



South West Regional Secretariat
2006 -2007 Annual Report



WHAT IS THE SOUTH WEST REGIONAL SECRETARIAT?

The South West Regional Secretariat supports the work of three separate organisations, the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA), the South West Local Government Association (SWLGA) and the South West Provincial Employers (SWPE). The Secretariat is managed by the South West Regional Board. Each organisation has its own Member structures and makes its own policy decisions. The organisations are brought together by the board. This Annual Report provides a short summary of what each of the three organisations have achieved with support from the Secretariat in the past year.

THE VISION

The vision of the Secretariat working through Members is 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”

We are 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”

OUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

We have six overarching objectives in delivering our work:

- 1. Ensure a better awareness of the role of the three regional organisations (SWRA, SWPE, SWLGA) so that it is possible to act effectively as the leading voice on key regional issues, and influence and shape policy affecting the South West to ensure it positively responds to the region's aims.**
- 2. Working in partnership develop and implement policies that reflect the region's aspirations and are in line with the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) and keep the work of key regional players under review to encourage them to collectively and consistently work towards the achievement of the region's aims.**
- 3. Ensure that the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Housing Strategy support each other in delivering the region's aims and objectives as set out in the IRS and the statutory function is delivered efficiently and effectively.**
- 4. Encourage improved performance and capacity across the region through the provision of high quality advice and support, and the sharing of accessible information and knowledge on a range of relevant issues, between local authorities.**
- 5. Promote the common interests of Local Government as a major regional employer to ensure that Local Government and the regional organisations continue to provide the region with high quality employment opportunities and attract employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide first class services.**
- 6. Ensure that all the work carried out by the three member organisations is underpinned by the principles of equality of opportunity and sustainable development; is carried out in true partnership spirit openly and transparently and is delivered to a high professional standard by a workforce that is supported by good employment practice.**

SUMMARY ACHIEVEMENTS

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

- Two full scale Assembly debates on Energy and Climate Change. Signed the South West Declaration on Climate Change in March 2007 and began work on a Climate Change Action Plan;
- Prepared, published and publicised a delivery framework for the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), *now connecting!*;
- Delivered the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) which was submitted to Government by the Regional Planning Body in Spring 2006. A 12 week public consultation followed;
- Prepared for the Examination in Public (EiP) and began the process a Partial Review of Gypsy and Traveller pitch issues;
- Assessed Local Development Documents and strategic applications for general conformity with the RSS;
- Led lobbying activity and responded to expenditure priorities to ensure delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and Draft RSS through the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA), refreshing the advice on transport priorities;
- Endorsed development of 'Regional Agreement' approach to improve regional working and engagement with Central Government;
- Lobbied Government on the Greater Western/Cross Country rail franchise;
- Considered implications of the DfT Rail Planning Assessment;
- Engaged in the strategic delivery of structural funds through the South West Cohesion Framework to identify priority areas and drew up operational programmes;
- Set up the Regional Housing Group (RHG) to ensure delivery of the housing agenda, and a close alignment between housing, planning and transport;

- Developed an interim financial framework for capital housing spend in the region for the period 2008–2011 and completed a review of the Housing Forum;
- Focussed on the challenges to delivering Sustainable Communities in the South West and identify innovative solutions to deliver growth;
- Responded on future devolved decision-making and spending in the form of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007;
- Developed jointly with the South East a Prospectus for a Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) for submission to Government;
- Completed work on the Regional Strategic Review of Sustainable Energy and undertook a new review on the Quality of Employment Opportunity;
- Identified areas of improvement in scrutiny processes and established a new protocol with the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA);
- Adopted the Low Carbon Housing and Fuel Poverty strategy for early delivery; promoted waste minimisation and recycling and assisted the implementation of the Waste Strategy;
- Developed the Regional Compact, a framework to facilitate regional working;
- Undertook a comprehensive review of Assembly Membership for the Social, Economic & Environmental Partners;
- Developed, published and disseminated the Annual Progress report for the Regional Environment Strategy (RENVS) in July 2006;
- Delivered and disseminated a comprehensive Annual Monitoring Report in February 2007.

SOUTH WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

- Discussed and presented concerns regarding the Local Government White Paper in the South West to shape subsequent modifications to the Bill;
- Re-launched the LGA Reputations Campaign in the South West and influenced the Independent Commission on the LGA informed by two workshops: one around the Local Government Association's Reputation Campaign and the other on the Independent Commission;
- Supported Lift SW with Members taking a role on the Board and implemented the improvement strategy for the region, including £110k for 22 Local Authorities who successfully applied for support funding to help them with their aim of achieving Member Charter status;
- Supported the South West Customer Service Managers Network and South West e-Government Group (SWeGG);
- Supported the South West Overview and Scrutiny Network considering key health issues in the South West and innovative approaches to health scrutiny. SWLGA successfully bid for £10,000 of support for the establishment of a regional health scrutiny network;
- Supported regional events to encourage sign-up and implementation of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change as well as on energy efficiency;
- Submitted a response to the extended Lyons Inquiry considering the implications for Local Government of the Baker, Eddington and Leitch Reviews;
- Formulated a response to the forthcoming switchover to Digital TV and its implications for Local Authorities;
- Embedded the restructured Regional Strategic Coordination Board for Asylum-seekers and Refugees which oversees the implementation of Government policies within the region.

SOUTH WEST PROVINCIAL EMPLOYERS

- Supporting a number of Local Authorities with the recruitment of senior staff including Chief Executives;
- Supporting several Authorities during a re-structure of some or all of their senior managerial posts;
- Supporting Member panels during the appraisal of their Chief Executives;
- Advising Members on sensitive and confidential employment issues;
- Supporting over 5,000 learners in developing their skills and acquiring new knowledge;
- Implementation of the new qualification framework for the Trading Standards profession;
- The highest national scorers in the majority of the Trading Standards Institute's exam papers in the Diploma in Consumer Affairs programme, out-performing all other training providers in terms of exam results;
- Achievement of re-accreditation for the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and rated as an A-grade centre for Edexcel (Advanced Award in Management of Gypsy & Traveller Sites).
- Provided independent advice to local authority Members allowances panel and supported network on allowances.
- Provision of comprehensive HR advice service via telephone and e-mail on employment and human resource issues including employment conditions and rights and tribunal cases;
- Assisted Authorities in delivering enhanced performance by supporting them to implement workforce planning and capacity building initiatives;
- Continued support to Authorities across the South West with job evaluation processes to enable them to conduct and implement pay and grading reviews.

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Our Remit

The Assembly exists to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of all who live and work in the region.

It has four core functions:

- To review wide-ranging strategies at the regional level within the context of '*Just Connect!*', the first Integrated Regional Strategy to be agreed by the region
- As the Regional Planning Body (RPB) and the Regional Housing Body (RHB), to review and revise the existing Regional Planning Guidance and develop a new Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for 2006–2026 to set a regional framework for development
- To scrutinise the work of the SWRDA
- To be the 'Voice of the Region'

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Planning & Strategic Shaping

1. Draft Regional Spatial Strategy

- 1.1 The Regional Spatial Planning and Transport Group developed the role of the Assembly as Regional Planning Body for the South West to deliver the statutory document, the Draft RSS, which reflects a new approach to planning for the South West and will influence how we live, work and travel in the region for the next 20 years. The overall purpose of the plan is to manage the nature, location, scope and pace of development in the region from 2006 to 2026, in the interests of current and future residents.

- 1.2 Following the completion of the Draft RSS which was signed off by the full Assembly in April 2006, further work was undertaken to revise household projection numbers, analyse scenarios to deliver carbon neutrality, undertake sustainability analysis and tourism policies. A comprehensive 12 week public consultation followed during the summer which enabled anyone with an interest in the region's future development to comment on the document. During the consultation, seven briefings were held attended by 400 people.
- 1.3 Much of the past year has been spent preparing for the Examination in Public (EiP) of selected matters arising from the submitted representations on the Draft RSS which will be heard in public before an Independent Panel appointed by the Secretary of State between 17 April and 6 July 2007. Preparation for the EiP included supporting the delivery of the four RSS overarching sustainability principles, climate change, eco-footprint, natural resources and sustainable communities.

Julian Johnson, Chair of Regional Spatial Planning & Transport Group, said:

“Engaging the region in the debate was crucial to the development of the Draft RSS. Right through the whole process, the Assembly involved hundreds of partners and stakeholders, and invited a wide range of views to inform the debate. This way, the Assembly was able to consult the whole region in a timely manner and not at the end.”

2. Partial Review of Gypsies and Travellers

- 2.1 In December 2006, the Regional Assembly issued a request for formal advice from Strategic Authorities (County Councils, Unitary Authorities and National Park Authorities) on district level pitch numbers based on Local Authority Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments. Advice is being submitted as part of a partial review of the Draft RSS. The advice will help to inform a revised RSS policy, setting out the number of additional pitches required for each Local Planning Authority in the region for the period 2006-2011.

3. Conformity

- 3.1 Work continued as a statutory planning consultee via the Conformity Panel assessing Local Development Documents and strategic applications for general conformity with the RSS;

4. Annual Monitoring Report

- 4.1 The comprehensive annual report which evaluates the performance of Regional Planning Guidance 10 determining the extent to which the policies are being implemented and identifying areas where action is needed to ensure delivery of objectives stays on track, was signed off, delivered and disseminated in February 2007.

Integration

5. The Integrated Regional Strategy

- 5.1 The delivery plan for the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), *now connecting!*, was finalised and published. IRS-related practical delivery in 2006/7 has included:
- The launch of the IRS website, www.justconnect-sw.co.uk in November 2006. By helping us know more about each other, what we do and how we work together, www.justconnect-sw.co.uk can identify and assist in developing integrated working and solutions;
 - Agreement on a set of regional commitments to progress projects profiling integrated working in the South West, informed by a successful 'speed-dating' event held in June 2006;
 - Research into best practice partnership working in the South West, to form part of an IRS Progress Report due to be published in the Autumn, which will also include statistical analysis of progress towards achieving key regional aims;
 - With the SWRDA, consultation on and drafting of regional advice for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, offering numerous proposals to improve how money is spent in the region, seeking a better regional agreement with government;
 - With the SWLGA, co-ordination of technical peer reviews in waste management and transport. These events have allowed senior Local Authority officers an opportunity to meet, share best practice, critically review each others work and develop common positions on matters of joint concern.

6. The Revised Regional Economic Strategy for 2006-2015

- 6.1 The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) was launched by the SWRDA at the end of May 2006. The Assembly has worked closely with partners to ensure that the emphasis is on delivery and has supported the SWRDA in engaging with the region through 'Great South West Debates' on key economic issues to inform the next RES. These include living within environmental limits to economic growth, globalisation, energy, demographic change and regional leadership.

Housing

7. South West Regional Housing Body

- 7.1 The South West Regional Assembly became the South West Housing Body (SWHB) in September 2006. This followed the 2004 Barker Review of Housing Supply, which called for Regional Housing and Regional Planning Bodies to be merged. This change brings housing delivery closer to the management of growth in the region, as set out in the Draft RSS and much of the year has concentrated on preparing and embedding the new arrangements. The Assembly is advised in its role by a Member Group, the Regional Housing Group (RHG). This comprises seven Assembly members and one representative from each of seven external housing partners. RHG is supported by an officer Working Group, and is further supported by the Regional Housing Forum, a large group of stakeholders which itself was reviewed, improved and re-launched last year.

8. Regional Housing Strategy

- 8.1 A key function of the SWHB is to oversee and review the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS). The current Strategy was published in 2005, and sets out three strategic aims:
- Improving the balance of housing markets;
 - Achieving good quality homes;
 - Supporting sustainable communities.
- 8.2 During the year the Assembly compiled a monitoring and implementation report analysing the RHS's aims and outcomes. We believe we were the first region in the country to do so. The report looked at the following areas:

- Implementation - progress in implementing the RHS and its actions;
- Finance - allocations, spend and outputs from the RHP;
- Outcome targets - progress towards targets in the RHS measured using relevant indicators.

9. Regional Housing Spend

- 9.1 The main task for the SWHB in the next year will be to advise the Government on spending priorities for the Regional Housing Spend for 2008-11. The funding is distributed across various funding elements including the Housing Corporation's National Affordable Housing Programme; work towards the Decent Homes Standard in Local Authority stock; Private Sector Renewal, Mixed Communities, Gypsy and Traveller Site Grants, and a proposed Capacity Fund. Members have considered how the spend should be divided up between the elements and will make recommendations to Government in June 2007. Recommendations will be revised following the Comprehensive Spending Review in Autumn 2007, when the total amount of funding for housing in the region is expected to be announced.

10. Lobbying

- 10.1 The Assembly campaigned against the loss of £3million from its private sector renewal budget, contacting MPs, Members of the House of Lords, Local Authorities and the Minister. The region received less money from Government than expected and as a result some of the most vulnerable in society will have to wait longer for their homes to be brought up to a decent standard.
- 10.2 The Chief Executive National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU) Kevin Williamson visited in February and attended a special Member session to discuss issues around affordable housing and future forecasting. The NHPAU was set up by the Government last year to provide independent advice on improving housing affordability. The region emphasised its willingness to work closely with the NHPAU as its work develops in the coming year.

11. Publishing

- 11.1 Housing newsletters have been published quarterly, a new corporate look agreed, the website transfer completed and information completely revamped, expanded and updated, to be further refined.

Sustainable Development

12. Climate Change

- Following Assembly debates in October 2006 and March 2007, the South West Declaration on Climate Change (based on the Nottingham Declaration) was signed in March 2007 by the full Assembly, we are now committed to developing a **Climate Change Action Plan** by Spring 2008;
- Members have agreed Assembly responses on draft supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) and other consultations including Code for Sustainable Homes and Building a Greener Future.

Ben Bradshaw MP said:

"I was delighted to able to take part in the Regional Assembly debate on climate change, and witness the signing of the South West's Declaration on Climate Change. Through joint working and developing ambitious policy, the Assembly has already taken bold steps in leading the region in tackling this major issue."

13. The revision of the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF)

- Working closely with a key regional stakeholder Sustainability South West to ensure as a toolkit complements the IRS.

13.1 A report was commissioned a short report from Land Use Consultants on the use of a 'Decision Making Framework', as recommended by the Strategic Sustainability Assessment.

14. Other Initiatives

- Adopting the low carbon housing and fuel poverty strategy for early delivery;
- Promoted waste minimisation/recycling to assist the implementation of the Regional Waste Strategy;
- Working to produce a regional sustainable construction and design checklist for use with developments of 10 houses or more.

Lobbying

15. Executive and Leaders led lobbying activity to ensure the region received a fair share of resources:

- **Regional Funding Allocation (RFA):** Responding to the invitation from Ministers to demonstrate where priorities for expenditure needed to be focussed to ensure effective delivery of the RES and Draft RSS through the RFA by refreshing the advice to Government on where investment money should go on transport priorities over the next 10 years to improve future public spending decisions. Results show that 46% of transport investment in the South West is allocated for public transport schemes;
- **Greater Bristol Bus Network:** This is one of the projects identified as one of the region's major transport priorities was a multi-million pound scheme to develop a network of 10 bus corridors and serve 40 improved bus routes across the sub-region;
- **Crossrail:** In July, Assembly Members made the South West's case for a rethink to protect vital rail services in the South West to a Government Select Committee regarding the Crossrail Bill. The project is designed to improve rail links in and around London, but is expected to adversely affect journeys from the South West into Reading and Paddington for about six years while construction is underway. While the Assembly welcomes the underlying principle of the Crossrail project, it is determined to ensure that it is developed in a way that does not threaten the long-term interests of the South West;
- **Meeting with Transport Minister, Tom Harris MP:** The Assembly voiced concerns over changes to the region's rail service which threaten links to the rest of the country, when Members met with the Department for Transport in Westminster. The meeting saw Assembly Members spell out the region's deep concerns regarding the cross-country rail franchise and timetable changes. The Assembly's lobbying for South West transport needs has continued, with the Minister visiting the region for further talks with the Assembly on the needs of the region.
- **South West Cohesion Group:** This has been advising on the strategic delivery of Structural Funds to the region through the South West Cohesion Framework which was established in April 2006 as a regional document demonstrating how European policy and funding can help to deliver regional priorities and similarly how the region can help deliver the EU Lisbon and Gothenburg competitiveness and sustainability agendas. The next generation of Structural Fund Programmes is being developed in the UK and will run for seven years, from 2007 to 2013. The South West will benefit from two Programmes – a Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Convergence Programme and a South West Competitiveness and Employment Programme. The South West is also eligible for the Territorial Co-operation Programme (which replaces the INTERREG 3 programme). Exact funding figures have been announced by Government in the National Strategic Reference Framework, confirming that the region will receive about 540 million pounds for the Convergence and Competitiveness funding programmes.

The Assembly has been involved in partnership groups which have been working on key thematic areas to identify priority areas where European policy can best support established and emerging regional aims and objectives as identified in the IRS, the RES and the RSS. It has been closely involved in drawing up the Operational Programmes for funding.

Consultation & Engagement

16. Working together to get the best for the region

- **The ‘Regional Agreement’:** Whereby the Chair, Leaders and Executive have endorsed development of approach to improve regional working and engagement with Central Government;
- **The Comprehensive Spending Review:** By working closely with the SWRDA, responded to the discussion on future devolved decision-making and spending in the form of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007;
- **With Hard to Reach groups:** Such as the Youth Parliament Members at their employment event ‘All Work and Low Pay’ in October 2006 and other people to ensure engagement on regional issues; a series of focus groups with Age Concern to help identify potential RSS issues affecting older people;

Sharon Adams, Regional Youth Democracy Worker said:

“The partnership between UK Youth Parliament and the South West Regional Assembly gives young people a real voice to influence policy and decision making in the region. It is these young people who will experience the impact of the decisions we make today, so getting their views and ideas now through joint projects such as the workshop on employment is absolutely vital.”

- **With South West Regional Observatory:** Annual Conference on demographic ageing, exploring the evidence base and impacts on RSS policy;

- **On the Draft RSS:** Conducted an equalities proofing exercise of the with regional representatives of all six equalities strands and Equality South West to help ensure issues embedded within Draft RSS;
- **On the Assembly Chairman's Regional Tour:** Cllr Jill Shortland, Assembly Chairman, undertook a regional tour visiting a number of other regions to establish how they work and to learn from and share good practice. This was part of an initiative for Leaders and Executive to take a more active role in the region by attending regional briefing events and undertaking fact finding visits to gain an increased understanding of issues and concerns across the region.
- **With the Mayor of London:** Assembly Chairman Cllr Jill Shortland was one of the key speakers at the English Regions Network (ERN) Annual Conference in March 2007 entitled 'The Regional Agenda: Future of Regionalism'. Guest speaker on day one of the two day conference was Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone.

Supporting

17. The region's key challenges:

- Contributed to Sustainability South West's annual Regional to Local Conference, focussing on Sustainable Communities;
- Jointly delivered an event for South West Climate Change Impact Partnership, based on the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change;
- Worked with Future Foundations to progress additional study on zero-carbon developments in the region and to develop a South West Sustainability checklist for developments;
- Participated in a Regional Faith Event in Taunton in January 2007 about Faith and Climate Change.

Collaborating & Influencing

- 18. Carbon Neutral Policy:** Following the publication of the Draft RSS, Central Government adopted the Assembly position of encouraging 'zero-carbon' homes, by making new builds exempt from stamp duty, and consulting on changes in national planning policy and building regulations as a means of reducing the regional footprint. This

was reflected in some parts of the pre-Budget report and the consultation papers on zero-carbon planning policy published on 13 December 2006.

19. **The Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF):** This is whereby the Regional Assemblies and Development Agencies in the South West and South East of England have been working together to create proposals which would give each region the power to pay for essential services. This will help to maintain quality of life as planned housing development takes place, by making sure. It would include providing facilities such as schools, transport, power and water before homes are built, paid for by RIFs.
20. **Regional Compact:** Working with South West partners to develop its capacity for effective partnership working in the form of a Regional Compact which is a document of agreed principles, aimed at creating “a framework for strong and effective relationships between the voluntary and community and public sector in the South West” for mutual advantage and community gain. Principles relate to: effective, inclusive and transparent consultation in policy development processes; the promotion of equal opportunities; best practice partnership working; promoting social inclusion, and effective funding relationships. The South West Regional Compact Partnership received a commendation in the 2006 awards from the national Compact Commission for its excellent joint work on “linking the Regional Compact with the Regional Economic Strategy”.

Scrutiny

Scrutinising the work of the SWRDA by:

21. **Completing the Strategic Review on Sustainable Energy** which sparked an Assembly-wide debate on energy issues. The Panel will remain engaged with this agenda through updates from the emerging Climate Change Task and Finish Group and on-going monitoring of the SWRDA’s commitments including the ‘one year on’ follow-up to the review.
22. **Undertook a Regional Strategic Review on Quality of Employment Opportunity.** This involved extensive stakeholder consultations, including a questionnaire, workshop, focus groups and a South West Youth Parliament event, and culminating in bilateral discussions with the SWRDA in January 2007. The final report and recommendations will be published in July 2007. Recommendations are divided into three strands:
 - On the core to the role and activities of the SWRDA;

- Acknowledgement of the responsibility of partner organisations;
- On other issues identified during the course of the review.

Jane Henderson, Chief Executive of the South West Regional Development Agency, said,

“How valuable the Quality of Employment Opportunity Review had been and how it had enabled an examination at some of the very difficult issues facing the region’s workforce and to take stock of our investments to drive and improve the capability and capacity in key sectors. This review enabled us to see through a complicated web of organisational responsibilities and get the support of Assembly Members to raise our profile in key areas such as skills.”

23. Scrutiny Protocol

23.1 The Assembly and SWRDA agreed a new protocol for the 2006-09 period following an independent review of scrutiny activity undertaken by ARUP Consultants. New developments to the scrutiny process in the South West include the appointment of a lead SWRDA board member on scrutiny to undertake liaison meetings with the chair of the scrutiny panel, and reporting of each report to the full SWRDA board. The Assembly is also committed to doing more follow up of recommendations arising out of strategic reviews that are of direct relevance to Assembly activity.

24. Health scrutiny (2006/07)

24.1 The Assembly Secretariat played a key role in the establishment of the South West Health Scrutiny Network (SWHSN), a forum for Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) officers and Members from the Local Authorities in the South West to discuss key issues and share best practice. With support from the Secretariat, the SWHSN submitted a successful bid to CfPS for £10,000 funding. To date, this funding has supported the expansion of a sub-regional Devon/Cornwall HOSC conference to HOSC officers and members from across the entire region.

Reviewing

25. Review of Assembly Membership for the Social, Economic & Environmental Partners

25.1 In early 2007, the Assembly launched a comprehensive review of their membership, to ensure the SEEP Membership continues to be fully representative of the South West region. Views from across the region were sought during a 12 week consultation period with 487 questionnaires sent out to regional organisations, interest groups, current SEEP Members, their Nominating Bodies and all 51 Local Authorities in the South West. In addition it was available online for any interested parties to fill out. The Secretariat also sought information from the other Regional Assemblies to see how SEEPs are organised and to draw upon good practice. Responses will be evaluated during May with recommendations going to the Assembly in July 2007.

Looking to the Year Ahead

- Following the Examination in Public, delivering the new policy requirements of the Draft RSS;
- Responding to the Climate Change Bill and producing an South West Climate Change Action Plan by 2008;
- Continuing the evolving role of champion of Sustainable Development;
- Continuing to support the SWRDA with the work on the recycle market;
- Promote renewable energy provision with Regen SW to meet targets for 2010;
- Ensuring the balance between public transport and road schemes will work in line with long term goals in the Draft RSS;
- Evaluating Consultants advice and determining which future Scrutiny topics should be selected to ensure they are focussed, relevant and supported by stakeholders;
- Getting the Regional Housing Strategy review underway, to be finalised following publication of the RSS;
- Input to Comprehensive Spending Review and Financial Framework finalised for 2008-11;
- Complete a second Monitoring Report;
- Completion of Quality of Employment Opportunity Report and sign-off from the Assembly;
- Evaluation of questionnaire responses and completion of the SEEP Review of Membership;
- Undertake two reviews comprising one shorter, focussed scrutiny on the SWRDA's engagement in the Local Area Agreement 4th Block and a second broader Regional Strategic Review;
- Development of accountability arrangements that explore delivery of the Strategic Health Authority's policies across the region;
- Develop criteria and a robust, transparent process for topic selection;
- Ongoing monitoring and review of progress on recommendations.

SOUTH WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Our Remit

SWLGA 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.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Responding to:

- **Local Government White Paper:** This was discussed and concerns for the South West were presented which helped to shape subsequent modifications to the Bill;
- **Lyons Inquiry:** A response to the extended inquiry considering the implications for Local Government of the Barker, Eddington and Leitch Reviews was submitted which led to a further opportunity for South West Members to participate in debates at round table discussions on the Lyons Inquiry;
- **Digital TV:** The implications of the forthcoming switchover to Digital TV for Local Authorities were discussed and a regional network of Local Authority officers established to help with roll out.

Supporting Best Practice:

- **Lift SW:** Members took a role on the Board and have been involved in developing and implementing the improvement strategy for the region. 22 Local Authorities have successfully applied for £110,000 of support funding to help them with their aim of achieving Member Charter status.

Andrew Pate, Chief Executive of West Wiltshire District Council said:

“We (West Wiltshire) are moving towards our aim of achieving Member Charter status thanks to advice and guidance from SWPE, in accessing Lift SW funding secured through the SWLGA.”

- **A Regional Waste ‘Refresh’:** This was prepared by working with Local Authorities to facilitate a Peer Review of local waste plans to ensure they are mutually supportive and have a consistent evidence base. Authorities are encouraged to share knowledge and experiences, as well as discussing the potential for joint working.

George Batten, Director of Environmental Services, Wiltshire County Council said:

“A really useful sharing of ambitions and experiences conducted in an open, supportive but challenging forum. All of us who attended left the sessions learning something that will help shape our own authority’s future waste plans. The whole Review process demonstrates what the SWLGA does best – pulling together the main players in the Region to learn from each other.”

- **Survey of Member Allowances:** This was conducted to develop a core database of regional information to help Member Allowance Panels determine their recommendations to Local Authorities. The results also helped inform the response to the Commission announced in the Local Government White Paper, which is reviewing incentives and barriers to councillor participation.

Influencing:

- **LGA Reputations Campaign:** This was re-launched in the South West and the number of Councils signed up to the initiative increased from eight to twenty four. The challenges involved in implementing the reputation campaign were also discussed in an interactive workshop.
- **The Independent Commission on the LGA:** A special meeting for prominent Members and officers working in Local Government in the South West was held to consider the review of the role of the LGA and its relationships with Member organisations. Members made a wide range of suggestions on how the LGA could strengthen its national influence as well as its engagement with regional LGAs and Member Authorities. Following the meeting, the Leaders of SWLGA agreed a detailed submission to the commission.
- **The Home Office Immigration Minister:** Cllr Roger Hutchinson from the SWLGA led the South West delegation to meet Liam Byrne MP when he visited the region to discuss Migration and Asylum Seeker issues of particular concern to Local Authorities.

Supporting:

- **South West Customer Service Managers Network and South West e-Government Group (SWeGG):** This was supported; Local Authority Customer Service Managers from all over the region have been taking part in a Customer Service Network for the South West. Delegates attending meetings have learnt from each other and shared ideas on how Local Authorities can increase their customers' satisfaction and deliver efficiently, as well as improving access to services. SWeGG continued to meet to enable local Government officers to share best practice and emerging information on improving accessibility. The remit of both groups has been reviewed to examine their inter-relationships and ensure they remain fit for purpose;
- **South West Overview and Scrutiny Network:** Considered at its most recent meeting key health issues in the South West and innovative approaches to health scrutiny. SWLGA successfully bid for £10,000 of support for the establishment of a Regional Health Scrutiny Network;
- **Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change:** An event was held to encourage sign up and implementation of the Declaration - a separate event looked at the role of local authorities in energy efficiency;
- **Migrant Workers:** Work developed in order to take a multi-agency approach to in the South West which included conducting a comprehensive survey of Local Authority awareness and activity around the issue and subsequently supporting a major regional conference on Migrant Workers in the Rural South West. SWLGA has also been taking forward with regional stakeholders the development of a multi-agency approach towards migration.

Implementing

- **Asylum-Seekers & Refugees:** continued supporting the Regional Strategic Co-ordination Board for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees which oversees the implementation of Government policies within the region.

Communicating

- **Regular e-Bulletins:** These were provided to Local Authorities across the South West.

- **2012 Olympics:** The Regional Secretariat has been involved as a partner in the South West England Advisory Board for the 2012 Games which has helped develop a legacy strategy for the Olympics in the South West and has publicised the opportunities for the South West to capitalise on the games. The South West is the only region outside London holding an event but there are also wide range of opportunities for training camps, tourism, business development, public health and community well-being.
- **Local Authority Chief Executives Regional Meetings:** Discussed other topics such as the appointment of joint directors for public health, the potential for greater co-operation on concessionary fares, emergency planning, the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), Regional ICT and Culture Strategies, CLG Business Improvement Package and the implications of the Local Government White Paper.

Looking to the Year Ahead:

- Continue to respond to and lobby on topical issues promptly and positively;
- Further develop Lift SW and encourage other local authorities to achieve Member Charter status;
- To continue to work with the SWRA to tackle issues of waste and affordable housing;
- Take forward the work on providing a regional lead on a multi-agency approach to migrant workers and to develop a new Board structure to provide for both migrant workers and asylum-seekers and refugees;
- Liaise with the national LGA to share and link with national policies and developments and respond appropriately;
- Continue to support performance and efficiency improvements and sharing of good practice between Local Authorities;
- Build on successes this year to raise the profile of the SWLGA and to attract funding.

SOUTH WEST PROVINCIAL EMPLOYERS

Our Remit

SWPE supports Local Authorities, Police and Fire Authorities and many other related organisations with all aspects of their employer role. In addition, SWPE constitute the employers side of the regional consultative and negotiating body – the South West Provincial Council, and are the regional arm of the National Employers Organisation, Local Government Employers (LGE). 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 specialist workforce development skills vital to the provision of highway-related services.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Supporting On Employment Issues:

1. Recruitment

- 1.1 We have assisted Local Authorities to recruit senior staff including Chief Executives as well as providing support to Members panels conducting Chief Executive appraisals. We have provided support and advice on a range of other sensitive and confidential employment issues including employment conditions and rights and employment tribunal cases. We have also provided advice during restructuring of senior management posts and helped in delivering enhanced performance by supporting Local Authorities to implement workforce planning and capacity building initiatives. A host of organisations across the South West have been given support and advice on job evaluation processes to enable them to conduct and implement pay and grading reviews.

2. Member Development

- 2.1 We have played a key part in the design and launch of the South West Charter for Member Development which

aims to help Councils adopt a structured approach to councillor development and to build elected Member capacity. The Charter is a statement of a Council's commitment to developing and supporting its elected councillors and funding has been made available to 23 Local Authorities that are committed to working towards it. Most regions now have their own charters.

Training in Highway Services:

3. **Service Provision:** Tormarton Training Centre continues to be one of the key providers to the highway industry in the UK. In the twelve months ending March 2007, Tormarton Training Centre provided 960 days training and assessment across our customer base. The total number of delegates that attended training or assessments events was approximately 3,272.

4. **Customer Base**
 - 4.1 Our customer base includes the majority of local authorities in the South West region. We also provide our services to three other Local Authorities outside the South West region; Birmingham City Council, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Slough District Council. We also provide our services to other public sector clients including the Environment Agency, the Highways Agency and the Forestry Commission.
 - 4.2 Tormarton also continues to provide services to major private sector clients within the industry that include Amey Mouchel Joint Venture, WS Atkins, Balfour Beatty Infrastructure Services, and InterRoute.

5. **Re-accreditations**
 - Tormarton underwent their annual visit from BSI in October 2006 and was successful in gaining re-accreditation.
 - Tormarton is the only highways training provider to hold accreditation under ISO 9001/2000 for design and delivery of highway maintenance training and assessment activities.

6. City & Guilds Accredited Courses

- Tormarton continues to provide training and assessment under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 for Operatives and Supervisors.
- NVQ Level 1 and 2 qualifications in Highway Maintenance and Civil Engineering are continuing to be offered under City & Guilds.
- Winter Service V.Q. continues to be in demand from our customer base to provide training and assessment for Winter Service providers.

7. Lantra Awards Accreditation

- 7.1 We continue to offer Sector 12 schemes in traffic management to our entire customer base. We provide high speed traffic management training and assessment for major term maintenance contractors on the motorway and trunk road network.
- 7.2 Urban and rural traffic management training and assessment is provided to local authorities and their term maintenance contractors.

8. WAMITAB Awards Accreditation

- 8.1 Tormarton continues to be an approved assessment centre to the Waste Management Training and Advisory Board, providing NVQ Level 1 to 4 for the Waste Management industry across the South and South West of England.

9. New Products and Services

- 9.1 Following the introduction of the Traffic Management Bill and the long awaited revised Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual, Tormarton has designed and delivered various new products:
- Incident Support training and Emergency Traffic Management Development;

- The training was undertaken for the Balfour Beatty Group in Area 2, 3 and 4. This covers the area between the Bristol Channel and the Kent coast and below the M4 corridor;
- Tormarton was the first organisation to develop Incident Support training;
- We have also designed and delivered a course on the revised traffic signs manual. One of our major customers for this product has been Somerset County Council.

Improving Learning and Development Services:

10. Tailored Courses & Events

- Primarily provided to regional clients including Local Authorities from the Isles of Scilly to Scotland to develop their skills and acquire new knowledge;
- Designed and delivered on a wide range of topics available in different formats, to meet differing needs, from awareness-raising workshops, discussion forums, networking opportunities, bespoke events to structured learning sessions;
- Many of our courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications;
- We offer the latest training and development programmes for staff working in Animal Health and Welfare, a Safety Conference and a National Pensions Conference.

11. Accredited Qualifications

- Designed a Level 3 BTEC Advanced Award for Local Government Member Champions in partnership with Bath & North East Somerset Council. The South West is the first region in the UK to offer a qualification for aspiring Member Champions which will be available from September 2007 in a variety of delivery formats. The concept behind the qualification is to help Councillors to connect their community to their Council. Accreditation for the course has been obtained from Edexcel and it has received a great deal of interest such that it is has been nominated for the Municipal Journal Training Awards;

- Produced, in conjunction with Bath & North East Somerset Council, a comprehensive Member Champions Guidance and Advice book written as a practical, document to develop and improve local guidance for the benefit of Member Champions which has been submitted for a national communication award;

CLlr Sarah Bevan, Bath & North East Somerset Council:

"I have found actively participating in the Champion project for the South West a very enlightening experience and one which I hope will lead the way for future Champions to fulfil their role with confidence."

- Managing the organisation of a Member Champions conference to be held in July 2007;
- Started the process of agreeing the transfer of a Level 4 Professional Award in Local Governance from Bristol City Council which will also be accredited by Edexcel;
- Both the qualifications will be offered to corresponding regional organisations and there has already been interest, particularly from the South East and North West regions. The qualifications are remotely assessed and will make full use of the e-portfolio;
- Retaining our accreditation as an A-grade centre for Edexcel for the delivery of the Advanced Award in Management of Gypsy & Traveller Sites with a steadily rising achievement rate for people gaining the qualification;
- Building on the success of the newly established training course announced last year, in the Diploma for Consumer Affairs Trading Standards, we trained 355 delegates in 25 separate events;
- Gained accreditation from an additional awarding body, ASET, and planning to introduce a number of their qualifications in the coming year;
- Building on the success of the newly established training course announced last year, in the Diploma for Consumer Affairs Trading Standards, we trained 355 delegates towards achieving professional qualifications in 25 separate events.

12. Support Regional Networks

- 12.1 Attending and supporting a number of regional networks: Member Support Officers, Member Development Group, Member Allowances (now the responsibility of SWLGA), L&D Network, Safety Advisers Panel. A possible Member Charter Support Group is being explored.

13. Teaching Observation Training at Lufton College

- 13.1 Staff from SWPE attended a training day at Lufton College, Yeovil - a MENCAP College for young adult students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. The Learning & Development Team are introducing improvements to their Quality Assurance process by introducing a teaching observation cycle that is based upon Ofsted and ALi guidelines. Lufton College has been recognised by Ofsted as having good observation processes in place that support tutors to improve their teaching and learning strategies. SWPE made a donation of £250 which will be used by the College to install broadband for students in their community houses.

Marketing

New branding scheme

- Introduced for teaching and learning documents to enable recognition of SWPE materials and the production of professional promotional literature by the Learning & Development team. The suite of literature includes an Annual Wall Planner highlighting the diversity and range of our courses, individual category leaflets, specific event outlines (available electronically), an email template and a house-style for teaching and learning material such as presentations and handouts;
- Timely distribution of the annual marketing literature to enable recipients to use it for planning training needs before the end of the budgetary year and for forthcoming requirements.

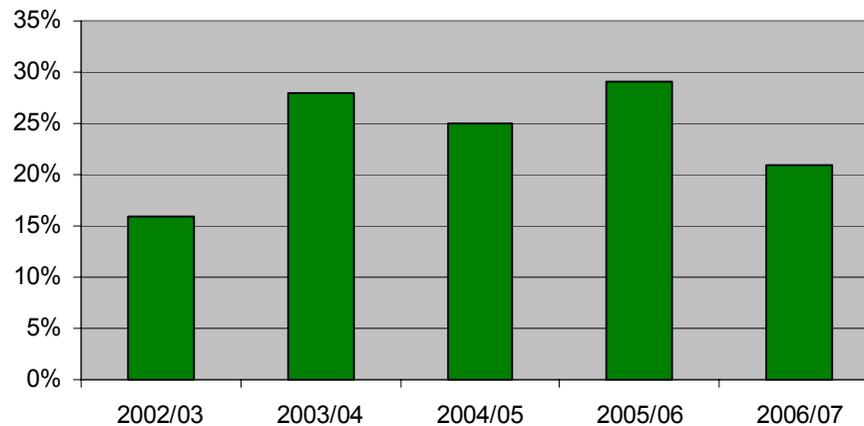
How Have We Done?

15. Event Organisation

Event Category	No delegates per category	% of total delegates	No events per category	% of total events
Personal Development	124	9%	23	18%
Local Government	94	7%	8	6%
Housing	19	1%	7	6%
Gypsies & Travellers	30	2%	3	2%
Food	31	2%	2	2%
Training & Assessment	43	3%	6	5%
Health & Safety	44	3%	2	2%
Legal & Enforcement	95	7%	13	10%
Management & Business Planning	82	6%	10	8%
Finance	180	13%	6	5%
Animal Health & Welfare	331	23%	22	17%
DCATS	355	25%	25	20%
Total	1428		127	
In-house events	44			

16. Event Cancellation

Cancellation rate has been reduced from 29% to 21%:



17. Market Share

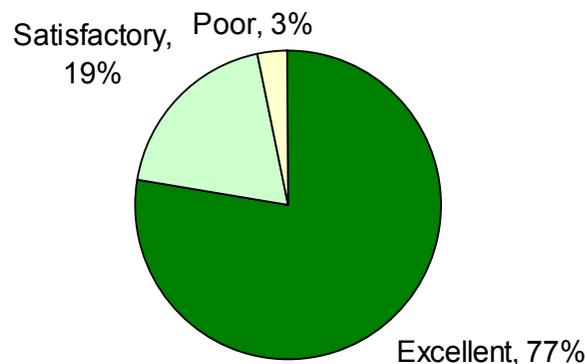
17.1 In 2005/06, we delivered training to 48 of the 51 South West Local Authorities (94%) and 144 of the 410 Local Authorities nationally (35%).

17.2 In 2006/07, we delivered training to 46 of the 51 South West Local Authorities (90%) and 126 of the 410 Local Authorities nationally (30%). In addition to this, we delivered training to 52 national organisations including DEFRA, UCAS, Regional Pension Funds, Ministry of Defence, Environment Agency, Fire & Rescue Service, Institute of Payroll & Pensions Managers, HM Revenue & Customs, Community First, Meat Hygiene Service.

18. What do our Customers Think?

Customer Course Evaluations

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Poor
Animal Health	87%	12%	1%
Legal & Enforcement	87%	12%	1%
Training & Assessment	86%	12%	2%
Personal Development	85%	11%	2%
Management & Business	84%	15%	1%
Local Government	80%	16%	4%
Health & Safety	79%	17%	1%
Housing	73%	25%	1%
Gypsies & Travellers	69%	25%	3%
Food	68%	26%	5%
Finance	61%	35%	4%
Trading Standards	59%	25%	10%



Comments made by course delegates:

“An excellent course. Very informative and presented by a variety of speakers with genuine enthusiasm for the subject.”

“Well delivered course on a very difficult subject. Thanks.”

“One of the most informative, pleasurable courses I have attended. Well done.”

19. Conclusion

The wide range of our courses, our enrolment and examination rates and results, the feedback from customers all confirm us as one of the top training providers in the country.

Looking to the Year Ahead:

- Continue to provide assistance with the recruitment, appraisal and restructuring of senior Local Authority staff;
- Continue to support delivery of enhanced performance by advising on workforce planning and capacity building;
- Continue to support Local Authorities with job evaluation processes to enable the conducting and implementing of pay and grading reviews;
- Continue to provide tailored events, accredited and other courses to clients nationwide;
- Introduce and embed the Incident Support and Emergency Traffic Management Development training courses;
- Develop the Lantra Sector Schemes Qualification for Lead Traffic Management Operatives Qualification which will be available in October 2007;
- Start to develop a City & Guilds Winter vehicle service qualification ready for October 2008;
- Develop two new courses for traffic engineers and environmental officers on the Highways Agency network;
- Explore the viability of introducing a new Animal Health qualification;
- Introduce Assessors Award (A1) and Verifiers Award (V1);
- Launch Regional and National Member Champions qualification and Local Governance qualification;
- Organise a Members Champions Conference in July;
- Increase the use of online assessment through multiple-choice tests;
- Establish the e-portfolio as an assessment method;
- Improve achievement rate for Gypsies & Travellers Award;
- Explore strategies for tutor succession planning;
- Develop further the marketing strategy to improve understanding of customer needs, market positioning, target audience and methods of communicating with new and existing customers;
- Sustain the pass rate on DCATS programme;
- Support and increase the number of Local Authorities working towards Charter status;
- Conduct assessments on Local Authorities' submissions for Charter status;
- Improve effectiveness by focusing the objectives of the two Member Support Networks;
- Continue to provide support to the various Regional networks;
- Introduce improvements to their Quality Assurance process by introducing a teaching observation cycle that is based upon Ofsted and ALi guidelines.

FINANCE 2006/07

The Secretariat is accountable directly to its Members for expenditure. The accounts for 2006/07 were signed off in June. External auditors are appointed annually and the auditors for 2006/07 will be Robson Rhodes. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Home Office also audit their funding of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat receives funding from a range of sources to support the three Member organisations:

Local Authorities continue to provide support for all three organisations. Non financial support is also offered by authorities through, for example, officer support and access to facilities.

Total income from Local Authority subscriptions = £520,108

Funding from Associate Members (Fire, Police etc) to SWLGA/SWPE

Total income from this source = £17,066

The CLG provides funding in support of the Strengthening Regional Accountability agenda since 2001

Total income from this source = £681,017

The CLG also provides funding for the e-Government work

Total income from this source = £55,564

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

Total income from this source = £1,550,610

The Home Office provides funding for the SWLGA, to support the activity of the regional Asylum Seekers agenda.

Total income from this source = £105,947

Income generated from the Secretariat's support of the region's Local Authorities through the provision of Employment Services and Learning & Development events. This 'self generated' income continues to provide a vital under-pinning 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 = £1,387,621