

Policy Statement on Regional Strategies

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Policy Statement on Regional Strategies

February 2010

Department for Communities and Local Government
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

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Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy Statement sets out the Government's policy framework for the preparation of Regional Strategies prepared under Part 5 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act (herein after referred to as "the Act"). It provides policy on the preparation and revision of such strategies and sets out the main expectations on their form, content, implementation and monitoring.
- 1.2 The policies in this Statement should be taken into account by responsible regional authorities in the preparation, revision and implementation of Regional Strategies. These policies complement, but do not replace or override, other national policies.
- 1.3 This Statement applies throughout England apart from London where the Mayor is responsible for preparing separate spatial development and economic development strategies¹.
- 1.4 This Policy Statement replaces *Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Spatial Strategies (PPS11)*; *Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Planning Strategies (2004) – technical amendments (2009)* and *Guidance to Regional Development Agencies on Regional Strategies (2005)*.

¹ London is covered by its own legislation – the Greater London Authority Act 1999, as amended by the Greater London Authority Act 2007. See also GOL Circular 1/2008 which sets out guidance on the arrangements for strategic planning in London.

Chapter 2

Purpose and Scope of Regional Strategies

- 2.1 The overarching principle for planning and overall government policy is sustainable development, the meaning of which is set out in *The UK Sustainable Development Strategy*² and *Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering sustainable development*³
- 2.2 The purpose of the Regional Strategy is to set out a long term strategic, spatial and integrated framework for the region which promotes sustainable economic growth, tackles challenges posed by climate change and contributes to sustainable development⁴.
- 2.3 Regional Strategy policies should be formulated in order to deliver sustainable economic growth, which means economic growth that can be sustained and is within environmental limits, but also enhances the environment and social welfare, and avoids greater extremes in future economic cycles. In designing policies in support of sustainable economic growth, responsible regional authorities should seek to:
- Align public and private sector investment 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 whilst also protecting and enhancing the environment and the well-being of communities.
 - Set out regionally and, where appropriate, sub-regionally specific policies which focus on key priorities, and provide a clear framework for local decision makers and public and private investors.
 - Secure a joined up approach to strategy-making and governance within each region, based on partnership working and stakeholder involvement.

Scope of Regional Strategies

- 2.4 It is intended that the Regional Strategy will guide the activities, plans and investment decisions of public sector agencies, local authorities and other regional partners to deliver the objectives set out in paragraph 2.3, taking into account the policies, plans and investment decisions of central government. The Regional Strategy will also contribute to central decision making; influencing the policies, plans and investment decisions of government departments and Agencies, and give clarity and incentives to the private sector to encourage investment in the region.

² Securing the future: The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (HM Government 2005)

³ ODPM (2005)

⁴ Sections 70 and 73 of the Act

2.5 The Regional Strategy is part of the statutory development plan, to be taken into account in the preparation of local development frameworks and the determination of planning applications.

2.6 The Regional Strategy should:

- Set out a clear spatial vision for all parts of the region over a 15-20 year time frame, taking account of implications beyond this time frame.
- Be based on a sound evidence base, supported by a sustainability appraisal which includes consideration of environmental limits and a Habitats Regulation Assessment and other required assessments.
- Set out the policies needed to deliver the vision, in particular bringing together:
 - policies for sustainable economic growth, the development and use of land and policies designed to contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change, and
 - other relevant policies, including those which are focussed on the needs of business and the enhancement of the environment and the social, health and well being of the region.

These policies should, where appropriate, be locationally specific by relating to different parts of the region⁵.

- Set out the long, medium and short-term actions required to implement the policies and vision. These should be included in a separate Implementation Plan giving details such as when, how, where and by whom they will be delivered.
- Set out the outcomes expected from the delivery of actions and the indicators that will be used to monitor progress towards them. Where possible the indicators should be quantified targets so that progress can be more effectively monitored and, if necessary, remedial action taken.
- Be concise and easily accessible.

2.7 The Regional Strategy should contain the minimum level of detail necessary to explain the policy clearly, including any guidance on the way in which the policy is to be implemented. But the Regional Strategy should not:

- Include data and other supporting information forming the evidence base, which should be set out in supporting documentation (see also Chapter 5).
- Address local issues, which are more appropriately considered at the local level.
- Be site specific.
- Replicate, contradict, or detrimentally affect matters within the scope of

⁵ The Regional Strategy may identify the areas of search suitable for a development or proposal in question, within which a number of suitable sites may exist. Such locations may include town centres.

other legislative requirements, such as those set out in Building Regulations.

- Impose unjustified or disproportionate burdens on local authorities and business.

Identifying sub-regions

2.8 Responsible regional authorities should, in consultation with stakeholders, identify where appropriate the sub-regions to be included within their Regional Strategy having regard to:

- Sub-regional partnerships such as relevant city regions, growth areas, Multi Area Agreements and Economic Prosperity Boards which exist in the region and which would benefit from specific sub-regional policies and actions.
- The economic geography of the region and functional relationships between areas, including travel patterns to and from work areas, housing markets, supply chains or other strategic economic, environmental or social issues that do not reflect existing local administrative boundaries.
- Inter-regional issues such as for growth areas, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, water catchment and coastal areas.

2.9 Where sub-regions cross regional boundaries, regions should work with responsible regional authorities in those regions, including London and the Devolved Administrations (where appropriate), and jointly consider shared priorities within their respective Regional Strategies.

Geographical coverage of Regional Strategies

2.10 The geographical area covered by each Regional Strategy corresponds, with the exception of the National Parks, to the boundaries of the eight English regions outside London⁶. National Parks will each be covered by a single Regional Strategy, even when they cross regional boundaries⁷.

⁶ Schedule 1 to the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998.

⁷ The North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks are covered in full by the Regional Strategy for Yorkshire and the Humber. The Peak District National Park is covered in full by the Regional Strategy for the East Midlands and the New Forest is covered in full by the Regional Strategy for the South East.

Chapter 3

Link to national and local priorities

Consistency with national policy

- 3.1 Responsible regional authorities, when preparing their Regional Strategies, must have regard to national policies and guidance issued by the Secretary of State⁸ and likely funding availability.
- 3.2 Regional Strategies should be consistent with national policy but they may include policies that depart from and/or provide a regional interpretation of national policy, subject to the justification for such policies being accepted by the Secretary of State in approving the Strategy.

Preparing regionally-specific policies

- 3.3 Responsible regional authorities should ensure that the policies in their Regional Strategy are regionally specific. Regional Strategies should not repeat or reformulate national policy, and are not required to have a policy on every topic. When having regard to national policies and guidance, responsible regional authorities should consider whether they are relevant at regional level and relate to priorities for the particular region, and whether it is necessary for the Regional Strategy to address a particular issue in order to achieve national objectives. They should however contain policies which:
 - Translate national policy to specific regional or sub-regional opportunities and challenges.
 - Are needed because they provide a regional or sub-regional framework to assist in local delivery.
 - Are needed because they support national programmes relevant to the particular region and steer locationally-specific initiatives such as identified growth areas, and/or steer the activities, plans and investment decisions of public sector agencies or strategic projects.

⁸ Section 77 of the Act

Content of Regional Strategies

- 3.4 Regional Strategies should focus on the key priorities for the region, considering them in an integrated way rather than as separate, unrelated issues.
- 3.5 In deciding on the priorities, responsible regional authorities should take account of:
- The future economic development of the region.
 - Infrastructure, transport, regeneration, social and environmental challenges and opportunities.
 - Specific requirements for regional policy set out in legislation or government policy.
 - The evidence base supporting the Strategy, including the results of Annual Monitoring Reports and progress on implementation.
 - The regional strategies in adjoining regions and devolved administrations.
- 3.6 Responsible regional authorities should, taking account of the evidence base and informed by the Sustainability Appraisal, ensure that the Regional Strategy's policies and priorities broadly cover and seek to integrate:
- An overview of the key regional and sub-regional opportunities and challenges over the period of the Strategy, covering economic, environmental, social, health and well-being, transport, infrastructure and spatial characteristics and needs (including equality and diversity) alongside consideration of value for money and effective prioritisation of key objectives in these areas across the region (urban and rural).
 - How sustainable economic growth can be best delivered, taking into account employment and the key drivers of productivity- employment, innovation, infrastructure, enterprise and business support, access to global markets and inward investment and skills⁹.
 - How the region will meet its housing need and demand and achieve a wide choice of high quality and suitable homes in good repair across both new and existing stock to create sustainable, well-connected and inclusive mixed communities.
 - Proactive and innovative actions on climate change and energy, through a strategy that makes a significant contribution to climate change mitigation and helps meet the Government's greenhouse gas and renewable energy targets and carbon budgets, as well as the Government's objectives on adapting to the impacts of climate change.

⁹ See Partnerships for growth <http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/regional/growth/page53688.html>

- Identification of areas or communities within the region that should be a priority for economic growth, regeneration and investment. Areas should be identified, based upon issues including opportunities for business growth and attractiveness for business investment as well as relative deprivation, worklessness, economic and environmental inequalities, health and social inequalities, social exclusion, skills levels, housing stock and the adequacy of infrastructure provision¹⁰.
- How the Strategy's plans for sustainable economic growth, housing and other development have taken account of available infrastructure, including environmental infrastructure¹¹, and its capacity and what strategic requirements, demand reduction, management and provision of infrastructure and services are needed to support the future development of the region, including communications, energy, waste, water and minerals.
- Transport needs and services in delivering sustainable economic development, regeneration, investment, housing growth and climate change mitigation. The strategy and its implementation should seek to integrate transport and, where possible, create and secure opportunities for sustainable options such as improved public transport, cycling and walking.
- Priorities for the protection, enhancement and access to the built and natural environment, including biodiversity.
- Priorities for widening access to culture, media and sport.
- Other action that is essential to support the outcomes of the Strategy, subject to the considerations in Paragraph 3.3.

¹⁰ For example see Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

¹¹ Includes water (supply and treatment), waste, flooding, coastal erosion, green infrastructure and habitats which help deliver ecosystem services

Chapter 4

Process to follow in revising Regional Strategies

- 4.1 Responsible regional authorities are required to keep their Strategies under review.
- 4.2 The process of reviewing the Regional Strategy provides considerable flexibility for responsible regional authorities to decide on the most appropriate way to bring forward revisions to their Regional Strategies. There are however a number of key stages or requirements which responsible regional authorities should address.
- 4.3 Appendix A summarises the key stages involved in preparing a Strategy. Government Offices will work closely with the responsible regional authorities throughout these key stages, acting as the first point of contact with all government departments to advise on both policy and process issues and on the Secretary of State's statutory functions. The role of the regional minister should be agreed with the responsible regional authorities and should include engagement at appropriate stages.

Project planning and the revision timetable

- 4.4 Partial or comprehensive revisions to the strategy will be required periodically when it appears to responsible regional authorities that it is necessary or expedient to do so. The general expectation however is that revisions of regional strategies are likely to take place approximately every five years.
- 4.5 Decisions about whether to revise the Regional Strategy should be informed by:
 - The evidence from the monitoring process where this indicates that the implementation or outcome of policies in the existing Strategy are not as intended.
 - Changes in national policy.
- 4.6 Revisions may be to parts of a Regional Strategy or they may be a comprehensive revision of the whole Strategy.

- 4.7 When responsible regional authorities decide to prepare a revision they should apply a robust project management approach to ensure that the revision is prepared in a timely and efficient manner, maximises opportunities for working on stages in parallel and to provide clarity and transparency about how the Regional Strategy will be prepared and enable key stakeholders to have a timely input into the process.
- 4.8 Responsible regional authorities and the Secretary of State, through the Government Offices, should therefore work closely with the key stakeholders, to prepare and agree a project plan to guide any revision of their Regional Strategy.
- 4.9 It will also be for responsible regional authorities to decide on the scope and content of the project plan, although it should, as a minimum, include a timetable with the key milestones as specified in the Regulations and:
- Timing of key pieces of relevant research and technical studies that will form part of the evidence base.
 - How risks will be managed, including risks of slippage to the timetable and in delivering the Strategy.
- 4.10 Once finalised, the project plan will apply to both the responsible regional authorities and to the Secretary of State, and it should only be changed exceptionally, such as for example where:
- New government priorities or policies require the Strategy to be adjusted.
 - There are significant changes in a region's circumstances.
 - Available resources prevent specific work being undertaken.
 - The evidence base is incomplete and needs strengthening.
 - Proposed changes to the Strategy need to be considered at an Examination in Public.
- 4.11 Where responsible regional authorities and the Government Office agree that exceptional circumstances exist, a revised project plan should be agreed by the responsible regional authorities and the Government Office and the revision publicised to all relevant stakeholders and made available publicly along with reasons for the revision.

Importance of evidence

- 4.12 An evidence base that is informed and shaped by regional and local partners and that takes account of best available information is more likely to provide not only a sound

basis for strategy-making but also a foundation for greater ownership of the Regional Strategy and its implementation.

4.13 Revisions of the Strategy must be made on the basis of a common and comprehensive evidence base presented in a clear way that takes account of best available information. Responsible regional authorities should ensure that the evidence base is:

- Proportionate and relevant to the policies being prepared and makes use of the most current data and information available.
- Underpinned by an analysis of the economic, demographic, environmental and social, health and well being challenges and the opportunities within the region over the lifespan of the Strategy and beyond.
- Informed by the outputs from local area economic assessments¹² and Annual Monitoring Reports.
- Informed by relevant advice from central government on the assumptions to be made in relation to regional funding availability and affordability.
- Informed by the expertise and views of stakeholders who have a stake in the future of the region and/or may be affected by the policy decisions in the Regional Strategy.
- Informed by and consistent with the UK Government's sustainable development principles.
- Informed by national policy.
- Informed by other relevant strategies in other regions and devolved administrations.

4.14 In preparing their evidence base, responsible regional authorities should also:

- Assess whether any gaps exist in the evidence base necessary to support the Regional Strategy.
- Work with national government, statutory agencies and regional data providers, such as observatories and intelligence networks from the region, and co-operate with adjoining regions on cross-boundary issues, to assemble any required additional information and data.

¹² Section 69 of the Act places a new duty on county councils and unitary district councils to prepare an assessment of the economic conditions of their area. Further guidance on these assessments and their relationship to Regional Strategies is set out in *Local Economic Assessments: consultation on draft statutory guidance* (CLG, forthcoming)

- Assemble relevant regional evidence gathered in support of wider government policy initiatives.

Stakeholder engagement

- 4.15 Regulations¹³ set out the bodies which responsible regional authorities must involve in preparing the Regional Strategy. The list in the regulations provides the statutory minimum. However, to effectively build a wide consensus for the proposals in the Regional Strategy, responsible regional authorities (and, where relevant, the Secretary of State) should consider engaging with a much wider range of stakeholders, many of whom have extensive knowledge, skills and experience.
- 4.16 Partnership working and the engagement of stakeholders from across the region when preparing Regional Strategies is critical to ensure that the Strategy integrates competing demands and commands support across the region. Stakeholder engagement in the Regional Strategy preparation process should be effective, wide-ranging and contribute to building consensus around the Regional Strategy. It should also be timely and add value to the preparation process.
- 4.17 Legislation therefore requires responsible regional authorities to prepare, publish, keep up-to-date and comply with a statement of their policies on involving those persons who appear to them to have an interest in the Regional Strategy¹⁴.
- 4.18 Statements of Policies on Community Involvement should:
- Cover, in broad terms, both formal public consultation activity and informal engagement with stakeholders.
 - Ensure that the level of stakeholder involvement is proportionate to the scale of issues addressed in the Regional Strategy.
 - Ensure that consultation is cross-sectoral, ensuring that social, cultural, health, economic and environmental interests are represented.
 - Explain the process and methods that will be applied for involving stakeholders during different stages of the revision of a Regional Strategy.
 - Be consistent with the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation¹⁵ in relation to public consultation arrangements.

¹³ Town and Country Planning (Regional Strategy) (England) Regulations 2010

¹⁴ Section 75 of the Act

¹⁵ See <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf>

- 4.19 It will be up to each region to decide how to engage with stakeholders, although responsible regional authorities should use a variety of means to involve different stakeholders. The Leaders' Board and RDA may wish to explore alternative arrangements for ensuring an effective stakeholder input.
- 4.20 Reference to 'stakeholders' means all those who have an interest in and a contribution to make to the content of the Regional Strategy. 'Involvement' means more than the provision of information and the invitation to respond to consultation documents, although both of these have a role to play. It means the opportunity to engage and participate in shaping the Regional Strategy, including the development of options and the sustainability appraisal.

Developing options

- 4.21 An essential part of the Regional Strategy preparation process is establishing the most appropriate policies and priorities for the future growth and sustainable development of the region.
- 4.22 Responsible regional authorities, working with stakeholders, should identify options for delivering the strategy for the region in relation to the policy issues being revised. Establishing and comparing the effects of the options through the sustainability appraisal will help to identify a preferred option.
- 4.23 Options should be:
- Proportionate, ensuring that the option being considered relates to the level of detail in the Strategy.
 - Reasonable, taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the Strategy and the legal powers of the responsible regional authorities¹⁶.
 - Sufficiently detailed to enable meaningful stakeholder involvement and sustainability appraisal to be undertaken.
 - Deliverable in the Strategy period, taking account of the availability of the necessary resources to deliver the option and whether delivery partners are committed to it.
 - Consistent with national policy, subject to the considerations in Paragraph 3.2.

¹⁶ For example, an option to tighten the Building Regulations would not be within the responsible regional authorities' power to deliver

4.24 Where options are changed or new options are put forward after the main stages of public consultation and sustainability appraisal, the responsible regional authority should consider whether there is a need for further consultation and appraisal and whether alternatives should be put forward.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment

4.25 Sustainability appraisal¹⁷ is a process for establishing and reporting on the social, environmental and economic effects of the Strategy and for testing and improving its sustainability¹⁸. It is not a separate add-on process but should form an integral part of the preparation of a Regional Strategy and compilation of its evidence base.

4.26 Sustainability appraisal fully incorporates the requirements of the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment¹⁹. It should be carried out in accordance with the guidance set out in *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive*²⁰, supplemented by *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Strategies*²¹. If this guidance is followed, there will be no need for a separate Strategic Environmental Assessment.

4.27 Responsible regional authorities should ensure that a sustainability appraisal:

- Is started as soon as the preparation of the Regional Strategy is first considered.
- Is proportionate to the issues being assessed.
- Is both informed by and informs the evidence base and annual monitoring reports.
- Takes into account any other assessments of the Strategy, such as those required for the Habitats Directive, equality, health or rural proofing.
- Has been carried out with the involvement of the public and stakeholders.

¹⁷ Section 77(2) of the Act

¹⁸ The consideration of environmental limits within sustainability appraisal is addressed in Sustainability Guidance for Regional Strategies

¹⁹ Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment", transposed into law in England by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

²⁰ ODPM and Devolved Administrations, 2005: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/practicalguidessea>

²¹ This forthcoming supplement supersedes the regional-level guidance in "Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents (ODPM, 2005),

4.28 Responsible regional authorities are also required to ensure that the Strategy meets the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive. The Habitats Regulation Assessment should therefore inform the sustainability appraisal and will be a key consideration in the development and appraisal of options for the Strategy. Revised guidance on Habitats Regulation Assessment will be published separately.

Examination in public

4.29 The purpose of the EIP is to test the draft strategy and examine controversial issues. It provides for debates held in public and independent scrutiny of selected matters before an independent panel.

4.30 Although the Act²² gives responsible regional authorities some discretion as to whether or not to arrange for an EIP, an EIP is likely to be required in all but the most exceptional circumstances, such as for example where the proposed revision to the Strategy is very minor and uncontroversial.

4.31 The decision on whether an EIP is needed should be informed by the extent of revisions to the Strategy and the level of interest shown. If the responsible regional authorities decide not to arrange for an EIP, the Act gives the Secretary of State the power to do so instead, having regard to the same considerations. The legislation also requires that the Panel must report to the responsible regional authorities and send a copy of the report to the Secretary of State. The report should form the main basis for any changes to the draft revision.

4.32 Responsible regional authorities should consider asking the Secretary of State to appoint a panel chair as early as possible in the Regional Strategy preparation process. This will enable the Panel to become familiar with the region and its issues and clarify the nature and extent of any controversy. This also provides an opportunity for the Panel to review and comment on, but not formally test, the evidence base underpinning the options being considered and, if necessary, to hold exploratory sessions on different issues. This will reduce the need to re-open discussions on some issues later in the process and instead prepare the ground for an effective and conclusive debate at the EIP.

4.33 While the Panel may be involved throughout the preparation of the Regional Strategy, it must remain independent and cannot be party to the development of the Strategy. It should be impartial and transparent in all its dealings. Where there is communication with the Panel outside of formal EIP sessions, any communication between the Panel and responsible regional authorities and/or other stakeholders should be channelled through an administrative officer such as the Panel secretary and not the Panel Chair or other panel member.

²² Section 76 of the Act

4.34 In determining which matters to test at the EIP and who should attend the examination, the Panel should be guided by the following considerations:

- Representations which have been made about the appropriateness of the policies in the Strategy and their justification and what debates are necessary to test the soundness of the Strategy.
- Issues involving significant controversy.
- Conflicts between the draft Strategy and national policy.
- Tensions between the draft Strategy and other Regional Strategies for adjoining regions.
- Internal inconsistencies in the Strategy and the extent of integration between the various elements of the Strategy.

4.35 In examining the draft Strategy the Panel should satisfy itself that the Strategy is sound. The main considerations which the Panel should apply in making this judgment are whether the Strategy:

- Is justified by being founded on a robust and credible evidence base and that it is an appropriate Strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives.
- Will be effective by being deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored.
- Meets the requirements set out in legislation, such as the extent to which it:
 - is consistent with national policy
 - meets the requirements for sustainability appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment
 - has been prepared in accordance with the responsible regional authorities' Statement of Policies for Community Involvement.

4.36 To avoid unnecessary delay and confusion, responsible regional authorities should not introduce major new material prior to an EIP. Where possible responsible regional authorities should make it clear to the Panel their views about significant issues raised, including any changes they think are needed to address such issues. It will not be appropriate for responsible regional authorities to produce a revised draft of the Regional Strategy prior to an EIP.

Secretary of State sign-off

- 4.37 Following the EIP, and having considered the Panel's recommendations and all of the representations made about the draft Regional Strategy, responsible regional authorities will need to consider whether to further refine the draft Strategy prior to submitting it to the Secretary of State for approval²³.
- 4.38 Responsible regional authorities should discuss any proposed changes they want to make with their Government Office as soon as possible after receipt of the Panel report.
- 4.39 Once a final draft of the Regional Strategy has been submitted to government, the Secretary of State will consider whether any further changes are required before publishing the final draft version of the Strategy with the changes for public consultation. In considering whether to make any further changes to the Strategy, the Secretary of State must have regard to the Panel report from the EIP and also any representations on issues that had not been debated at the EIP.
- 4.40 The Secretary of State will invite representations on any changes made by the responsible regional authorities in response to the EIP and any further changes that the Secretary of State decides are needed prior to approving the Strategy.
- 4.41 Following this consultation the Secretary of State will consider the representations in response to the proposed changes and, if needed, make further changes before approving the Strategy for publication.
- 4.42 In making further changes to the Strategy, responsible regional authorities and the Secretary of State will need to consider the implications for the sustainability appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment. Whilst it is envisaged that changes to the Strategy at this stage would be minor, any significant changes will need to be assessed along with any reasonable alternatives that may come forward.
- 4.43 Once the Strategy has been approved by the Secretary of State, the responsible regional authorities are required to publish the final Strategy as approved, making it publicly available.

Implementation plans

- 4.44 Responsible regional authorities must produce, publish and keep up to date a plan for implementing the Regional Strategy (the *Implementation Plan*)²⁴. The Implementation Plan is central to the Regional Strategy process and is where the Regional Strategy

²³ Section 78 of the Act

²⁴ Section 81 of the Act.

commitment to partnership working is translated into practical actions. Although the Plan will be an important factor in assessing the realism and soundness of the overall strategy and it can be expected that aspects of it may be discussed at EIP, the Plan will not be subject to formal testing at the EIP. Its purpose is to demonstrate how and by whom it is intended the Regional Strategy will be delivered.

4.45 The Implementation Plan should:

- Be succinct and translate the Strategy's vision, objectives and outcomes into clear and deliverable actions.
- Be prepared in conjunction with and inform the Regional Strategy.
- Focus on the critical actions, priorities and programmes necessary to deliver the Strategy, with a detailed focus on the priorities over the first three – five years from the time the Strategy is published, set out specific actions allocated to those key organisations responsible for delivering the policies in the Strategy, along with the current status of any proposals (e.g. whether they are committed) and the timescales for each action to be delivered.
- Be consistent with implementation initiatives and actions of adjoining regions, where cross boundary issues are relevant.
- Maximize the benefits of aligning investment programmes (both public and private) and aligning and integrating deliverable actions.
- Be prepared in close co-operation with regional, sub-regional and local partners, government and government agencies.
- Be reviewed through the annual monitoring process and revised where necessary.

4.46 The Implementation plan will not:

- Form part of the statutory development plan.
- Be subject to a separate formal approval process by the Secretary of State.
- Be expected to be a comprehensive business plan of all implementation actions.

4.47 The Implementation Plan is unlikely to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment or sustainability appraisal or a Habitats Regulation Assessment although responsible regional authorities should take advice that the level of detail contained in the implementation plan does not affect that assumption.

- 4.48 In developing the Regional Strategy and the Implementation Plan, responsible regional authorities should take account of the resources likely to be available for implementation to ensure objectives, priorities and actions are challenging but achievable. These resources include, but are not limited to, the resources of key delivery partners such as the Homes and Communities Agency, Learning and Skills Councils (and successor bodies), higher education institutes, local authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships, sub-regional bodies and partnerships and Government Departments and Agencies as well as the private and third sectors and to organisations where resource provision is contracted out.
- 4.49 When considering the deliverability of identified priorities and actions as part of their Implementation Plan, responsible regional authorities should assess the potential risks to the delivery of the strategy, including funding availability.

Implementing the Regional Strategy through local strategies

- 4.50 Implementation of the policies in the Regional Strategy will in part be dependent on these being translated into Local Development Documents, Local Transport Plans and other local plans and programmes and on how local authorities exercise their service responsibilities. Responsible regional authorities should therefore actively engage with local authorities to promote the implementation of the Regional Strategy at the local level.
- 4.51 Local Development Documents must be in general conformity with a Regional Strategy²⁵ which means that there should be no inconsistency or omission which would cause significant harm to the implementation of a Regional Strategy. Where a development document is inconsistent with one or more policies in the Regional Strategy, either directly or through the omission of a policy or proposal, this does not, by itself, mean that the local development document is not in general conformity. The test that should be applied is how significant the inconsistency is from the point of view of delivery of the Regional Strategy.
- 4.52 The general conformity test will be applied by Inspectors, appointed by the Secretary of State, through the examination of development plan documents.

²⁵ Section 24(1)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended

Monitoring

4.53 Responsible regional authorities must prepare and publish a report on the implementation of the Regional Strategy, which must be submitted to the Secretary of State (the *Annual Monitoring Report*)²⁶.

4.54 Annual Monitoring Reports are essential for keeping the regional evidence base up to date and to inform decisions about whether or not the Regional Strategy should be revised. Such reports do not however replace the regular performance and accountability reporting by the Regional Development Agencies or any other public body.

4.55 The Annual Monitoring Report should:

- Be prepared on an annual basis to the timescale specified in regulations²⁷.
- Be directly related to the policies in the Regional Strategy and the delivery of priorities and actions identified in the Implementation Plan, including identification of where they are not being met and why.
- Report on progress against the core output indicators set out in the *Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Framework Core Output Indicators Update 2/2008*.
- Be informed by the issues and monitoring recommendations raised in the sustainability appraisal.
- Relate annual information to longer term trends.
- Identify remedial action required, such as where priorities and actions are not being met.
- Be made publicly available, including on responsible regional authorities' websites.

²⁶ Section 81 of the Act

²⁷ Town and Country Planning (Regional Strategy) (England) Regulations 2010 (see draft at Annex 2)

4.56 The *Regional Spatial Strategy Monitoring: A Good Practice Guide*²⁸ provides advice on the preparation of Annual Monitoring Reports, while Appendix 10 of the SEA Practical Guide suggests ways of meeting the monitoring requirements of the SEA Directive.

²⁸ ODPM, 2005

Chapter 5

Other documents

Publication of other documents to support the Regional Strategy

- 5.1 Responsible regional authorities may publish supporting material, evidence or advice to assist in the implementation of the Strategy. However such material should not have the status of policy nor suggest that it forms part of the development plan.

Chapter 6

Intervention by Secretary of State

- 6.1 The Secretary of State has a formal role in approving the Regional Strategy. In addition, the legislation gives the Secretary of State a number of reserve powers. Sections 71 and 79 of the Act set out the Secretary of State's reserve powers for intervening in the operation of a Leaders' Board and in the Regional Strategy process.
- 6.2 The Secretary of State will only use these powers of intervention as a last resort and:
- In the operation of a Leaders' Board, where in the opinion of the Secretary of State such a Leaders' Board does not comply with the principles set out in legislation or does not function in a manner set out in the approved *scheme* under Clause 71(8) of the Act.
 - In the preparation of a Regional Strategy under Section 79(1) and (6) of the Act, only in circumstances where the issues are of national importance.

Appendix A

Regional Strategy revision process*

| Stage | Task |
|--|---|
| PROJECT PLANNING | <p>Responsible Regional Authorities draw up and agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Plan, including the scope and timing of the revision, in consultation with the Government Office • Statement of Policies on Community Involvement, in consultation with key stakeholders |
| DRAFTING REGIONAL STRATEGY REVISION | <p>Responsible Regional Authorities, in discussion with stakeholders and the Government Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare evidence base • Engage stakeholders • Consult on scope of Sustainability Appraisal • Appraise issues and options (testing impacts through sustainability appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment) in consultation with stakeholders • Develop preferred option in consultation with stakeholders • Invite Examination in Public Panel to review evidence and hold other exploratory sessions e.g. on specific technical issues • Prepare draft Implementation Plan • Arrange Examination in Public • Finalise draft Strategy, sustainability appraisal report and Implementation Plan |
| FORMAL CONSULTATION | <p>Responsible Regional Authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake statutory public consultation on published draft Strategy and appraisal report in accordance with Government Code of Practice on Consultation • Submit draft Strategy, sustainability appraisal report and Implementation Plan to Panel |
| TEST DRAFT REGIONAL STRATEGY REVISION | <p>Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consults on draft list of matters • Holds at least one preliminary/exploratory meeting before EIP to explain the process to the public and selected participants (meeting should coincide with start of consultation period on draft list of matters) • Sends out final list of matters (min. 6 weeks before EIP) • Holds EIP (length dependant on issues being tested) • Prepares report of the Examination in Public and sends to Responsible Regional Authorities (copied to Secretary of State) who make report publicly available |
| FINALISE REGIONAL STRATEGY REVISION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible Regional Authorities refine draft Strategy in light of Panel Report and submit to Secretary of State • Secretary of State considers whether further changes to Strategy are needed and, if necessary, makes modifications • Secretary of State consults on final draft Strategy in accordance with Government Code of Practice on Consultation • Secretary of State considers consultation responses to final draft Strategy before approving final version of Strategy • Responsible Regional Authorities publish approved Regional Strategy revision and statement on how sustainability issues were taken into account |
| IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR REGIONAL STRATEGY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible Regional Authorities, in liaison with Government Office and other stakeholders, monitor achievement of Regional Strategy targets through Annual Monitoring Report, identify remedial action, revise Implementation and Project plans and Statement of Policies on Community Involvement and trigger further revisions where appropriate • Inspectors test Local Development Documents to ensure 'general conformity' with Regional Strategy |

* Process applies to comprehensive, partial or any sub-regional reviews being undertaken. The timetable for undertaking each stage will be determined by the Project Plan which responsible regional authorities need to prepare and will depend on the nature and scope of the review.