

# GWE Business West Briefing Note

## Regional Strategies & Leaders' Boards Policy Statement

### Regional Strategies & Leaders' Boards Policy Statement

The Government has recently published a new draft Policy Statement to replace existing policy on Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Economic Strategies with a single integrated strategy, as previously set out in the Review of Sub National Economy and Regeneration (2007). The main aim is to consult on the principles to be applied to the preparation of Regional Strategies and to seek views on the draft guidance on the preparation of Schemes for the establishment of Leaders' Boards.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill was introduced in Parliament in December 2008. Part 5 of the bill provides for the introduction of a regional strategy in each region in England. The Bill has completed most of the stages of its passage through both Houses and is expected to receive Royal Assent in autumn 2009.

### KEY MESSAGES

- Regions are vital in enabling decision making between the national and local level and to ensure long term, joined up policy, spanning local authority boundaries, which take into account wider costs and benefits for communities.
- The new single integrated regional strategies will replace existing strategies, will simplify processes ensuring alignment of decision making and implementation of economic, spatial and other priorities.
- They will set out an agreed vision for the region over a 15-20 year time horizon and identify key regional challenges, supported by a robust evidence base and a deliverable implementation plan.
- They will have a strong spatial dimension with a focus on how sustainable economic growth is delivered across the region through wider initiatives such as jobs, skills, regeneration and investment.
- The strategy must have a genuine and distinctive regional dimension and should not repeat national policy.
- Each region will have a scheme for the establishment and operation of a Leaders' Board that is streamlined, representative and authoritative

### MAIN PRINCIPLES, PURPOSE & SCOPE

The main principles of the new arrangements are to:

- Put in place an integrated strategic framework for the long term sustainable development of each of the English regions
- Secure a joined up approach to strategy making and governance within each region
- Align public and private sector investment in enterprise, skills, infrastructure, regeneration and communities around the delivery of a common set of agreed objectives
- Drive the development of low carbon and sustainable regional, sub regional and local economies and support them in responding to changing economic conditions
- Set out regionally and sub regionally specific policies, which focus on key priorities, translate national policies and provide a clear framework for local decision makers
- Streamline previous approaches to regional strategy by promoting robust project management and a more flexible approach to testing.

## GWE Business West Briefing Note Regional Strategies & Leaders' Boards Policy Statement

The strategies will include the minimum level of detail necessary to explain policy clearly but should not be site specific or address local issues. They will also identify sub regions having regard to existing partnerships, journey to work patterns and housing market areas.

### LINK TO NATIONAL & LOCAL PRIORITIES

Regional Strategies should be consistent with national policy but they may include policies that depart from or provide regional interpretation of national policy, subject to approval by the Secretary of State. Their role is to translate national policy and provide a framework for regional or sub regional delivery.

The regional strategy's policies and priorities should broadly cover the following aspects:

- Key regional and sub regional opportunities and challenges
- How sustainable economic growth can best be delivered
- How the region will meet its housing need and demand
- Proactive and innovative actions on climate change and energy
- Identification of priority areas for economic growth, regeneration and investment
- How the Strategy's plans have taken account of available infrastructure and its capacity and what additional infrastructure and services are needed to support the future development of the region
- Priorities for the protection, enhancement and access to the built and natural environment
- Priorities for widening access to culture, media and sport
- Other action that is essential to support the outcomes of the Strategy

It is expected that these Strategies will be reviewed every 5 years and will include active engagement with key stakeholders from across the region. The process for approval, following consultation, exploration of options and a sustainability appraisal, will be through an Examination in Public, with final approval by the Secretary of State.

### LEADERS' BOARDS

Local government, jointly with the Regional Development Agencies, will be responsible for revising, implementing and monitoring the Regional Strategy. Each authority is required by the Bill to prepare a scheme for the establishment and operation of a Leaders' Board for the region. These Boards will be streamlined, representative and authoritative bodies, comprised of elected members, which will enable local government to act collectively at the regional level to implement these Regional Strategies.

Further detail on how to respond and consultation questions can be found at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/regionalstrategiesconsultation>

Consultation closes 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009, email responses to:

[regionalstrategy@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:regionalstrategy@communities.gsi.gov.uk)