

1E: Sustainability

1E(i)

- 1.20 The County Council has no concerns about procedural compliance with statutory requirements and is pleased to see that the appraisal process has sought to guide the development of the RSS. However, greater consideration should be given to monitoring and implementation matters, which will play an important role in controlling and mitigating against significant environmental impacts and in contributing to a greater understanding of sustainable development. The monitoring and implementation section of the sustainability appraisal report is relatively generic and fails to prioritise the actions required to address issues raised earlier in the report; nor is it demonstrated how the proposed indicators will be analysed to reflect these issues.

1E(ii)

- 1.21 The vision is more about sustaining development than sustainable development. Generally, there is limited mention of environmental matters throughout the vision or the introduction of RSS. The vision focuses on maximising economic growth as the solution to addressing regional disparities, and it is weak in its engagement with the region's environmental assets or the role they should play in 'quality of life'.
- 1.22 By focusing on an economic description of the region, at the expense of any environmental description, the RSS is bound to focus on economic solutions e.g. a development solution to deprivation. However, the landscape and its natural and cultural heritage are some of the region's most significant assets and should be promoted as a key characteristic within the RSS. The natural and historic environment of the region should be reflected more positively in RSS, and build on one of the priorities and goals in the AfS Framework; "biodiversity and landscapes are valued in themselves and for their contribution to the region's economy and quality of life."¹
- 1.23 The RSS should recognise that the natural and historic environment of the NW is one of its most important assets. This asset is ubiquitous throughout the region down to the local scale. A quality environment at a local level is a key to delivering 'quality of life' and should be explicitly recognised as such in RSS. A more positive approach to the environment would help to drive the RSS ambition to "tackle issues of deprivation, worklessness and social exclusion in disadvantaged areas" and "to improve local environments and to boost quality of life for North West people as a whole."²

¹ ACTION FOR SUSTAINABILITY The Regional Sustainable Development Framework for the North West p6

² RSS Vision p2 Draft submitted

1.24 The imbalance between economic and environmental issues is reflected in the poor performance of some policies against environmental objectives in the RSS SA framework. It is important that economic priorities throughout RSS are reconciled with environmental priorities, recognising the importance of the environment to the sustainable development of the region and the corresponding need to protect and enhance it.

1E(iii)

1.25 The draft RSS is broadly positive in its approach to climate change, with inclusion of adaptation measures such as climate proofing of dwellings, resilience to flooding and coastline management. It might be preferable to incorporate the more relevant strategic policies that refer to climate change in either Chapter 6 or 7, including:

- Policy EM5, which refers to Flood Risk Areas. A map showing these areas would be useful.
- Policy EM6, Managing the North West's Coastline, which could be combined with Policy RDF4. The NWRA should commit to undertaking work to define the various types of coast, the potential impacts of climate change on each type and appropriate mitigation measures.

1E(iv)

1.26 Policy DP1 of draft RSS identifies the importance of reducing the need to travel when developing proposals and schemes. However, draft RTS Objective 4 and Policy RT6 both refer to "managing travel demand" rather than reducing the need to travel.

1.27 Draft RSS, as the Sustainability Appraisal draws out, emphasises economic growth in the North West. Policy W2 is, for example, likely to have the effect of stimulating more travel by increasing commuting. Airport growth will also stimulate the demand to travel. Promoting more efficient transport networks creates the opportunity for more travel. However, other policies, such as RT7 and RDF1 (in respect of local facilities and services), could make a positive contribution to reducing the need to travel.

1.28 Lancashire County Council would not want to see increased economic growth and prosperity jeopardised but would wish more attention to be paid to how this could be achieved in a more sustainable manner. Ensuring that accessibility audits are taken of all major new employment, leisure and residential developments would be one possible way to address this and should be explicitly built into RSS policies. Where more travel is necessary this should be done in the most sustainable way in line with Policy EM16.