

SNR Consultation Document: Joint RDA* and LGA Statement

- Local government and RDAs are jointly committed to helping the Government successfully implement the SNR to achieve increased sustainable economic growth.
- We welcome the strengthened role for local government in economic development.
- A whole system and integrated approach is vitally important to ensure real economic growth, including areas such as skills and housing, as well as innovation and enterprise and the culture agenda.
- We agree that planning, which affects property rights and the character of communities, needs to be anchored in democratic political processes, with political responsibility taken at the appropriate level for different orders of planning decisions.

Regional Strategies

- We welcome the introduction of a single Regional Strategy which integrates spatial and economic strategies and sets out a clear vision for the next 15-20 years of how and where sustainable economic growth should be delivered.
- We support the principle of a minimal legislative framework set by Parliament, allowing partners in each region to develop their own approaches to implementation.
- We support the need for a robust and rigorous shared evidence base within each region, which should be based on the existing regional evidence base and the new economic assessments prepared by Las, often working together as sub-regions.
- We endorse the approach that the strategy will result in a strategic alignment between national, regional and local spending plans and the expectation that it will influence the policies and investment decisions of central government departments, public agencies and private investment.
- We agree that RDAs will have executive responsibility for developing the strategy and that local authorities will be fully involved in its preparation from the outset; that there will be effective engagement with stakeholders; and that councils will bring to the process their elective mandate to help ensure that it commands support across the region.
- We agree that there will be a joint agreement of the draft strategy by the RDA Board and Leaders' Forum before it is submitted to Government, that strategies should only be submitted to Ministers when they are agreed; and that local authorities and RDAs should endeavour to agree regional strategies in their regions, seeking ministerial intervention only as a last resort.
- We are keen to ensure that there can be a smooth transition to the new arrangements set out in the SNR; we also want to ensure that capacity is not lost from the system as the result of uncertainty; we would therefore support making provision in the current Planning Bill to allow consensual transfers of staff and activity from Regional Assemblies to RDAs, where partners in each region agree that is what they wish to do.

Scrutiny

LAs will develop new arrangements for exercising scrutiny powers at a regional level which will be based on the principles of being complementary to national arrangements and set in the context of parliamentary regional committees. Local authorities in each region will scrutinise a wide range of partners (not just RDAs) on the delivery of the Regional Strategy.

Regional Funding Allocations

- We welcome the second round of the RFA exercise as a means of regional partners influencing the shape of government spending, particularly inclusion of the Housing and Communities Agency resource, and wish to see the RFA begin in 2009-10.

Skills

- We believe adult skills are a crucial element of economic development and that decision-making on adult skills and training priorities should be devolved to partnerships involving both RDAs and councils at the level of real economic geography.

Joint Working & Delegation

- We support the principle that RDAs should be business-led and that they will continue to manage the single pot to fund economic priorities.
- Within this context we welcome the move to a more programme-based approach to budget management and more clarity on the level of investment activities and policy interventions best delivered sub regionally or locally.
- In line with an effective investment planning process between RDAs and local government, we recognise that a 'spectrum' of delegation will be appropriate, with activities, subject to capacity, occurring primarily at three levels:
 - Regional delivery by the RDA e.g. responding to economic shocks, inward investment, innovation
 - Regional or sub regional delivery through others e.g. Business Support, MAS; and
 - Sub-regional level with delegation to local authorities and other organisations, including through developments such as Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs).
- We will jointly explore in each Region how, within current legislative constraints, greater flexibility in terms of delegation can be given to LAs to meet agreed outcomes and yet retain appropriate accountability.
- We support the principle that LAs will continue to promote economic development in a way that increases sub-regional collaboration where appropriate and in line with the regional strategy.

* London's unique governance arrangements mean that the London Development Agency is not a signatory to this statement