

14 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

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Policy IM 1

Implementation

In addition to the statutory requirement for Environmental Impact Analysis, economic, health, transport and other impact assessments should be carried out in appropriate cases.

The Regional Planning Body along with other partners will ensure the RSS Implementation Framework is reviewed and developed.

Plan-Monitor-Manage

Plans and policies should be sufficiently flexible to respond to robust monitoring information which will reveal whether :

- they are having the desired impact/outcome;
- they are being implemented as intended;
- circumstances have changed and there should be appropriate mechanisms to trigger a review of policy, if necessary.

The Regional Planning Body will work with local authorities and other partners to secure, as far as possible, a common evidence base, targets and indicators, avoid duplication and improve the efficiency of monitoring activity.

They will keep the RSS monitoring framework under constant review and annually prepare a Monitoring Manual and Monitoring report.

14.1 Clear assessment of the relative benefits or likely ill-effects of development proposals are essential to planning decisions and there is growing acceptance that any tensions between development and existing environmental, social or economic 'capital' (such as road space) should be clearly stated alongside proposals for measures necessary to minimise harm, replace lost capital or provide alternative benefits. Sustainability appraisals of development plans should cover social, environmental and economic objectives. An Integrated Appraisal Toolkit (IAT) has been developed alongside Action for Sustainability and this will provide an excellent basis for such appraisals, having been used in this capacity for draft RSS and the current draft RES. Transport and environmental impact assessments are established as part of planning processes and impact assessments related to health and broader social issues are being developed both nationally and within the Region, referenced in the IAT. With regards to accessibility, planning authorities need to ensure that new developments – especially those which are anticipated to generate significant numbers of visitors – are in locations which are accessible by public transport and that measures to make walking and cycling are included from the design stage of the proposal. Furthermore, local authorities should use planning obligations such as Section 106 Agreements to ensure that these measures are delivered.

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14.2 RSS has a clear set of overarching spatial and development principles and each thematic chapter now has a set of key objectives. The RSS Implementation framework sets out a series of targets and indicators which link to the objectives and vision of RSS with their delivery and implementation being monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report. The implementation framework also indicates priorities, mechanisms, partnerships and lead agencies for delivery of RSS. The Implementation Framework is a separate document which accompanies RSS, this means it can be continually modified to reflect the emergence of new partnerships, priorities and funding sources.

14.3 Traditionally the greatest responsibility for delivery of RSS has fallen upon Local Authorities through the preparation and delivery of Local Development Plans and Communities Strategies and now also through the delivery of Local and Multi Area Agreements. Whilst this will continue to be the case, Local Authorities and the Regional Planning Body will need to work closely with a wide range of other organisations to ensure the more spatial nature of RSS is reflected in, and delivered by, the plans and strategies of a wide range of organisations. The Implementation Plan will be useful in clearly identifying the organisations which will have the potential to deliver RSS, in addition to Local Authorities. The Regional Planning Body will need to work with potential delivery partners to raise awareness of RSS and the relevance of its objectives to their own organisations aims and objectives. In this way partnership organisations will have a clearer shared interest in delivering RSS, in order to meet their own targets and objectives. Many organisations need early involvement in RSS policy preparation in order that funding to deliver RSS objectives can be identified in their own longer term plans and strategies. Consultation has taken place with a wide range of organisations throughout the preparation of RSS, but the contacts made should be maintained and strengthened through the regular updating of the Implementation Framework and the establishment of delivery groups. It is important that awareness raising and annual feedback of key implementation themes and monitoring information continue to improve to encourage wider participation in the delivery of RSS.

14.4 Other partners currently involved with the delivery of RSS objectives include the private sector including the utility companies; organisations such as housebuilders, transport operators, investors and landowners; public agencies like Natural England, Highways Agency, Forestry Commission, Housing Corporation, English Heritage and Environment Agency; and voluntary and community bodies and local and community groups. RSS is now a spatial rather than a land use plan and accordingly there is a clear need to forge better links in the future with new partners such as in the health, education, training and police and fire sectors.

14.5 Along with the Local Authorities and the Regional Planning Body, the North West Development Agency (NWDA) is also a significant agent of change in the region. The need for the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies to be complementary and aligned has been a clear priority of RSS. The July 2007 publication, the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration - which has become known as the sub-national review - set out a number of structural reforms including the introduction of a single regional strategy in each region. This will bring together the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy and will set out the economic, social and environmental objectives for each region.

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Monitoring

14.6 PPS11 emphasises the need to regularly monitor the effectiveness of RSS against its main objectives. In July 2008 CLG published a new set of core indicators. Therefore the RPB and LPAs will need to ensure that systems are established to monitor these and ensure that this is taken in account in future reviews. Both of these documents have been taken into account during the preparation of this strategy.

14.7 By the end of February each year, the Regional Planning Body will produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) on RSS, the main purposes of which will be to:

- assess the impact over time of RSS against its main objectives;
- consider whether RSS is being carried out correctly, in line with its main objectives;
- offer explanations where policies are not being put into practice;
- outline the measures to be taken where RSS policies are not being put into practice;
- provide information on net and gross additions to the housing stock.

14.8 The AMR will comprise:

- contextual indicators relating to areas where RSS has only indirect influence. These provide information on the wider social, economic, environmental, physical and demographic background against which RSS is being implemented;
- a small number of “headline indicators” relating to the central principals of this RSS, which will be analysed on an annual basis to provide an early indication of any emerging trends that may need to be addressed;
- further indicators measured on a yearly or three yearly basis to demonstrate the overall progress made towards specific RSS policies.

14.9 An RSS Monitoring Manual has been published as a practical guide to data production for the agencies involved. Developed in close conjunction with the Implementation Framework, the manual outlines the indicators that need to be monitored and the frequency with which the results should be reported. It also sets out an annual monitoring timetable and supplies detailed definitions of the data required so as to ensure it is produced in a consistent format by the various organisations.

14.10 The development of a regional monitoring framework is an ongoing process. New opportunities for acquiring and sharing information may arise as a result of work undertaken by partner organisations and new indicators may come to light as part of the monitoring process. The precise indicators to be used in monitoring RPG, together with their definitions, are therefore under constant review and will evolve over time. Any necessary revisions to the monitoring manual will be made in the late spring of each year. There is also a need to develop the capacity to carry out sub regional monitoring, in order to measure the effectiveness of sub regional policies.

14.11 The success of RSS monitoring will depend upon extensive cooperation from, and coordination with a wide range of organisations in the region. The role of local planning authorities in regularly collecting data on housing, land use change and other information will be particularly important. There are clear links between the monitoring of RSS and local planning authorities’ own LDF monitoring practices. The Regional Planning Body will work with local authorities to ensure, where possible, the development of a common evidence base so as to avoid duplication and achieve greater efficiency in the monitoring of both. A regional monitoring group has been

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established, made up of representatives from local authorities; the three county councils and two former county councils; GONW; NWDA, and with attendees from other regional bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and the ONS regional presence.

Review

14.12 The need to review RSS can be identified as part of the monitoring process when policies are not being delivered or are having undesirable or unintended consequences, or when there is a need to address specific deficiencies. In particular, the Housing Green Paper indicated the need to undertake partial reviews of RSS to reflect Government targets to address housing affordability and other changes such as Housing Growth Points.

14.13 The scope and timetable of a partial review of RSS was consulted upon in the early 2008. The initial stage of the review is in progress with the following issues identified as the priority:

- Housing – the revision of district housing figures in line with the Housing Green Paper challenges, taking account of environmental capacity, the supply of suitable land, the housing needs in each housing market area and the likely impact of supply on affordability;
- Renewable energy – the identification of broad areas suitable for renewable energy development; and
- Waste – the identification of the number and type of facilities required and their broad location.

14.14 Consideration is to be given to the best way to take the review of these issues forward, taking account of the current housing market conditions, the National Housing and Planning Unit's advice, proposals for new housing growth points, and the need to manage the transition to the Single Regional Strategy which will replace the RES and RSS in the near future.

14.15 Interim reviews of RSS and future single regional strategies will be informed by additional research. Ongoing research includes sub regional cross border studies for South Cheshire and North Staffordshire, and the Manchester City Region and High Peak, the revision of Parking Standards, provision for gypsies and travellers and assessment of definitions of housing market areas. The immediate priorities for future research will relate to the priorities identified in 14.13 above.