

THE COALITION GOVERNMENT – WHAT’S HAPPENED TO REGIONAL BODIES

South East England Partnership Board (SEEPB)

- Now dissolved; all remaining staff were made redundant on July 31st.
- The work on the Regional Strategy has been discontinued; supporting evidence will be archived by GOSE and made available (probably through SEEC) to local authorities.
- Functions are being transferred where appropriate (e.g. secretariat for the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership now resides with Surrey Heath District Council).

South East England Councils (SEEC)

- South East England Councils (SEEC) was established in April 2009 to represent the views of local authorities in the South East. SEEC represents over 95 per cent of the 74 councils across the South East and is chaired by Cllr Paul Carter (Conservative, Leader of Kent County Council). SEEC has a wide remit, which includes providing effective representation of local authority interests on regional, national and international bodies; and a forum for the consideration and determination of regional issues, including strategic policies and investment priorities.
- SEEC meets regularly once a month.
- Click [here](#) for details about SEEC activities

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL) & South East Strategic Chief Executives (SESCE)

- SESL has evolved from the ‘South East County Leaders’ group, formed in 2006 to promote county interests during the SE Plan EiP. SESL comprises local authority Leaders; SESCE is a parallel group of Chief Executives. These two groups cover an extended area (the old SERPlan area) and membership (county, district and unitary authorities)
- SESL aims to deliver an ambitious programme of joint policy development and lobbying at all levels – national, regional and local. Hampshire CC provides support services (including an area on their [website](#)); Surrey CC Leader and CEO were elected in July as chairs of SESL and SESCE, respectively.

South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)

- Closure of all the RDAs has been announced
- Local authorities submitted proposals for their replacement ‘Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)’ at the beginning of September (see below for more details). The Public Bodies Bill which will provide the legislative basis for abolishing RDAs and any other public body will be introduced in the autumn, but Royal Assent is not expected until summer 2011 at the earliest. Government has not yet decided the closure time line for RDAs

although it has set up a backstop date of 31st March 2012.

- SEEDA still has a programme budget of £79m to spend this financial year. An outline of the budget priorities (and cut backs can be seen in a letter from Pam Alexander on the [SEFS website](#)):

Government Office of the South East (GOSE)

- Eric Pickles announced in July the Government’s intention in principle to abolish the remaining eight Government Offices of the Regions across England, although final decisions will be made at the end of the Spending Review on October 20th.
- The GOSE websites has been merged with a Government Office Network [website](#)

Regional Government Departments & Agencies

- Most government departments will be expected to cut budgets by an average of 25% over the next 3 years
- Defra and the Defra family (Natural England, Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency) will be affected.
- The **Environment Agency** is undergoing a major structural review and is expected to merge its Southern Region and Thames Region.
- **Natural England** has merged its South East and London regional offices. This is likely to be a temporary/transitional measure since it appears that NE will be ‘de-regionalised’ (in part responding to the switch from regionalism to localism, in part in response to the expected 30-40% budget cut).
- **Forestry Commission** is planning for at least 30% cuts and will not have any money for programme work or partnerships.
- There are suggestions that CABE & English Heritage might be merged.

Quangos are still under review but we expect announcements from Eric Pickles in the near future.

South East Regional Rural Board, Rural Forum for the South East & Sustainable Food and Farming Board

- The SE Rural Board will not meet again (because of the demise of SEEDA who run its secretariat) and is to amalgamate with the Rural Forum assuming the RF agrees.
- Rural Forum has finance up until the end of March 2011 and so does the Sustainable Food and Farming Board. However their futures are under review by ministers.
- The Government has announced that they agree with the principle and themes within the [Food 2030](#) document and are currently working on a suitable implementation plan, and considering how the regional boards could help with its delivery. This is now being referred to as the Food Strategy.

South East Rural Community Councils (SERCC)

- SERCC have appointed an Interim Chief Executive, Neil Casey

- With the existing political uncertainty about regional structures and delivery, the SERCC are undertaking a review of the organisation
- During this review SERCC will continue to deliver all its projects.
- Council for Rural Communities has been disbanded

South East Region Technical Advisory Body for Waste (SERTAB)

SERTAB meetings are planned for the autumn with a workshop due to take place on the 4th October to consider the "[SERTAB Role and Action Plan](#)". It has also been proposed that a SERTAB response is collated and sent to DEFRA on its "Path to Zero Waste economy" consultation. Hampshire County Council is currently supplying secretariat for SERTAB.

Sustainable Development

- DEFRA is withdrawing funding from the Sustainable Development Commission at the end of the current financial year.
- DEFRA SD Unit will take SD forward, assuming it survives DEFRA cuts.
- The government is due to radically reform the planning system on the basis of the [Open Source Planning](#) green paper. The aim is to "decentralise and streamline the planning system and allow it to focus on promoting sustainable development that local communities want."
- The Planning System changes are (according to the [DCLG Structural Reform Plan](#)) due to take place over the next year and be in place by April 2012
- Planning Policy Statements – According to the [Open Source Planning](#) green paper the need for existing Policy Statements (and PPGs) "will be evaluated and those required will be re-ordered and aligned in order to reflect the national priorities, as determined by Parliament. The result will be a series of short and focused guidance notes describing how specific aspects of the planning system will operate to deliver the government's agenda and setting out minimum environmental, architectural, economic and social standards for sustainable development. These will support the overarching National Policy Framework
- All revisions of PPSs have been halted; the PPS on Regional Spatial Strategies has been withdrawn.
- kind of working relationships with them.

The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review

Will be announced on 20th October 2010 and we hope things will start to settle down after that.

NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK IN SOUTH EASTERN ENGLAND

The view amongst SEFS P&EC members (and some external organisations to SEFS) is that even with the demise of regional level planning policy, there is still a need for a strong, SE (or wider) network of environmental organisations to ensure:

- 1) Information sharing
- 2) Support and overview policy input to help those working at sub regional/local level

- 3) Liaison with remaining regional bodies (SEEC, SESL, SESC and the emerging We will be discussing this further at the SEFS AGM in November. Click [here](#) to download your booking form

SEFS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

For the last 10 years SEFS has campaigned with much success to ensure the principles of Sustainable Development were enshrined in regional policy. This was particularly important once RSSs became a statutory obligation. However, in just a few months the coalition has abolished all regional policy documents and we have lost the good work done on not only the RSS but also the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework. However, with the increasing move towards the "Big Society" it is going to be crucial that local communities take up the challenge to ensure the region develops sustainably.

There will be opportunities, for voluntary community groups, to engage with the emerging Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) as well as continuing dialogue with local decision makers. When we do engage the single most important point that we all need to drive home to politicians, policy-makers and decision-takers wherever we can is that the guiding principles of sustainable development are key to ...

- a secure environment;
- a fair society; and
- a robust economic recovery.

If the South East is to grow and develop economically then we must manage our resources sustainably and seek to reduce our ecological footprint. The shift to "people power" doesn't change this, in fact, it gives us the opportunity to really push for sustainability to be at the heart of the communities we build and live in. Please stand up for sustainable development and make some of these points in the work that you are doing locally. If you have time to write to your MP or the leader of your council about the continuing need to keep the environment at the heart of decision making, please do so.

Click [here](#) for more detailed information on SEFS sustainable development priorities for south eastern England.

LEPs - REPLACEMENTS FOR SEEDA

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are the planned replacements for Regional Development Agencies (RDA). The LEPs' role will be to provide the strategic leadership in their areas to set out local economic priorities. The partnerships, the Government claims, are central to realising the vision of an economy rebalanced towards the private sector. The Government expects LEPs to create the right environment for business and growth by tackling issues such as planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure priorities, employment and enterprise. The LEP's will have access to the Regional Growth Fund and could have access to the land banks currently sitting with the RDA's. They may also bring forward Accelerated Growth Zones within their areas.

For LEPs to be effective, Government has stressed that it is "vital" that business and civic leaders work together.

As yet there does not appear to be a formal role for the voluntary and community sector, with the LEPs being business-led, there are indications that this may change.

The Government said it had been concerned that some RDA boundaries did not reflect economic areas and that it wanted LEPS to "better reflect the natural economic geography" of the areas they serve. Though they did add, "they would not object to LEPs being established that match an existing RDA's area "if it is clearly the wish of business and civic leaders".

However the SEEC have made it clear that they do not wish to see an LEP that covers the whole of the South East.

Some SEFS members have been involved in their Local Strategic Partnerships, (LSP's), which face an uncertain future and as such might see LEP's having an impact upon their work.

14 bids to form Local Economic Partnerships in the South East have been received by BIS (links to the bid documents have been provided where possible)

1. Bexley, Dartford, and Gravesham
2. [Brighton and Hove, Croydon, the Gatwick Diamond and West Sussex – Coast to Capital](#)
3. East Sussex
4. [Enterprise M3 – Covers parts of Hampshire and Surrey including Andover, Basingstoke, Aldershot, Farnborough, Fleet, Hook and Camberley](#)
5. [Gatwick Diamond](#)
6. [Hampshire](#)
7. [Kent and Medway](#) (link to draft submission)
8. [Kent-Essex](#)
9. [Oxfordshire City Region](#) (link to draft submission)
10. [Solent](#)
11. [Surrey Connects](#)
12. Thames Valley Berkshire
13. Thames Valley Buckinghamshire
14. [Visitor Economy Southern England](#)

And to the north of the region and beyond

- 15 [South East Midlands LEP](#) - Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, Aylesbury Vale in Buckinghamshire and the Boroughs of Northampton, Kettering and Corby and the districts of South Northamptonshire, Daventry and Cherwell in Oxfordshire.

Details of all the bids should appear on the Department for [Business Innovation and Skills website](#):

A parliamentary briefing on LEPS can be found [here](#) and you can read an article which lists all 56 bids from potential LEPs, received by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [here](#):

HOUSING

Planning for New Housing

Following abolition of the RSS, councils are reviewing the targets for housing provision. Amongst others Waverley Borough Council has got stuck in straight away with a new [consultation](#) (which closes on 13th October) asking the public how many houses should be built. Option 2 (just build within settlements) of three options is deemed by local campaigners to be the clear favourite to win although on any analysis it doesn't deliver enough houses.

Milton Keynes is definitely planning to reduce the amount of housing to be provided via its core strategy as a result of the revocation of the South East Plan. The council has agreed a series of changes that will not only remove references to the Plan but will also see their housing provision figures cut by nearly one third. The proposed changes will be produced shortly for [consultation](#) until mid November.

If your council is reviewing its housing provision please do keep us informed by emailing alison.walters@foe.co.uk

TRANSPORT

Airports – Lydd, the Battle Continues

Against the advice of their own officers, ecological consultants and Natural England, at a special meeting on 3 March 2010, Shepway District Councilors voted to approve expansion plans for Lydd Airport in Kent. Since then nearly 14,000 people wrote to the Government Office for the South East to request the plans for expanding Lydd Airport be called-in for a public inquiry. On 24 June it was announced that this inquiry will go ahead, starting on 15 February 2011.

Dungeness peninsula is one of the most important and sensitive wildlife habitats in the UK.

An expanded airport at Lydd risks adversely affecting internationally protected wildlife sites. Including a [SPA](#), which is currently under review for extension and a [SAC](#). The area may also be designated as a [Ramsar](#) site. The expansion would also impact on these not to mention, there are concerns over the increase in road traffic and noise, and the impact that the increased emission of greenhouse gases will have on climate change.

The decision to call-in Lydd airport's expansion plans is entirely consistent with the coalition Government's position on aviation and transport, which promotes the need for restraint rather than the previous headlong rush towards airport expansion.

You can help strengthen the case by writing a letter of objection to the inspector.

Please send your letter FAO:

Inspector K D Barton BA (HONS) DIPARCH
C/O Leanne Palmer, Room: 4/02, Temple Quay House
2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN
Or email: leanne.palmer@pins.gsi.gov.uk

RENEWABLE SOUTH EAST?

Largest offshore wind farm opens off Thanet in Kent

The world's biggest offshore wind farm off the Kent coast opened on September 23rd.

The 100 380ft (115m) tall turbines are expected to generate enough electricity to power 240,000 homes. It has been built seven miles (12km) off Foreness Point in Thanet. In all, up to 341 turbines will be installed over a four-year period. They are spread over an area of more than 35 sq km and are visible from the shore on a clear day.

The same company, Vattenfall also owns the 30-turbine Kentish Flats wind farm, off Herne Bay, one of the UK's first such projects when it opened five years ago.

[23/09/2010 * BBC *](#)

Other renewable projects

There are one or two interesting projects looming in the future which might help to reduce the regions carbon

dioxide emissions. These include proposals for two off-shore wind farms - off the Isle of Wight and Sussex coasts. There are also onshore wind farm proposals near Eastbourne and Banbury. Brenda Pollack is trying to collate information about other potential renewable energy projects around the region. If you have any information about a site near you please let her know. Email: brenda.pollack@foe.co.uk

MEMBERS CAMPAIGNS

How low should you go?

Friends of the Earth campaign on Local Carbon Budgets

FOE is asking the government to bring in new legislation to ensure that the targets set in the Climate Change Act are actually met.

A special petition has been drafted – not for individuals, but for councils to show support for this scheme. Before the election there was support for Local Carbon budgets but now ministers need to hear from councils that support the concept as the government doesn't seem to be following through on making this happen.

If you think your local authority would or could be supportive please contact them about this now. The petition will be presented to Chris Huhne the Secretary of State for the Environment in October.

A model letter and the petition are on [this webpage](#) which explains more about the initiative and how you can help: If you want further information or advice contact Brenda Pollack.

Letter to the Future

RSPB is pleased to be able to report that more than 300,000 people have now signed the Letter to the Future calling on better investment in nature, particularly timely as the UK Government finalises the comprehensive spending review. RSPB has written to the Prime Minister to urge him to take into account public concerns about the consequences for wildlife and that the UK Government does what it can to fulfil its ambitions to be the 'greenest government ever'. Whilst recognising the need to cut public spending, and the need for the Big Society to play its part in delivering public services, RSPB will continue to make the case that Government should protect budgets, such as the higher-level agri-environment scheme, which are core to the coalition's ambition 'to protect wildlife and restore biodiversity. Click [here](#) to sign the RSPB Letter to the Future

Make a Smarter Choice

Last week transport campaigning done by Sustrans, CBT and Friends of the Earth scored a small but important victory.

At the Lib Dem party conference Transport Minister Norman Baker announced that the Coalition Government will shortly introduce a "Local Sustainable Transport Fund".

Councils outside London will be able to make bids to secure funding for like 'Smarter Travel Choices' schemes that encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport instead of their cars.

It is not yet known how big the new fund will be, or crucially, whether it will fund both revenue and capital

projects and there is concern that things like [Bikeability](#) (the replacement to cycling proficiency) might lose out to other initiatives. However it is a positive development. In addition to the Bikeability campaign, there is an ongoing web action "tell the transport secretary to make a Smarter Choice" if you haven't yet please [click now](#) – pressure is still needed.

Here's 'Our View' now show us yours!

The Woodland Trust has recently launched a pioneering visual petition tool enabling people to campaign locally for more trees in their communities.

'MyView' is a 'first of its kind' online campaigning tool that enables people to get their messages across to local councillors via a picture.

People simply take a photo of a local street or area that they feel would benefit from more trees and load it onto the Woodland Trust website. Using the interactive click-and-drag design programme people can then 'plant' trees in the image.

Finally, they include a statement about why having more trees in this space is important to them. Once the design is finished, MyView will send the personal MyView straight to the individuals local Councillor via e-mail using a postcode finder.

Click [here](#) to have a go at MyView and create your ideal view

CAMPAIGNS AWARDED

South Downs Campaign

The South Downs Campaign recently won the [Sussex Eco Award for best Campaign](#). This was after many years of lobbying, networking and demonstrating to get the Government to designate the South Downs as a National Park. A number of SEFS groups took part in this campaign over the years. Well done to all involved.

Grow to Eat Well

Congratulations also to Portsmouth Friends of the Earth won [Campaign of the Year](#) at Friends of the Earth Local Groups conference. The group secured £250,000 from the Big Lottery to help children grow food at school. The project is focusing on schools in the most deprived areas. The aim is to create growing areas, provide composting facilities and show children and staff how to grow herbs and vegetables.

SEFS CONTACTS

SEFS Secretariat: Alison Walters – tel: 01273 766643, email: alison.walters@foe.co.uk

SEFS Chair: Lynnette Leeson - lynnette@hareslandscape.co.uk

P&EC Chair: Brenda Pollack – brenda.pollack@foe.co.uk

SEFS Transport & Behaviour Change: Peter England - hscap@ukonline.co.uk

Events

**[SEFS AGM](#) (click for more details)
4th November (Thursday) 10.30am-3.30pm,
National Trust Offices, 32 Queen Anne's Gate,
London**

**SEFS, 39-41 Surrey Street, Brighton BN1 3PB, tel: 01273 766643
email: alison.walters@foe.co.uk, website: www.sefs.org.uk**