

Panel Question 11B (iii)

Are there sufficient processes in place such as annual monitoring reports to ensure that the impacts of RSS can be monitored? Have the right targets and indicators been identified in the implementation framework to ensure the RSS can be effectively monitored?

3.1 The annual monitoring report is a comprehensive system for monitoring the impacts of the RSS.

3.2 The regulations¹ state that the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) should identify where policies are not being implemented, the reasons for this and indicate the measures that the RPB will take to secure implementation e.g. whether there will be a draft revision of the policy. The Assembly has already commenced this approach in the 2006 AMR² for the adopted RSS. This process directly links policy to implementation allowing a more meaningful monitoring system. The AMR can also identify gaps in our understanding of policy impacts. These may be addressed in the future by introducing new indicators, or by one off research projects.

3.3 The Assembly has produced AMRs since 2004³, developing a robust set of indicators, and systems for data gathering in partnership with district authorities. To aid data providers, we publish a monitoring manual in spring / early summer of each year which outlines indicators, timetable, data definitions and a data form for local authorities to complete. The draft manual is circulated to data providers and users for comment prior to finalisation. Two regional monitoring seminars have also been held, and a Regional Monitoring Group was set up in 2004 to discuss monitoring issues and share best practice.

3.4 Feedback from the DCLG on the latest AMR⁴ was generally positive, singling out the following aspects as good practice:

- An effective executive summary with a policy performance table
- The use of a table in the introduction outlining indicators and the links to emerging and adopted RSS policies.
- The structure and analysis of bundles of indicators by policy areas.

3.5 The AMR is central to monitoring the impacts of RSS but there are two related processes which will also have a role:

- The Assembly's statutory role in assessing LDF Core Strategies for conformity with RSS provides a means of monitoring the influence of RSS.
- Assessment through the monitoring regimes of other strategies which play a role in delivering RSS, particularly Regional Funding Allocation and Housing Strategy.

3.6 Indicators have been identified according to the following criteria:

- Using DCLG Core Output Indicators⁵.
- Links with draft RSS Sustainability Appraisal indicators⁶

¹ Town and Country Planning (Regional Planning)(England) regulations 2004, Section 5(3)

² Annual Monitoring Report on RPG13, NWRA, February 2006 (**MON2**)

³ Regional Planning Guidance Annual Monitoring Report, NWRA, January 2005 and Annual Monitoring Report on RPG13, NWRA, February 2005

⁴ Letter from DCLG dated 1 September 2006 – "Feedback on Regional Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) for 2005"

⁵ Core output indicators for Regional Planning, ODPM, March 2005

- Linking and aligning with existing monitoring arrangements, targets and indicators (e.g the Regional Economic Strategy, North West Vital Signs⁷).
- A good range of output and contextual indicators
- Continuity with the current monitoring regime for RPG13.
- Avoiding too many indicators, which would result in too much time spent collecting information and lack of focus in the AMR which needs to be concise and easily understood.
- Minimising the collection of primary data, as use of existing published sources is more efficient and effective, and helps to achieve consistency between organisations.
- Development of headline indicators to directly monitor the RSS objectives.

3.7 We note GONW concerns raised about usefulness of the proposed targets and indicators⁸ and invite GONW to provide clarity to the Panel on how it envisages the indicators could be changed to become more relevant and focussed.

3.8 North West Regional Assembly Panel Briefing Paper 19 “Proposed further development of the Implementation Framework” details further work that will be undertaken on targets and indicators.

Panel Question 11B (iv)

Should the draft RSS include a specific policy for monitoring?

4.1 The Assembly does not consider that a specific policy for monitoring could add anything over and above repeating national government guidance.

⁶ Sustainability Appraisal Report of the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England, January 2006, Chapter 6.

⁷ See www.gonw.gov.uk/gonw/OurRegion/VitalSigns/

⁸ Paragraph 9b) of Annex 1 of the GONW response