

Briefing

Yorkshire & the Humber

regional forum

voice of the voluntary & community sector



The Yorkshire and Humber Strategy

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Summary

This briefing gives an update on progress towards the production of an Integrated Regional Strategy, for our region. Now called the Yorkshire & Humber Strategy it is designed to deliver sustainable economic growth over a 15 to 20 year period. The briefing gives details on:

- what the strategy will contain
- the process
- how the Regional Forum is responding on behalf of the voluntary and community sector (VCS)
- key issues and concerns
- conclusions.

Background

At the end of 2008 the Government announced its response to the consultation on the Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR). The purpose was to look for ways to drive forward economic growth in the English regions, and particularly to tackle pockets of persistent deprivation. The Government concluded that this would be best achieved by targeting policy at the appropriate spatial level: regional, sub regional, and local.

Local Authorities would be given new responsibilities for economic development, including working more closely with each other. At the regional level decision-making would be simplified. Regional Assemblies would cease to exist and their planning and other functions would be transferred to Regional Development Agencies (RDAs – in this case, Yorkshire Forward) and local authorities through local government associations (Local Government Yorkshire and Humber in this region), and a new governance structure would be established. Existing regional strategies, including Spatial and Economic, would be replaced by an all-embracing Integrated Regional Strategy.

These proposals are contained in the Local Development and Construction Act which received Royal Assent on 13th November 2009.

Where are we now?

A new governance structure is now in place in our region.

(See www.regionalforum.org.uk/policy/other.php?id=201) The Regional Assembly ceased to exist in April 2009, and responsibility for the strategy rests with a new Joint Regional Board. This is made up of 8 local authority leaders and 8 Yorkshire Forward board members. The Joint Regional Board is now the Regional Planning Body and is supported in this function by officers from Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) and Yorkshire Forward. The creation of the strategy is one of the early tasks of the Joint Regional Board. The aim is to have the strategy signed off by October 2012.

What will be in the strategy?

- An overview of the key regional and sub regional challenges including economic, social, health and well being.
- How sustainable economic growth can be delivered.
- How we can create sustainable, well-connected and inclusive mixed housing communities.
- Addressing climate change and energy needs.
- Identification of areas or communities that should be priorities for regeneration and investment.
- Ensuring that economic growth takes into account available infrastructure, including transport, waste, water, and minerals.
- Widening access to culture, media, and sport.

The process

Project Plan and Key Lines of Enquiry

A Project Plan has been developed which sets out the process for the development of the strategy including detailing the scope, timetable, and the approach to securing wider involvement in its development. An essential element of this plan is a series of questions, or Key Lines of Enquiry which need to be answered during the development of the strategy. These Key Lines of Enquiry will be the structure for all subsequent submissions of evidence that will inform the eventual drafting of the strategy.

Evidence Collection and Developing Policy Options

It is intended that the strategy will be built on robust evidence. Evidence will be collected on the Key Lines of Enquiry from November 2009 to the end of March 2010. Any organisation or individual can submit evidence. This evidence will be used to develop draft policy options, and there will be a consultation on these before they are finalised. The Key Lines of Enquiry are; Economy and Skills, Housing and Regeneration, Transport, Spatial Planning, Climate Change and Environmental Resources, and Quality of Life and Equalities.

One of the key features of the process is stakeholder consultation and engagement. It is clear that a complex and high level strategy like the strategy cannot succeed unless it involves the widest possible range of interests, organisations, and expertise. There is a clear commitment in this region to do this, and to go beyond the minimum expected in the government's guidance. Yorkshire Forward and the Leaders' Board will be required to prepare, and comply with, a published statement setting out how they will consult and engage with stakeholders and

communities.

How the Regional Forum is responding to the strategy

The Regional Forum wants to make sure that there are opportunities for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to help shape the strategy and that our involvement is informed by VCS experience and understanding.

- We submitted comments to the informal consultation on the draft project plan and secured some changes on behalf of the sector.
- We are fully involved, as a key stakeholder, in discussions about strategy developments.
- We have formed a VCS Leaders Advisory Group to offer expertise, intelligence, and understanding to regional decisions on skills, the environment, community development, and the whole process of policy making. Members of the group are: Sharon Allen (St. Anne's Community Services); John Bracewell (Groundwork); Helen Groves (Humber Learning Consortium); Peter McGurn (Goodwin Centre, Hull), and David Smith (Leeds Voice).
- We organised a major conference, called 'Making Connections: the third sector and the Integrated Regional Strategy' on 13th October 2009. This focused on how the experience and work of the sector could be used to inform the development of the strategy. It was attended by, and involved, Yorkshire Forward, Local Government Yorkshire and Humber, Government Office, and the new economics foundation, as well as representatives from across the region's VCS.
- We are promoting a more sustainable view of economic development using a think piece developed with the new economics foundation; 'Living better, using less'. (Download at www.regionalforum.org.uk/publications_resources/knowledgebase/500/560/309.pdf)
- We have secured representation on the Consultation and Engagement Task and Finish Group led by Yorkshire Forward. The role of this group is to ensure that all relevant organisations are engaged with the development of the strategy.
- We are keeping the sector informed about developments via our website at www.regionalforum.org.uk/policy/index.php.

Key issues and concerns

- The impact that the current recession will have on the strategy and the region's economic growth, particularly in terms of the amount of public investment that will be available in the short to medium term.
- The way in which key agencies work together. It will take time for them to develop productive working relationships, and the timescale for producing the strategy is tight.
- Current political uncertainty in the run up to the next general election with possible implications for regional governance, such as the possible loss of RDAs.
- How genuinely sustainable development, and not just the pursuit of economic growth, can be the focus of the strategy. In particular, how the region can respond to the challenges of improving the quality of life for all, within recognised environmental limits.
- How to ensure that the VCS is engaged with the process and that we provide the necessary

evidence to inform the strategy development.

Conclusions

The strategy is an ambitious project which, as one of its aims, tries to simplify the process of regional governance and focus economic development at the right levels. In the short term, at least, it may actually have made the process more complicated, because new structures and ways of working have had to be developed. These will take time to mature.

The intention is that the strategy should be built by starting at the local level and creating a framework for the region's development. It is important to note that local authorities will have to carry out Local Economic Assessments from April 2010. (Some have already started.) These assessments should involve the private sector and the VCS in meaningful consultation. This is one of the reasons why the strategy is relevant to local VCS organisations. The other is that the strategy will identify some underlying principles for the way in which we do things in the future. One of these should be recognition of the crucial importance of co-production: recognising people as assets, strengthening and extending social networks, and building levels of trust and shared expertise. The VCS has specific and valuable experience in delivering on these at community level.

Whatever the outcome of the general election, it seems likely that there will still be some form of decision making and planning at different spatial levels because issues like climate change, transport, housing, and economic development cut across local boundaries. Having an effective VCS engagement with whatever decision-making structures emerge will be important. The Regional Forum believes that the VCS should adopt a positive and pro-active approach to working with other stakeholders and partners to ensure that we are able to play a meaningful role.

What happens next?

Evidence will be collected on the Key Lines of Enquiry from November 2009.

- We will be asking Regional Forum members for their ideas and evidence to contribute to the strategy process.

- We will be submitting evidence to the Key Lines of Enquiry, and helping the sector to do so. The evidence collection period runs until 31. March 2010.

Getting more information



Contact Stephen Fox: 0113 394 2300
stephen.fox@regionalforum.org.uk



'Making Connections' conference report – www.regionalforum.org.uk/publications_resources/knowledgebase/200/310.pdf

'Living better, using less', (new economics foundation think piece) – www.regionalforum.org.uk/publications_resources/knowledgebase/500/560/309.pdf



Yorkshire Forward are planning a dedicated strategy part of their website, with up to date information about the process to follow to submit evidence to a Key Line of Enquiry and more details about the strategy timetable.

Author

Stephen Fox (Development Officer, Policy & Engagement)

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We use our briefings to summarise important developments and their implications, including proposals for new structures or legislation. They are designed to promote debate, put forward an argument, elicit response and encourage action, as appropriate.

Yorkshire & the Humber Regional Forum Ltd
Suite D10, Joseph's Well, Hanover Walk, Leeds LS3 1AB
t: 0113 3942300 f: 0113 3942301
w: www.regionalforum.org.uk

