

### NEW REGIONAL STRUCTURES

Oft criticised little lamented the Regional Assembly for the South East has now ceased to be.

The SEERA website states: "The South East England Regional Assembly was dissolved on 31 March 2009. This is the result of the Government's plans to streamline regional working arrangements, as part of its Sub-national Review (SNR) of Economic Development and Regeneration.

As of 1 April 2009, responsibility for regional planning and the production of a new Single Regional Strategy rests with the South East England Partnership Board, which is supported by staff from the former Assembly and from SEEDA."

But how does this effect SEFS work to ensure the environment is at the heart of regional planning? The transition process has been difficult and Stakeholders including SEFS have been marginalised. SEEDA has been encouraging about stakeholder engagement but Local Authorities have been less willing. As a result the new structures are excluding stakeholders from direct involvement in the decision making process.

The new structure consists of the SE England Leaders Board (SEELB), which is made up of of Local Authorities without stakeholders.

8 members of SEELB will be joined by 4 non LA directors from SEEDA to make up a Partnership Board.

Below the Partnership Board will be a Strategy Board. This board will include the members of the Partnership Board but will also include 4 delivery agencies (the Environment Agency, HCA, Learning and Skills Council and the Highways Agency) and 2 stakeholders (from the economic, social, environmental and Town and Parish Council groups) in a nonvoting capacity. It is proposed will also be three Delivery Boards (transport, housing and economy), technical advisory groups and various "Task and Finish" and supporting groups (yet to be defined). Discussions are still in progress about how Sustainable Development will fit in and the links to the Rural Board.

A "Stakeholder sounding board or Liaison Group" is to be set up.

A diagram of the proposed new structures can be found in the new Partnership Board information leaflet: [http://www.se-partnershipboard.org.uk/pdf/who\\_we\\_are/what\\_we\\_do\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.se-partnershipboard.org.uk/pdf/who_we_are/what_we_do_brochure.pdf)

A stakeholder representative group (including 2 from SEFS) is working on how the stakeholder group will engage.

There is much progress still to be made but it is clear that stakeholders are being placed firmly outside of the decision making tent. All this will make it much more

difficult to have an input in the development of the new Regional Strategy. Having said that there are indications that stakeholders will be welcomed on the "delivery and technical groups" and SEFS will continue to try and influence where it can at this level and beyond.

### SEFS BEHAVIOUR CHANGE WORK

In our Spring Newsletter we reported on the agreement whereby in return for two years funding from SEEDA, SEFS would develop and widely promote consistent key environmental messages. Reducing the region's ecological footprint was the driver so selecting the most significant behaviour change themes was straight forward - **transport**, **home energy** and **food** collectively account for just over half of the region's ecological footprint. **Waste** is an associated element in all three themes. Our fifth theme was **water**, although its use does not have a significant impact on our ecological footprint. Increasing demand is, however, likely to lead to shortages of essential supplies and result in biodiversity and habitat loss.

Under each theme we selected three key actions which, individuals could take and were most likely to lead to the biggest reductions in both ecological footprint and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

<b>Transport.</b>	<b>Energy</b>
Walk and cycle shorter trips and choose public transport for longer ones.	Ensure that your home is properly insulated.
Select a more fuel efficient car and use smarter driving techniques.	Change to fuel efficient heating systems and controls.
Consider alternatives to short haul flights.	Lower the temperature of your heating and washing.
<b>Food</b>	<b>Water</b>
Plan your shopping and only buy the food you are going to eat.	Use less water through domestic water saving devices and actions.
Buy locally produced seasonal produce whenever possible.	Consider installing a water meter.
Eat more fruit and veg.	Use a watering can rather than a hosepipe and never a sprinkler.
<b>Waste</b>	
Recycle through your local system and by reusing and repairing rather than binning.	
Reject goods which are overpackaged.	
Consider home composting	

The actions are simple but need to be communicated and widely promoted through the network of SEFS member organisations, cascading down to individual members and on to the wider public. We are taking a number of initiatives to reach out, one of which is this newsletter, and we will be focussing on behaviour change issues in our email communications to members. Some member organisations will be communicating the messages through a leaflet/postcard which will be handed out at public events, some will add web links and others will try and engage with members of their organisations who perhaps do not have behaviour change as their core agenda.

To reach as many of our members as possible we need groups which are already active at local level to adopt the behaviour change messages and disseminate them widely, using whatever means fit best with their existing campaigning activities. One of the most important initiatives taken by P&EC will be a re-launched website (see item below) which will give us the capacity to devote more space to behaviour change issues.

Externally we now have close links with Climate South East and have begun to explore how we might develop a mutually beneficial and productive relationship with the Greening Campaign which has established itself as an effective grass roots organisation.

SEFS regards behavioural change as an essential complement to policies which aim to promote environmental sustainability. It requires input and real commitment from government at all levels.

To have a significant impact SEFS work in this area has to form part of a larger push led by an agency with much more substantial resources. We are, therefore, promoting the concept of a Behaviour Change Lead to bring together, in an effective unified strategy, the wide range of current behavioural change initiatives, promotional and practical, of the numerous organisations governmental and non-governmental in the region.

## TRANSPORT

### Road building plans continue to dominate.

An analysis by SEFS of the list of schemes submitted by the region to central Government as part of the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) bid, shows 90% of the funding earmarked for road schemes. The list includes recently completed schemes, schemes about to start, those programmed for delivery, some subject to review and some which will be funded through Local Transport Plans (LTPs). The most disturbing fact revealed by the analysis is that schemes which are programmed for delivery, which in practice means up to and beyond 2014, still demonstrate an overwhelming bias in funding of about 84% in favour of road.

This has to be considered in the context of the DfT response to the submission which states that 'the Department will expect regions to reconsider and re-prioritise their advice for the medium to long term in the light of new options that are developed through the Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) study work over the next two years.' And that 'Carbon emissions will become an increasingly important

determinant of the transport choices we make. The work that regions have done on carbon in developing their RFA2 advice is a start, but it is clear that the evidence currently available is not sufficient to fully appraise the carbon impacts of schemes and programmes to the extent that the Department would like, nor in most cases are the carbon implications yet seen to be driving either the overall strategy or scheme prioritisation.' They go on to say 'Transport has a key role to play in meeting these obligations (very challenging targets on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions), and reducing GHG emissions is one of the goals established under its DaSTS work. The Department is looking to regions to make a positive contribution towards meeting these objectives, including, where possible, through sustainable transport measures.'

On the other hand they say 'As a general assumption all schemes that were accepted in the RFA and remain in your RFA2 advice will continue to be progressed as planned through the system.'

The uncertainty persists.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Since the news that the South Downs has been designated a National Park the South Downs Campaign is still working albeit at a lower level than previously. Here's a brief update on what is going on.

- The Inspector's Report from the re-opened inquiry on 18th August was submitted to Defra on 28th August.
- It is expected that the Confirmation Order will be signed soon. (That's when we will know the final boundary).
- The Secretary of State is currently asking for people to apply to be on the South Downs National Park Authority. There are likely to be 8 - 10 places available.
- The consultation on the size and make-up of the National Park Authority ended on 9th October. The South Downs Campaign prepared a response supporting a smaller rather than a larger authority and one which has a fairer geographical spread of representation, particularly for local authorities - currently West Sussex appears overrepresented compared to Hampshire
- Volkswind have withdrawn their proposal for two large wind turbines in East Meon adjacent to the South Downs Way. Congratulations to those who succeeded in discouraging them.
- A proposal by Brighton based arts group Red Earth for a celebratory 2012 Olympics landmark on the South Downs has caused an outcry in Ditchling and Hassocks. The proposal has won through to a shortlist of 5 projects for the South East. It involves digging a ditch and piling up the chalk (6ft high) to create a 33 yard chalk ring with wooden and stone entrances. Red Earth says it is looking for the project to be built anywhere between Worthing and Eastbourne.

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

Throughout the development of the South East Plan SEFS advocated and supported the inclusion of a policy on Green Infrastructure. Now the South East Plan is in

place it is welcome news to see that a Green Infrastructure Framework has been launched. The aims of the Framework are to: establish Green Infrastructure as an integral and essential component of sustainable communities

- develop a common understanding of the role and importance of green infrastructure

- help implement the South East Plan's green infrastructure policy,

- provide detailed guidance on how Green Infrastructure can be delivered through the planning system and local partnerships.

The Framework can be downloaded by following this link:

<http://www.gos.gov.uk/497648/docs/171301/SEGIFramework.finaljul09.pdf>

## DIBDEN BAY

Back in 2004 (after a 7 year campaign), Dibden Bay was saved from the clutches of ABP.

The then Secretary of State commented that "Overall, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that the disbenefits of the scheme, as borne out by its impact on internationally and nationally environmentally sensitive sites, outweigh the potential benefits."

Alas the nature of big business is to pursue its plans and ABP want to set out Southampton Port as a contender for the forecast growth in marine trade. So once more the site is under threat.

To this end ABP has launched a new consultation in the future of the Port. The consultation will run until 13th November. Exhibitions have been held at the Southampton Civic Centre on 11 September and in Hythe on 15 September.

Aware that development was on the cards the original Residents Against Dibden Bay Port campaign group has been revived to keep a watching brief. In their view nothing has changed in the new plans make a future proposal by ABP acceptable. RADBP's objections, which are the same as they were to the original proposal, are summarised as follows:

- Substantial environmental damage would be caused, not only to wildlife habitat, but also to the residents' quality of life in the New Forest side of Southampton Water.

- Other port proposals such as at Thamesport, Felixstowe and Harwich present more acceptable alternatives. The cost of such proposals, and the environmental impact, would be much less than for Dibden Bay.

- Larger ships could not access Dibden Bay port without major dredging and other works

- Transport links – road and rail are inadequate. They are already overstretched without massive new traffic.

During the original campaign most of the local authorities around Dibden Bay were against the proposal and many local residents were deeply alarmed. RADBP joined SEFS and became a consortium of local interests including residents associations, parish councils in the Waterside area and organisations such as RSPB, CPRE, the Wildlife Trusts and Friends of the Earth. There was also strong support from Dr Julian Lewis MP. Together the group objected on a wide range of issues, including

unacceptable increases in traffic on the already overcrowded A326 ("one of Hampshire's deadliest roads"); a big increase from a few freight trains per day in the area to two every hour; and the effects of noise, light and visual intrusion on local residents. The campaign was successful. After a lengthy public inquiry, government decided to refuse ABP's application. Opposition to the new proposals is already mounting and The RSPB for one has voiced its concerns about ABP's intentions.

In June a Forest District Council spokesman was quoted in the Southern Daily Echo as saying "If another application is ever submitted, all the hurdles ABP had to climb before – and failed – will have to be climbed again".

The consultation can be found at:

<http://www.southamptonvts.co.uk/portconsultation/>

## 2008 PLANNING ACT

This Act is the most radical change to the planning system since World War II. The new Act, made law in December 2008, creates a new system for approving the construction of **major infrastructure projects** including major roads, airports and power stations.

Key parts of the new law:

- Development of new **National Policy Statements (NPS)** for major projects including nuclear power. Questions of safety and other technical issues will be determined here, removing these issues from discussion at public inquiry.
- The creation of a new **Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC)** of around 35 commissioners to take decisions previously made by the Secretary of State on major infrastructure. (Now open for business as of the beginning of October)

The end of the **public inquiry system** and its replacement with a limited open floor hearing. This gives no public right to bring witnesses or to conduct cross-examination.

Very **limited protection from nuisance** generated by construction or works with regard to these major projects.

Friends of the Earth fought a long campaign to secure people's rights and the proper consideration of climate change in the new Act. Each proposal will now have to consider the impact on climate change (although how this will happen is still unclear), and the Climate Change Committee is now a statutory consultee.

While campaigning prevented some of the worst excesses of government policy, the new system being both **undemocratic and unfair** could not be prevented. That doesn't mean that it can be ignored.

It is vital for our collective future that **communities use all possible means to have their voice heard** in the process. The first opportunity for this will be during the consultation on the National Policy Statements. It is expected these will start coming out for consultation in October and details should be available on the Planning Portal website:

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/government/en/1115311950702.html> SEFS will try to keep you updated generally and specifically on things that directly affect the region.

A full briefing on the Planning Act from Friends of the Earth can be found on the SEFS website:

<http://sefs.org.uk/downloads/The%20Planning%20Act%202008%20.pdf>

## **CITY LOOKS TO ITS HARVEST**

A consortium of groups including Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and Food Matters have been granted £500,000 to develop a portfolio of projects across the city that focus on growing, cooking and eating more local food. Along with this Harvest will also be working to reconnect people to food and the seasons and fostering appreciation for food and how it gets to our plates.  
<http://www.bhfood.org.uk/page.php?id=147>

## **RIVER THAMES CORRIDOR**

The final version of the South East Plan contained a new policy, strongly supported by SEFS, to ensure a greater degree of protection for the River Thames and its valley corridor. The Chiltern Society, on whose draft the policy was based, is working with Bucks County Council, through the Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Consortium, to explore possible criteria to assist in developing the cross-boundary coordinated policy framework that the policy demands.

## **HIGH SPEED RAIL THREAT TO THE CHILTERN**

Whilst SEFS does not support the expansion of aviation, the development of High Speed Rail is also not without its problems.

The prospects for a new high speed rail network linking London to the Midlands and the North of England are being evaluated by a number of rail industry and government bodies, including High Speed 2 (HS2), a company set up by Government specifically to investigate options for a high speed rail link between London and the West Midlands.

The Chairman of HS 2 has made it clear that the route is likely to cross the Chilterns. The company is required to submit its report to Lord Adonis, Minister of State for Transport, by the end of the year. The company's remit requires it to consider the potential for extension to Greater Manchester and Scotland and to provide a proposal for an interchange station between HS2, The Great Western Main Line and Crossrail, with a convenient link to Heathrow. This latter requirement makes it more likely that any eventual route will pass through some of the special landscapes of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Chiltern Society, Chilterns Conservation Board, National Trust and other local interests have all expressed their strong concerns about the wide degree of harm such a major piece of infrastructure could do to the landscape, wildlife and heritage assets of the Chilterns. The proposal is likely to provide for two tracks in each direction with overhead gantries and could have very significant implications for the extensive footpath network of the Chilterns and the area's plans for developing linked Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, as well as substantially adding to noise pollution in relatively tranquil rural areas of the AONB.

The HS2 study is being conducted on a confidential basis with no public and very limited institutional consultation. Public consultation, which will raise

complex and controversial environmental issues, is not envisaged until the short listed options and recommendations have been considered by Government. The new line, if authorised, would not be completed before the early 2020s.

## **PLANS SHELVED (for the time being) Kingnorth**

It was announced last week that the development of the coal fired power station at Kingsnorth in Kent would be put on hold. E.ON blamed this decision on falling electricity demand and stated that if demand failed to pick up then the whole idea would be shelved completely. Given that the EU is planning to ban new power stations with emissions over 500g of carbon per kilowatt-hour from 2015 or make those built before pay for their carbon emissions. This might prove to be a wise move on E.ON's part.

## **Heathrow**

BAA has decided not to apply for a third runway at Heathrow before the next election, nor will it sign large contracts that leave no room for manoeuvre. Opponents of the scheme are delighted. But watch this space for news of proposals for a Thames Estuary Airport.

## **SEFS INTERNAL NEWS Surrey Wildlife Trust**

In March this year Surrey Wildlife Trust advised that they would no longer be able to provide financial and employment administration to SEFS. Since then P&EC have been looking for an alternative arrangement. After a call for help to members the Environment Centre in Southampton volunteered their services and SEFS is aiming to move all activities over to them by the beginning of December subject to the approval of the AGM. We would like to thank SWT for their help and support. Details about the Environment Centre can be found at: [www.environmentcentre.com](http://www.environmentcentre.com)

## **New Website Old Address www.sefs.org.uk**

In order to help SEFS further the Behaviour Change work changes needed to be made to the website. It worked out more cost effective to update the whole site so we now have a brand new look. You can tweet items and post comments. SEFS is also on Twitter (SEF4S) so you can follow when the website has been updated from there. This is your website so please use it. We would especially welcome news or details of events from where ever you are in the region.

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## **Events**

Please check the SEFS website for events happening around the region

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