members Briefing Roadshow, inviting our Members, and colleagues at their home organisation, to half day briefings on the work of the Secretariat. As well as policy and funding discussions we provided more information about Training and Development and the work of SWLGA. The purpose of the briefings was to explain what the subscriptions were spent on, and provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussions about local issues.



The Member briefings' were part of a commitment to maximise the opportunity for Members to get more closely involved in debate on South West issues. We introduced a short email 'post-Assembly Briefing', providing a snapshot of discussions, decisions and concerns immediately after each of the full Assembly meetings. This allowed Local Authorities, Partners and Stakeholders to stay in touch with developments, without waiting for publication of the formal Minutes, which could only be approved at the next Assembly meeting. The Local Government Association e-bulletin was re-focused to increase the sharing of information and best practice, while reducing the size of the electronic file. The e-bulletin now has over 356 recipients, and contributions from across the region are on the increase month on month.

An in-house production called Members Update allows Assembly Members, partners and others to keep up-to-date with the work of the Advisory Groups, including work on planning, transport and scrutiny. The distribution list has grown to 1,500, following requests from Members, Local Authorities, partners and other Stakeholders.

More general information has been developed for the wider public. Information Sheets about the three organisations supported by the Secretariat have been updated in the last year and are provided at events, in response to enquiries, and made available on request to partners and Stakeholders. The Information Sheets are compiled in a Profile Pack and can be tailored to the audience. This approach keeps the content relevant, the cost down and allows us to update each Information Sheet as required. During 2004/05, we distributed approximately 800 Profile Packs.



While we aim to put as much material as possible on the website, there are a variety of reasons why some people want printed information. During 2004/05, requests for information about planning led to the creation of the Regional Spatial Strategy Update. This is a short summary about the development of the RSS, and an outline guide to the next steps. The high demand meant a total of 8,000 copies were printed, in addition to the copies sent out electronically.

The SWLGA has continued to provide a forum for the sharing of Best Practice: short items are shared via the LGA e-bulletin, with

the South West Centre of Excellence at Dorset becoming a key contributor. However, the SWLGA has also provided the focus for discussion of more complex issues faced by many Authorities. During the last year, such discussions have led to the development of a protocol on consultation on windfarms for all Local Authorities; the creation of a compact for Local Authorities and the Voluntary Sector and detailed work on Public Service Agreements with alternative models for insurance and risk.

The LGA also took the lead in creating the South West Asylum Board, designed to help share information and advice between officers dealing with Asylum Seekers across the region.



To help manage the increased distribution of this material by all three organisations, we introduced software that streamlines record-keeping, and allows us to tailor mailouts to specific groups, reducing wastage and improving effectiveness.

We are keen to reduce the use of printed material, and have worked hard to improve the existing website, making it easier to use and more relevant to website visitors, as the site is static and requires significant staff time to keep updated. All our meeting papers, Minutes and general information are published on the site. Throughout the year, preparation for a new, searchable, content-managed site continued, and this is expected to be launched in winter 2005/06.

The Secretariat, and the three organisations it supports, are not currently subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. However, the Members of all the organisations and the Senior Management Team are committed to working in an open and transparent way. The Board that runs the Secretariat made a commitment to adhere to the principles of the FOIA, as far as is practicable.

Support improved performance and capacity in Local Authorities by giving them high quality employment and technical advice and guidance; promote the common interests of Local Government as a major regional employer

All of the Secretariat work links to the activities of Local Authorities across the South West. The Secretariat can, therefore, play a pivotal role in bringing the Authorities together on issues they all face. In the last year we have facilitated discussions, debates and exchange of best practice on subjects as diverse as e-government, asylum seekers, local government finance, local public service agreements and efficiency.

Though the emphasis is often on sharing Best Practice or agreeing an approach, the SWLGA has also secured practical help for common problems. During 2004/05, a SWLGA working group and staff worked on a bid to secure a £300,000 grant for a one-stop-shop for Local Authorities. A successful bid means we will have the ability to provide instant on-line support on sustainability assessments: this is a comparatively new area of work for Local Authorities, but one that will have increasing prominence as various provisions within environmental legislation take effect.





As the regional voice of Local Authority and related employers in the region, SWPE monitors all developments likely to affect the people providing services to the region. Our staff play a significant part in recruiting senior staff and Chief Executives across the region, providing tailored interviewing packages and applying a range of industry-recognised tests to potential employees. We also provided guidance, support and technical information for Authorities undergoing restructuring of some or all of their key departments. Our expertise in all aspects of employment, training and performance management is also used on behalf of Elected Members carrying out appraisals of Chief Executives. Throughout the year we have played a major part in efforts to improve performance and increase capacity in Local Authorities across the region. During 2004/05, we helped over twenty Local Authorities bid for £4.6m of funding to support their capacity development and improvement plans.

Important issues such as pay and the ongoing development of the workforce are kept under constant review, so we can ensure that Local Government has a highly motivated, appropriately rewarded and skilled team of employees. We advise on job evaluation, salary scales for senior staff and the legal aspects of employment law.

The training services cover a wide range of topics from road maintenance to financial systems. Last year we assisted over 5,000 students through a variety of training and development programmes and we ran several seminars and conferences including the national Pensions Conference. We provided tailored and targeted training



for other Local Authority priorities: a training and development programme for Human Resources professionals; a Pay Roadshow; a Pay and Reward Seminar and a suite of training specifically designed to support Parish and Town Clerks. One of the key training and development initiatives this year was the Strategic Management Programme, designed to develop senior managers and help raise the capacity of Local Government to deliver well managed key services.

Trading Standards is one of the core areas of our work: 28% of students nationally became accredited Trading Standards Officers as a result of the SWPE training programme. This year SWPE developed a training package for the new Consumer Advice and Trading Standards qualifications due to be launched in the Autumn. Two other new SWPE courses were developed and accredited – the Management of Traveller and Gypsy Sites Award and the Professional Trainers Certificate. We worked with City and Guilds to develop and pilot a new Streetworks Re-instatement qualification; we were the only public sector training centre to be involved. So far, we have achieved a 100% success rate at NVQ level 2 and continue to look for new students at Level 1.

We also help promote the sharing of good practice by supporting and facilitating a number of officer networks, for example the Learning and Development Network.

For many years, we have also taken the lead in examining draft legislative regulations, corporate performance assessment and government initiatives to ensure the region's views are taken into account and to plan how we can best support South West Authorities. During 2004/05, SWPE staff have represented the region's views on a number of important issues, such as the proposed and potential changes to Pensions for Local Government workers. This extremely sensitive, but highly important issue is among a number of matters that SWPE staff will be dealing with in the next year.

Base all our activities on the principles of equality of opportunity, sustainable development, partnership, transparency and professionalism

The Assembly and South West Local Government Association continued to support the development of a regional Equality Body: Equality South West.

Internally, we continue to strive to achieve the highest standards in employment practice. We were awarded the Investors in People accreditation in February 2005, after a process of examination and discussion. An Assessor will be invited back in three year's time for re-accreditation. We recently introduced a comprehensive Appraisal system, in which training and development played an integral part. During 2004/05 we undertook a review of the system to make sure it met the needs of the Secretariat.

All staff at the Secretariat have been trained on race relations, so our commitment to equality is supported by best practice



South West Youth Parliament Members working on the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy with Jackie Longworth, the Chair of SWRA

Assembly Members, including the Chair, Jackie Longworth, met with Members of the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) to identify what they saw as their priorities for the region between 2006 - 2026, the period covered by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The activities took place during Autumn half term and gathered the opinions of young people on subjects such as population growth, the environment, economic prosperity, housing, transport and leisure. A variety of workshops led by the young people themselves created the opportunity to discuss the future of the region and make their recommendations to the Assembly.

Administration and Resources

The Secretariat supports three key functions carried out by three groups of Members:

The South West Regional Assembly exists to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of all who live and work in the region. It reviews wide ranging strategies at the regional level to provide an over-arching vision for the economic, social and environmental well being of the region. It also provides a voice for the region and develops the capacity for further action at the regional level. It is the Regional Planning Body and also has a remit to scrutinise the South West Regional Development Agency.

The South West Provincial Employers supports Local Authorities, Police and Fire Authorities and many other related employers with all aspects of their employer role. In addition they constitute the employers side of regional consultative and negotiating body, the South West Provincial Council and they are the regional arm of the National Employers Organisation. SWPE constantly seeks to promote the interests of Local Authority and related employers at a regional and national level by formulating and contributing to employer strategies on issues such as pay and workforce development.

The Learning and Development Service, which is part of SWPE aims to support all our members and partners in developing a highly skilled and motivated workforce. The Tormarton Training Centre provides very specialist workforce development skills vital to the provision of regional services.

The ***South West Branch of the Local Government Association*** exists to represent and promote the regional interests of the population of the South West, and the Local Authorities that serve them. It also acts as a host for joint working by Local Authorities on a range of issues such as Refugees and Asylum Seekers, e-Government and the overall improvement agenda.

Each organisation has separate member structures making key policy decisions but the staff and resources of the Secretariat are managed together by the South West Regional Board.

The whole Secretariat successfully achieved Investors in People accreditation for the first time. The new Customer Relationship Management system has enabled the Secretariat to make efficiency gains and deliver more effectively for Members. Once again external audit gave the finances a clean bill of health.

Finance 2004/05

The Secretariat supports the three Member organisations which receive financial support from a range of sources:

→ The Secretariat is accountable directly to its Members for expenditure. The accounts for 2004/05 were signed off in August 2005. External Auditors are appointed annually and the auditors for 2004/05 will be Robson Rhodes. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Home Office also audit their funding of the Secretariat.

Local Authorities continue to provide support for all three organisations. Non financial support is also offered by Authorities through officer support and access to facilities at no cost.

Total income from this source = £487,650

→ The ODPM has provided funding in support of the Strengthening Regional Accountability agenda since 2001. Though this funding has remained at a constant level since it was first introduced, it has enabled the Assembly to develop its activities.

Total income from this source = £600,000

→ The ODPM also provides funding in support of the Regional Planning function through a core level of funding plus an element of Planning Development Grant, which is agreed on an annual basis. As activity in this area has continued to increase the amount available has seen an increase.

Total income from this source = £1,625,128

→ The Home Office is providing funding for the SWLGA in support of the activity in support of the regional Asylum Seekers agenda.

Total income from this source = £143,266

→ Income from the Secretariat's activities in support of the region's Local Authorities continued to be generated through the provision of employment support and learning and development events. This "self generated" income continues to provide a vital underpinning for the SWPE role enabling investment in the development of new and innovative methods of helping build capacity within Member organisations.

Total income generated by SWPE = £1,490,733



SOUTH WEST
Regional Assembly

SOUTH WEST
Local Government Association

SOUTH WEST
Provincial Employers

South West Regional Secretariat
Dennett House
11 Middle Street
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 1SH

Tel: 01823 270101

Email: swra@southwest-ra.gov.uk

Web: www.southwest-ra.gov.uk