

Panel Question (i)

Is the overall vision in the draft RSS appropriate, and does it adequately cover the characteristics and issues of the whole region?

1.1 Existing RPG 13 does not contain a clear vision and set of objectives. Early in the process to prepare RSS, it became apparent that there was a desire for RSS to do so. As a consequence, a series of options were consulted on as part of the online engagement exercise on strategic options for draft RSS in March/April 2005¹. As a result of the consultation it was decided that a vision and objectives should be developed.

1.2 The vision in draft RSS was developed in partnership with representatives of local planning authorities and other key stakeholders during the spring of 2005 including a workshop held on 18th May 2005 at GONW in Manchester². Further iterations of the vision were developed by the Assembly for consideration by the former Planning, Environment and Transport Key Priority Group³ and subsequently by the RSS Steering Group⁴. The vision was then subject to extensive consultation as part of the consultation on the Interim Draft RSS in autumn 2005.

1.3 There was strong support for a clear vision which identified the key issues/challenges facing the region and which stated how the region was expected to have been spatially planned, developed and operated in 2021.

1.4 It should be noted that there has been relatively little comment made on the vision as part of the public consultation. However Assembly officers accept that the text could be revised in light of a number of comments to ensure that there is a clear concise overall vision with supporting text addressing some gaps in coverage.

1.5 Key areas that the Panel may wish to consider recommending revisions for include:

- reference in introductory text and within final two paragraphs to improving Cumbria's economic performance and transformation of local economy⁵
- relationships between North West, neighbouring regions and individual sub-regions (city regions addressed in introductory text)⁶
- ensuring that a clear and concise vision is provided and presented, which could be achieved through revisions and reordering of final two paragraphs⁷
- ensuring that the introductory text addresses some of the concerns raised about the role of social and environmental factors in improving quality of life and delivering sustainable development⁸

¹ RSS Strategic Options Papers, NWRA, April 2005

² See note of the RPAG Workshop, 18 May 2005

³ See papers prepared for PETKPG meetings held 19th May 2005 and 28th July 2005.

⁴ The Steering Group was set up in as a result of new Assembly governance structures replacing PETKPG. The Steering Group first met on 12th August 2005

⁵ Allerdale BC, Barrow-in-Furness BC, Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Strategic Partnership, Furness Enterprise Ltd, KOFAC Secretariat and Eden DC

⁶ AGMA

⁷ AGMA, Brethrens Gospel Trust, CPRE, North West Development Consortium and the National Trust

Panel Question (ii)

Does the draft RSS provide an appropriate, realisable and sustainable strategy for the region, having regard to national objectives/ policy, key strategic issues and factors influencing change?

2.1 The Assembly believes that the strategy set out in the draft RSS is appropriate, realisable and sustainable. The document has been prepared within the context of European, national, pan-regional and regional policy⁹. The key strategic issues identified at the issues stage of the draft plan¹⁰, and subsequent iterations of policy development, have been fully incorporated into the draft RSS. Moreover, future proofing¹¹ of the draft plan has been undertaken to account for anticipated factors that may influence changes required of the plan. It has been the subject of a full sustainability appraisal, incorporating the requirements of a strategic environmental assessment. The outputs of this process have been an integral part of the policy development process (see Matter 1E).

⁸ CPRE, English Heritage, Friends of the Earth North West, Environment Agency, Lancashire CC, Manchester Friends of the Earth, National Trust, North West Environment Link, North West Transport Activists Roundtable

⁹ See section 3 of draft RSS

¹⁰ The North West Regional Spatial Strategy Issues Paper, NWRA, September 2004

¹¹ Future Proofing the North West Spatial Strategy, Forum for the Future, December 2005