

Panel Question (i)

Could the clarity and consistency of the draft RSS be improved? Is the draft RSS “user friendly” in terms of understanding the strategy and how policies are to be implemented?

1.1 The structure of the draft RSS has undergone an iterative process of development involving a wide range of stakeholders. The draft RSS reflects the majority view from stakeholders as to how an RSS should be set out. The framework provides a logical progression in delivering a regional spatial strategy in the following way:

- Regional Development Framework (RDF) that sets out the key overarching regional principles and the broad spatial framework to be delivered over the plan period;
- Regional Policy Framework that provides detailed thematic policies that sit within the context of the RDF and provide detail for the Sub-Regional Policy Frameworks; and
- Sub-Regional Policy Frameworks that reflect the advice and policy work undertaken by sub-regional partners that mesh with the Regional Development and Regional Policy Frameworks.

1.2 The Assembly has identified a number of appropriate changes that respond to the full public consultation¹ in various written statements that clarify and improve the consistency of the draft RSS.

1.3 Draft RSS sets out in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.6 the role and purpose of RSS which provides an up front user friendly introduction to what RSS is precisely setting out to do. Draft RSS states that *‘This document is accompanied by an Implementation Framework, which provides information on methods for the delivery of RSS, the agencies that will carry it out, targets to be met and arrangements for monitoring progress.’*

Panel Question (ii)

Does the draft RSS provide an appropriate level of detail for the preparation of Local Development Documents? Does it provide appropriate guidance for other local plans (e.g. LTPs) and delivery mechanisms? Do the proposals in Chapter 19 of the RSS adequately provide for the transition from Structure Plans to the new LDF system?

2.1 Planning Policy Statement 11 (PPS11)² sets out clearly the need for RSS to provide a sufficient level of detail for the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs). It is considered that the draft RSS provides an appropriate level of detail, clearly stating where regional policy requires further interpretation by LDDs. The public consultation raised little comment regarding concerns that the draft RSS did not provide an adequate basis for the formulation of policy in LDDs.

2.2 The use of “plans and strategies” and “proposals and schemes” in policy wording to set out the roles of other strategies and delivery mechanisms provides a consistent and inclusive approach in the Assembly’s opinion. It ensures that the draft RSS relates to the full range of plans, strategies and delivery mechanisms that have

¹ Briefing Paper 20 - Suggested Wording Changes to Draft RSS, NWRA, September 2006

² Paragraph 1.5, PPS11 (**PP11**)

spatial implications for the region. Moreover, the Implementation Framework sets out clearly who will do what with regard to delivering the policy framework in draft RSS.

2.3 Chapter 19 of the draft RSS provides the Assembly's opinion on which policies in the draft RSS will replace policies in the three adopted structure plans³. The public consultation revealed that Lancashire County Council supported the Assembly's position set out in Chapter 19. Cheshire and Cumbria County Councils, and the Lake District National Park Authority suggested that there was a need for a significant number of policies to be retained in the respective structure plans. The Assembly acknowledge that that the structure plans policies suggested to be "saved" by the three planning authorities provide more detail than that given by equivalent draft RSS policies. However, it is the opinion of Assembly officers that much of the detail in the structure plan polices is more suitable for Local Development Documents, and in particular Core Strategies. If it is considered by the Panel that structure plan polices should be saved beyond the three years post adoption to prevent a potential policy deficit, the recently published guidance on saving structure plan policies⁴ provides the procedural framework for such an exercise.

³ Cheshire County Council (2006), Cheshire 2016 Structure Plan Alteration;
Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Blackpool Borough Council (2005), The Replacement Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016;
Cumbria County Council and Lake District National Park Authority (2006), Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan

⁴ DCLG (2006), Protocol for handling proposals to save adopted Local Plan, Unitary Development Plan and Structure Plan policies beyond the 3 year saved period