



In the Know

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This is the third edition of our new quarterly electronic newsletter. Its purpose is simple, to keep you in the know about what is going on in the Government Office for the West Midlands and our sponsor Departments in Whitehall. We hope that you find it both informative and clear.

communications.team@gowm.gsi.gov.uk

Planning for a Sustainable Future

21 May 2007 - the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Trade and Industry, and Transport jointly published a White Paper which outlines further reforms to the planning system. Although described as a White Paper, in many ways it is more of a Green Paper – it includes a large number of questions on which we want to hear views.

Effective planning creates places which enhance our quality of life. It facilitates the development of infrastructure such as water supply and treatment, energy, and transport. The proposed improvements to the system will enable decisions on the infrastructure necessary to achieve our goals for secure energy supply, reduced carbon emissions, and international competitiveness in a timely, efficient and predictable manner.

Recent reports from Kate Barker and Rod Eddington have highlighted the challenges which the planning system faces in supporting sustainable economic development, increasing the supply of housing, protecting and enhancing the environment, and improving our infrastructure.

The White Paper responds to these reports and focuses on two distinct areas for improvement. The first part of the White Paper presents proposals to improve the delivery of nationally significant infrastructure projects, such as major airports, improvements to the Strategic Road Network, major power generating facilities and nationally significant water and waste infrastructure.

National policy statements on infrastructure are key to this. Ministers would be required to establish long term infrastructure requirements and subject them to Parliamentary scrutiny. These statements would enable promoters to identify projects which deliver the infrastructure requirements. Promoters would prepare applications to nationally agreed standards which ensure consultation before submission.

An independent Infrastructure Planning Commission would then determine applications for National Infrastructure Projects.

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Planning for a Sustainable Future continued ...



The planning applications and appeals processes will be streamlined, the estimated reduction of 25% in householder applications will allow planners to focus on the more important issues.



The Commission would gather and consider evidence and hold round table examinations on these proposals. In granting permission, all appropriate consents would be covered including compulsory purchase powers.

The second part of the White Paper focuses on the Town and Country Planning system. A major aim is a review of the national planning policy framework to make it strategic, clear and short. It will ensure economic development benefits are appropriately weighted, whilst improving the effectiveness of town centre policy. There is a strong commitment to maintaining the existing Green Belt policy, whilst recognising that it does allow authorities to review them as necessary.

This also builds on the Local Government White Paper, strengthening the linkages between planning and the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreements. Authorities will have increased flexibility in relation to the process for preparing planning documents and financial incentives will incentivise delivery of plans, progress in delivering policy outcomes, and joint working between authorities. The planning applications and appeals processes will be streamlined, the estimated reduction of 25% in householder applications will allow planners to focus on the more important issues.

To summarise, a White Paper jointly issued by four Whitehall Departments, proposals to streamline the procedures for

delivering national infrastructure projects, complemented by more efficient, effective, joined-up planning processes at the local level. To find out more, read the White Paper at www.communities.gov.uk/planningwhitepaper

Make sure your views are heard by responding to the consultations. Those launched on 21 May close on 17 August. There will be consultations on further details later in the year.





The New Energy White Paper

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Despite anticipated energy savings, approximately 33% more generating capacity will be needed to secure the future and the paper strengthens support for renewable electricity.

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DTI published the Energy White Paper *Meeting the Energy Challenge* on 23 May 2007. The paper follows *The Energy Challenge*, published in 2006 and has two central aims:

1. To tackle climate change by cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and
2. To ensure the UK has secure and affordable energy supplies.

The White Paper sets out a long term framework for action to address those challenges both in the UK and abroad and to deliver 4 energy policy goals:

- reduce CO2 emissions,
- maintain energy supplies,
- promote competitive markets
- ensure every home is adequately and affordably heated.

It also includes a range of measures to help the UK become more energy efficient and cut energy use. It puts stronger obligations on energy producers to double their efforts to reduce residential power consumption rather than simply supplying power. And big organisations like supermarkets, banks, hotel chains and the public sector will be required to limit their emissions.

Despite anticipated energy savings, approximately 33% more generating capacity will be needed to secure the future and

the paper strengthens support for renewable electricity. Local generation of energy by individual households and communities will be encouraged by extending the use of solar panels and wind turbines. There will also be efforts to remove current barriers to local generation by introducing simpler licensing and by 2015 it is expected that around 15% of our electricity supplies will come from renewables (like solar, wind and wave and tidal power) – triple the amount now.

In transport, the road transport fuel obligation in the White Paper will save a million tonnes of carbon a year. The White Paper wants to double that *if* government is satisfied that it is sustainable to do so.

There will be a competition for the demonstration of ‘carbon capture and storage’ – which has the potential to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel power stations by as much as 90%.

Also, alongside the White Paper was a consultation document on nuclear power as renewables alone will not provide all of the increased demand in power and the existing nuclear power stations are ageing.

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The New Energy White Paper continued ...

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Government has reached the preliminary view that it would be in the public interest to allow energy companies to invest in nuclear power.

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Government has reached the preliminary view that it would be in the public interest to allow energy companies to invest in nuclear power. But there will be further consultation before making a final decision.

In summary, the White Paper anticipates ambitious savings of carbon emissions of between 23-33 million tonnes of carbon by 2020 - equivalent to removing all the emissions of every car, van, lorry on Britain's roads today. It also aims to tackle the issue of energy cost and security of supply through a commitment to more renewable generation and commits to a further consultation on nuclear power generation.

The entire White Paper can be accessed from:
www.dti.gov.uk/energy/whitepaper/page39534.html





GOWM plays a key role in AWM's Board Appointments

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We work closely with the Agency, to raise regional awareness about becoming an AWM Board member and the opportunities it presents for the right individual to help shape the economic future of the West Midlands.

”

Advantage West Midlands 2007 Board Appointments

Since 2001 Ministers have implemented a rolling programme of RDA Board Appointments to help RDA Chairs effectively manage their succession planning programme and to bring in new talent and fresh ideas. Vacancies for the 2007 Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) Boards were advertised on the 3 June 07. The closing date for applications is noon on 6 July 2007. Applications can be accessed online at www.rdaappointments.co.uk. Alternatively, application packs can be obtained by calling 08700 435060, quoting reference number RDA001.

For its 2007 Board appointments AWM is seeking 2 new members, to replace two of its existing Board members who are standing down after serving two full terms. They are looking for one representative from the Business sector and one from the Voluntary and Community Sector. The successful candidates will take up their positions on AWM's Board in December 2007 for a period of three years.

GOWM plays a significant role in the appointments process. Our Economy Team manages the process in liaison with DTI, including supporting the sift and interview panels to be chaired by Trudi Elliott our Regional Director. Accompanying Trudi on the panel will be Nick Paul the Chair of AWM and an Independent Assessor appointed by DTI. The latter is a requirement of the

Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies (the OPCA code), under which all RDA Board appointments are made. Trudi will report the outcome of the panels to the DTI Minister, who will make the final decision on AWM's new Board members. The appointments will be announced in November 2007. The Minister also has the option to interview candidates considered as appointable before making the final decision.

In reality our work on AWM's Board Appointments is a continuous process. We work closely with the Agency, to raise regional awareness about becoming an AWM Board member and the opportunities it presents for the right individual to help shape the economic future of the West Midlands. We also seek to ensure that AWM's Board replicates the diversity of the Region, and has the appropriate gender balance. Therefore we are keen to encourage potential applicants from women, members of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities to ensure the Board reflects the diversity of our region.

We are always looking at different ways to raise awareness to attract new talent to AWM's Board, as well as building on what has worked well in the past.

Continue →





GOWM plays a key role in AWM's Board Appointments continued ...

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We are always looking at different ways to raise awareness to attract new talent to AWM's Board, as well as building on what has worked well in the past.

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We promote opportunities through appropriate Ministerial visits and speeches in the region, hosting awareness events, such as a very successful one we held for the business community at our office in April this year, and issuing joint letters with AWM to key stakeholders.

If you know of anyone who could be a potential AWM Board member (or indeed reading this you may be interested yourself) you can find out more by visiting www.rdaappointments.co.uk for the 2007 vacancies or, alternatively by visiting our website on

www.go-wm.gov.uk

or AWM's www.advantagewm.co.uk/board-appointments

Remember our campaign for attracting AWM Board members is ongoing!





Your Region Your Strategy

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It is worth re-emphasising that the WMES belongs to the region and its success depends on the actions and support of all key partners and stakeholders.

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West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) Consultation Draft

As the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM) is charged with drawing up the WMES and keeping it under review. Regional Economic Strategies are about improving a region's sustainable economic development while at the same time supporting, enhancing and delivering national Government policies.

GOWM is a key partner in the development of the revised WMES and we have been working closely with AWM and other regional partners and stakeholders since the review process began in March 2006.

It is worth re-emphasising that the WMES belongs to the region and its success depends on the actions and support of all key partners and stakeholders. Since they belong to the regions, Regional Economic Strategies do not require Ministerial approval, but Ministers are important stakeholders at the national level.

Therefore, we are working with AWM to ensure they are aware of Government Departments' views during the consultations on the revised WMES to ensure that Ministers are in a position to formally welcome the WMES when it is finalised and submitted to them in the autumn, following its approval by AWM's Board and the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

To enable Government Departments to gain a better understanding of the economic issues facing the region and, in turn, for AWM to obtain Departments' early views on the draft WMES published in May 2007, we arranged a consultation event in London for the 4th of June 2007. This built on the success of a similar event held on the Policy Choices phase of the WMES Review.

Working with our parent Departments we are now considering the draft strategy to determine how it meets national policies and objectives, in so far as they apply to the region's circumstances. Additionally, we are looking to identify and resolve any possible conflicts arising between national priorities and strategic priorities for economic development as identified by regional partners.

Our Economy Team will bring together the views of Government Departments to feedback to AWM by the end of the consultation period on 31 July 2007. After that we will continue to work closely with AWM until the WMES and its supporting action plan is finalised and submitted to Ministers in the autumn.

The draft WMES and its supporting material can be accessed using the link below, (and accessing the phase 4 option), which explains more about the consultation process.

www.advantagewm.co.uk/wmesreview.html





Black Country Challenge

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Professional development opportunities will be available for outstanding school leaders in the Black Country to work with other schools.

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The four Black Country Local Authorities are to receive City Challenge funding of £25m between 2008 and 2011 to support educational outcomes for young people.

City Challenge is a three year programme, delivered in partnership with all those working in education and aims to address the associated cycle of disadvantage and educational underachievement in the Black Country and Greater Manchester through a focused strategy along the lines of the London Challenge model.

Building on improvements already underway the main outcomes of the programme will be:

- A sharp drop in underperforming schools, particularly focusing on English and Maths
- More outstanding schools
- Significant improvements in educational outcomes for disadvantaged children

The London Challenge is a proven model of success in supporting educational improvement in an urban context.

The Black Country Challenge will cover primary and secondary education extending the lessons learned in supporting London primary schools, which share many of the challenges facing secondary schools.

All schools in the Black Country will benefit, regardless of performance. The Black Country Challenge will incorporate a number of initiatives which all schools will be able to access. There will be support tailored to suit schools that need help to improve that will seek to align with other initiatives. Professional development opportunities will be available for outstanding school leaders in the Black Country to work with other schools.





European Structural Funds 2007 to 2013

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This programme aims to boost the productivity of businesses and reduce inequalities by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the region's economic growth.

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New European Programmes are full steam ahead with Operational Programmes submitted

In the first edition of *In the Know* we introduced you to the new European Social Fund (ESF) and the ERDF Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programme (RCE) for 2007 to 2013. There have been significant developments for both programmes including consultation exercises with partners in the region resulting in the submission of both Operational Programming documents to the European Commission.

The ERDF RCE programme was submitted to the European Commission in May. The RCE has been developed in close collaboration with regional partners under the direction of the Regional Assembly's European and International Affairs Partnership. This programme aims to boost the productivity of businesses and reduce inequalities by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from the region's economic growth.

The Department for Work and Pensions submitted the proposal for the 2007-2013 England ESF programme to the European Commission on 5 March 2007. The Regional Skills Partnership in the West Midlands has started to draft a regional ESF framework for 2007-2013 on the basis of the programme proposal. This regional framework will inform the delivery of the programme so that it adds value to regional employment and skills priorities and

complements other funding streams.

Both proposals will now be examined by the European Commission and it is hoped that the programmes will be agreed by autumn 2007.

Developments are also taking place with the delivery of the new programme. In October 2006 Government announced that the RDAs would be taking on the strategic management and delivery of the ERDF programme for 2007-13. Government Offices will continue to manage the existing Objective 2 and 3 programmes that run until the end of 2008.

This increased role for the RDAs should provide greater alignment between ERDF and domestic funds (in particular the Single Programme) providing improved co-ordination of investments. There must also be a clear delivery framework which will ensure adherence to the principles of additionality, transparency and accountability.

GOWM, AWM and regional partners are working collaboratively to prepare for this transfer of management responsibility. A consultation exercise on the proposed arrangements was recently completed and the outcome from this will be published shortly. In the interim for more information please visit www.advantagewm.co.uk/eu-structural-funds.html

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European Structural Funds 2007 to 2013 continued ...

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There must also be a clear delivery framework which will ensure adherence to the principles of additionality, transparency and accountability.

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New developments and updates on both programmes will be reported in future editions of the newsletter. In the meantime you are able to download and view the full OP documents on our website at:

www.gos.gov.uk/gowm/EuroFund/?a=42496

Additional information on the ESF programme is also available on the '2007-2013' section of the main ESF website www.esf.gov.uk





Healthy Choices? You Decide. A Regional Consultation

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Ensuring the good health and well-being of these people is of paramount importance and cannot be achieved through access to good healthcare services alone.

”

The West Midlands Regional Health Partnership, on behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, has recently produced a consultation document on the development of a Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy.

There are over 5 million people living in the West Midlands region. Ensuring the good health and well-being of these people is of paramount importance and cannot be achieved through access to good healthcare services alone. Good health and well-being also relies on people living within strong and inclusive communities set within safe and flourishing environments, with thriving local economies providing them with good employment opportunities and a wide range of service choices.

The West Midlands Regional Assembly and Partners are committed to working towards improving the economic, social and environmental well-being and ultimately the quality of life of everyone in the Region as well as for future generations to come. In particular, the West Midlands Regional Concordat provides a framework for partnership working between regional organisations and for the integration of regional strategies. Through good communication and closer partnership working, we can reach our common goals to the benefit of the people of the West Midlands Region.

Commitment of regional partners to this Health and Well-Being Strategy is sought as part of the consultation. Extensive scoping

work has been carried out with various organisations and partnerships during the development of this consultation draft and we are keen for all partners to think about how the priorities identified might be taken forward in the future by themselves and what actions they can commit to deliver.

There are eight main themes reflected within this Strategy, with priorities listed under each theme, including:

- Children and Young People
- Later Life
- Planning, Transport and Health
- Housing and Health
- Environment and Health
- Economy and Health
- Culture, Physical Activity and Health
- Safer Communities and Health

These identified themes link to key areas and partnerships where most impact can be made on reducing the health inequalities outlined in the 'Choosing Health for the West Midlands' document. This recognises that for example, key regional decisions made by planning and housing bodies directly affect the health of the population.

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Healthy Choices? You Decide. A Regional Consultation continued ...

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The improvement of health and well-being within the Region relies on shared visions across public, private and voluntary and community organisations.

”

The priorities listed in this Strategy will form the basis of a detailed implementation plan. Regional lead organisations have collectively written this Strategy and potential lead organisations have been identified for future delivery. The improvement of health and well-being within the Region relies on shared visions across public, private and voluntary and community organisations. This Strategy provides a regional context to enable partners to focus their activities to greatest effect.

An implementation plan will be developed after the consultation period and your views are valued. We do want to hear your views on what are the key priorities which should be addressed and how you and your organisation can help deliver these.

The full document can be downloaded from the West Midland Regional Assemblies website www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=37

The consultation period ends on Wednesday 11 July 2007 and comments can be e-mailed to z.lynch@wmra.gov.uk





GOWM Ministerial Visits



The agenda for discussions focused on DTI policy issues, including efficiency savings, RDA Capability Review, red tape, Companies Act and R & D and innovation.



From mid March until the end of May, GOWM has organised 12 full visits in the West Midlands region which can be broken down by department as follows:

DCLG - 5 DCMS - 1
DfES - 5 DTI - 1

Example highlights showing the wide range of visits this office is involved in are as follows and all took place within the last 10 weeks.

Bill Rammell - Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further & Higher Education

Bill Rammell visited this region on 20th March and went to Cadbury's 6th Form College at Kings Norton. He then travelled to the University of Birmingham. The key themes of the visit were the National education agenda and key changes.

Sir Brian Bender – Permanent Secretary, Department of Trade & Industry

Sir Brian Bender visited this region on 23rd March and had a very full and productive programme. He visited PricewaterhouseCoopers with Trudi Elliot, GOWM Regional Director and met John Crabtree, President of Birmingham Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCI) and Chairman of Metalrax Group plc. He also met David Waller, Regional Chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers. A lunch was provided and ten Birmingham Chamber of Commerce patrons were also

invited. The agenda for discussions focused on DTI policy issues including efficiency savings, RDA Capability Review, red tape, Companies Act and R & D and innovation.

Beverley Hughes - Minister of State - Department for Education & Skills

Beverley Hughes came to the National Motorcycle Museum to speak at the EPRA Dissemination Conference on 28th March. The subject of the conference was developing innovative approaches to engaging parents and tweaking traditional models of engagement to bring parents to the heart of the learning community. Beverley Hughes's speech endorsed the work schools are doing to highlight the significance and importance of effective parental engagement in school, at home and further raising the profile of this agenda.

Angela Smith – MP – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – Communities & Local Government

The Minister had been invited to visit Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service HQ on 24th April. She met with Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Paul Hayden and Group Leaders and discussed modernisation issues. Other topic areas were cultural change, equality and diversity and performance management. Angela Smith also met Fire Control personnel and had discussions on Command Support and Special Rescue.

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GOWM Ministerial Visits continued ...



Ninestiles has progressed from being a failing school to being one of the leading schools in its area. Dexter Hutt has received a knighthood for services to education.



After this visit the Minister met Simon Hawkins who won the Service Delivery Individual Award in the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity category in May at the NEC. Simon Hawkins is the first amputee fire fighter in Europe. Following a motorcycle accident in 2004, Simon, a fire fighter with over ten years' service lost the lower part of his left leg and was fitted with a prosthetic limb. In 2006 after rehabilitation and a return to work programme, reasonable adjustments were made to allow him to resume his duties.

Meg Munn - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State - (Women & Equality) - Communities & Local Government

The Minister travelled to Solihull on 25th April to attend the launch of the Women's Refuge Centre. Meg Munn visited the centre and met the Chief Executive, Operations Director and Refuge Manager. The Minister then travelled to the Holiday Inn in Solihull to attend the launch of the Refuge Centre. Amongst the attendees were Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid, Solihull MBC, Haden Housing Association, local MPs and Birmingham City Football Club.

Sir Bruce Liddington - Schools Commissioner - Department for Education and Skills

The Commissioner visited Birmingham on 9th May and attended a meeting at Ninestiles School in Acocks Green. There he had discussions with Sir Dexter Hutt, previously Headmaster of the

school in 1988. Ninestiles has progressed from being a failing school to being one of the leading schools in its area. Sir Dexter Hutt has received a knighthood for services to education. He is heavily involved in school improvement both locally and with the DfES.

Phil Woolas - Minister of State for Communities & Local Government

The Minister attended the LG Communications Conference at Birmingham City Council chambers on 24th May. This involved Phil Woolas making a speech to reflect the government's new agenda for local government.

Chris Wormald - Director General - Communities & Local Government

The Director General visited the West Midlands on 23rd and 24th May. On the first evening a dinner was held with nine local authorities. The next day involved meeting the Corporate Management Team at Government Office West Midlands and then later accompanying officials to Sandwell. The Director General visited the WBA Community Training programme to see ACES personnel and also Sandwell Academy meeting schools and pupils for an interactive session.

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GOWM Ministerial Visits continued ...

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The Secretary of State visited Birmingham to officially open the Northfield Relief Road on 24th May.

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Rt Hon Douglas Alexander - Secretary of State (Scotland) for Department of Transport

The Secretary of State visited Birmingham to officially open the Northfield Relief Road on 24th May. He was driven along the A38 through Selly Oak to see the benefits that will accrue from improvements to this road due to start shortly. Douglas Alexander gave a short speech along with Councillor Len Gregory, Cabinet Member for Transportation, and then finally the plaque was unveiled.





Museums Libraries & Archives Council West Midlands moving ahead within National Partnership

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The region has been chosen to take the lead nationally in developing the programme for the Cultural Olympiad which will start in 2008 and form an integral part of the 2012 games.

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The region's museums, libraries and archives now have a seat on the national policy-making body for the sector with the appointment of Glen Lawes (recently retired CEO of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust) as a national MLA Trustee and Chairman of MLA West Midlands.

The MLA, through its national-regional partnership, is responsible for channelling £7m of government money annually into West Midlands museums, libraries and archives (in addition to local government/other institutional income and lottery funds). This is done in close collaboration with these institutions and with key stakeholders such as the region's local authorities and Advantage West Midlands. There have already been impressive results from this investment with steady growth in the number and diversity of people of all ages using the region's cultural institutions and a greatly strengthened working relationship with its schools.

MLA West Midlands has also recently appointed a new CEO – Jon Finch who comes from doing a similar job in the North West – and aims to build its co-operation with other key cultural bodies, including the Arts Council, Sport England and Culture West Midlands.

The region has been chosen to take the lead nationally in developing the programme for the Cultural Olympiad which will start in 2008 and form an integral part of the 2012 games.

Although much remains to be done, there is increasing recognition of the unique role of culture in improving local government services with the potential to make significant contributions to agendas for education, social cohesion and economic regeneration.

The MLA has three well established programmes for supporting its sector:

- **Renaissance in the Regions** is a joint project, led by the region's five leading museums, aimed at modernising all museums and helping them reach more people.
- **Framework for the Future** has similar aims for the region's libraries and has proved to be an effective vehicle for channelling Big Lottery Funding into the sector.
- Archives are the focus for a third modernisation programme.



*In 2007, the **Elgar Birthplace Trust Museum** near Worcester is at the heart of celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth – see www.elgarfoundation.org - with visitors also coming to Birmingham, Malvern and various other locations in the region from many parts of the world.*

For more information on the work of MLA West Midlands, please click on www.mlavestmidlands.org.uk





Sexual Orientation and Transgender: Breaking down barriers to Employment and Services

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The event focused on removing the barriers to services and employment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as well as employers' duties and responsibilities.

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The West Midlands Regional Assembly's Regional Strategic Partnership for Equality and Diversity and GOWM staged an event for public and private employers on **Friday, 29th June**.

The event, which was chaired by Michael Cashman, MEP, took place at the Government Office for the West Midlands building.

The event focused on removing the barriers to services and employment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as well as employers' duties and responsibilities in the light of recent and forthcoming related changes in legislation. It also looked at the role of new Commission for Equality and Human Rights in relation to both employees and employers in this area.

The programme featured the following speakers: Steve Ball, Chair of the Birmingham Pride Community Trust and Jenny Brett, Chair of Gender Matters, who not only highlighted some of the related issues, but looked at how these can be addressed positively within the workplace.





Preventing Violent Extremism: West Midlands Update

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Particular emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the events include young Muslims and Muslim women in order to ensure that diversity within the community is represented.

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Published by Communities and Local Government (CLG) in April 2007, *Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning Hearts and Minds* sets out a plan to step-up work with Muslim communities to isolate, prevent and defeat violent extremism. Action plan priorities include:

- Strengthening leadership and governance in mosques;
- A framework of new standards for imams engaged by the state;
- Helping communities build stronger civic and religious leadership;
- Rolling out good practice guidance nationally to encourage the teaching of citizenship in madrassahs and supplementary schools;
- Strengthening the role of women and a major expansion in the number of local 'Forums Against Extremism';
- £6million of allocations to prevent extremism on the ground.

Supported by the £6million Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund (PVEPF) and GOWM, early efforts to tackle violent extremism are now underway in the West Midlands. Examples of developing work include:

Young Muslim Leadership

Birmingham City Council will work in partnership with young British Muslims to run 'Young Muslim Leadership Programmes'

across the city. The programme will include workshops on citizenship, media skills and civic engagement, extremism and how to identify signs of radicalisation amongst young people, and de-radicalisation activities.

The aim of the workshops is two-fold. They will help young Muslims to become aware of the risks of extremism, and have the knowledge, skills and confidence to lead their peers away from violent extremism. They will also help young Muslims to become better equipped to take the lead on any number of issues in coming years.

Understanding Attitudes

Stoke will coordinate events across the city to engage the Muslim community in debate on the issues of violent extremism, Islamophobia and 'radical' interpretations of Islam. Particular emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the events include young Muslims and Muslim women in order to ensure that diversity within the community is represented.

The outcomes of the events will provide the information-base for further work and will help build community involvement in further actions.

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Preventing Violent Extremism: West Midlands Update continued ...

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Key activities will include language courses, training in citizenship and an improved understanding of key governance functions.

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Black Country Imams

Imams can be powerful voices in the theological debate on the true meanings of Islam and in the rejection of violent extremism in the name of their faith. Dudley Muslim Association, the Black Country Sunni Ulema Council, the British Muslim Forum and relevant local authorities will develop a programme to give new skills to imams and help develop future home grown British imams.

The programme will help support existing mainstream imams to counter the appeal of persuasive figures who propagate violent extremist views, fostering a new generation of moderate, mainstream faith leaders. Key activities will include language courses, training in citizenship and an improved understanding of key governance functions.

It is hoped that the project will support the medium to long term development of a new generation of mainstream imams, well versed in the English language and with a solid understanding of the British legal and political systems.

The action plan *Preventing Violent Extremism - Winning Hearts and Minds* can be accessed at:

www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1509398

For further information please contact:

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Waqar Ahmed
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0121 352 5005





A more strategic role for Government Offices

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At GOWM we took this opportunity to undertake a complete review of our structure. This exercise was completed in October 2006 and we have now implemented it and new ways of working.

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In March 2006 a Review of Government Offices was published which set out a more strategic role for Government Offices focusing primarily on three areas:

- Leading for Government in negotiating with local areas on Local Area Agreements, Local Public Service Agreements and place-specific policies;
- Providing performance and policy feedback to Departments and performance managing specific central programmes; and
- Overseeing regional strategies, challenging for consistency and quality, and co-ordinating regional funding allocations.

A number of additional challenges were set out in the Review which included streamlining the organisation with a higher proportion of senior staff who would undertake the more strategic role set out in the Review around relationship management, analytical capability and influencing Whitehall.

At GOWM we took this opportunity to undertake a complete review of our structure. This exercise was completed in October 2006 and we have now implemented it and new ways of working. We are keen to maximise the benefits of the new structure where organisational development will be matched by changes in the way that we work with more matrix and project management, more task and finish project work, a greater mix of disciplines within teams and improved knowledge management

supporting the special work within our directorates.

The diagram over the page sets out the senior structure and shows thematic as well as place responsibilities for Directors.

Lead Directors have responsibility for maintaining an overview of the area, developing a relationship with the Local Authority Chief Executive and the Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership, leading the LAA process and providing challenge back to Whitehall on behalf of the locality.

Relationship Managers are responsible for managing the implementation and delivery of Government policies and performance in the locality and with appropriate policy specialists, monitoring progress and agreeing mechanisms for improvement where appropriate.

We would welcome views from you on how you are finding the new ways of working. Please contact Ranuka Jagpal, Assistant Director for Organisational Development on 0121 352 5128 or email her at ranuka.jagpal@gowm.gsi.gov.uk



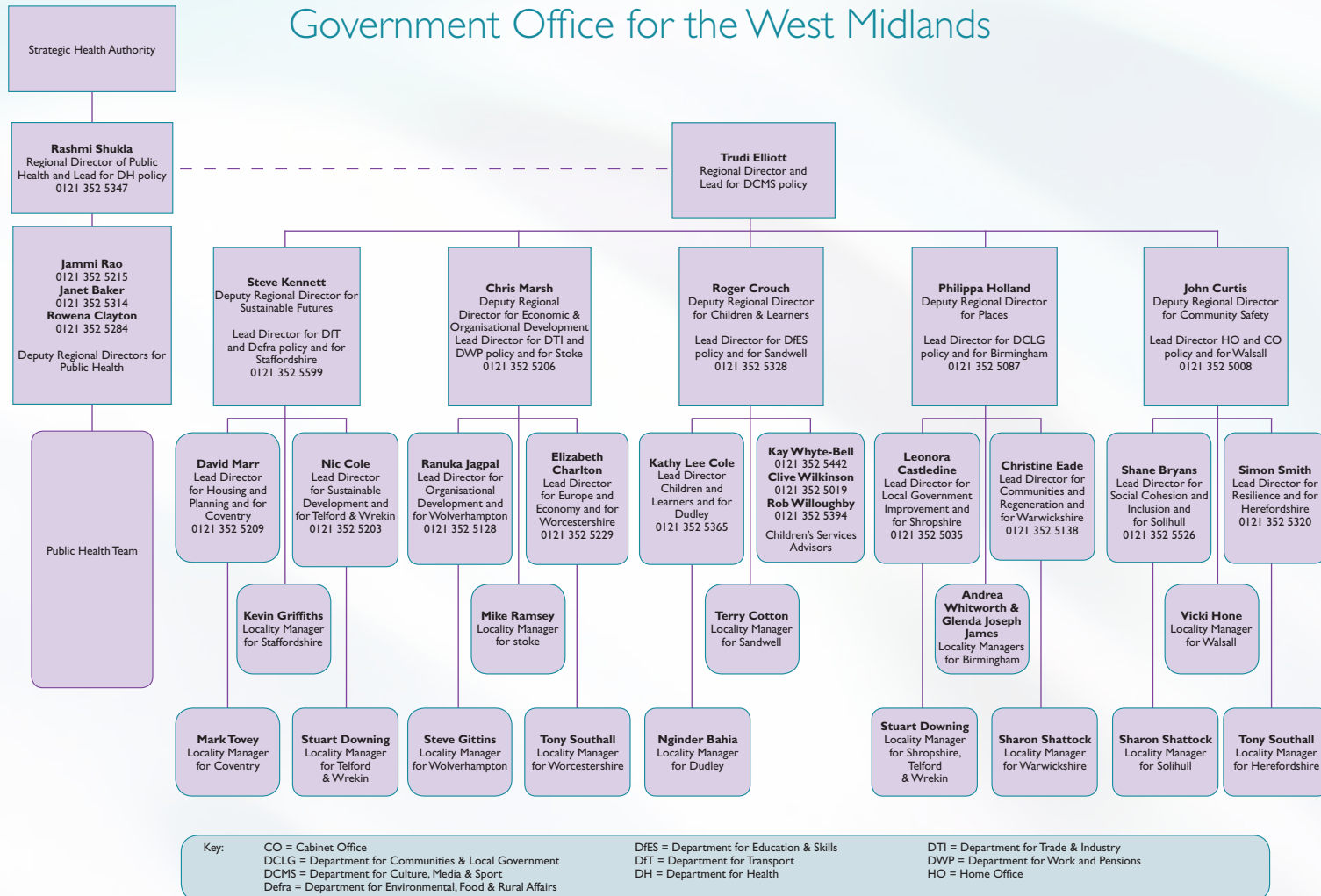


A more strategic role for Government Offices continued ...

“

The diagram opposite sets out the senior structure and shows thematic as well as place responsibilities for Directors.

”





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