



PRE-DRAFT



**REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY
(RSS)**



TOPIC PAPER 8:

WATER



**Consultation
Winter 2004/05**



Foreword

The Yorkshire and Humber Assembly has reached another crucial stage in the development of 'PLANet Yorkshire and Humber' - the new Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). A draft of the new RSS is to be submitted to Government by the end of April 2005.

In preparing the new draft RSS the Assembly is committed to involving as wide a range of organisations and individuals as possible. The preparation process for the new draft RSS therefore provides for two specific periods of public consultation *before* a new draft RSS is prepared and submitted to Government. This is in addition to the continual involvement of many partners in the technical work for the new RSS.

The first consultation document - 'Draft Spatial Vision and Strategic Approach' (July 2004) - considered the overall approach that should guide the preparation of the new RSS (particularly the role of sub-areas), key issues facing different parts of the region and possible responses to these issues.

We have now reached the second stage of consultation. This is based on the need to consider in more detail how we can develop a clear spatial strategy for the region that takes into account all of the issues identified in the RSS Project Plan ('Shaping the Future', January 2004). This second stage of consultation is therefore structured around a series of 'topic papers', of which this is one. The full list of topic papers is:

- Topic paper 1: Introduction to Pre-Draft RSS
- Topic paper 2: Spatial Options
- Topic paper 3: Housing
- Topic paper 4: Economy
- Topic paper 5a: Freight
- Topic paper 5b: Strategic Public Transport
- Topic paper 5c: Public Transport Accessibility
- Topic paper 5d: Demand Management
- Topic paper 5e: Aviation
- Topic paper 5f: Transport Investment Priorities
- Topic paper 6: CAP reform
- Topic paper 7: Energy
- Topic paper 8: Water
- Topic paper 9: Sustainable Tourism
- Topic paper 10: Forestry
- Topic paper 11: Biodiversity
- Topic paper 12: Culture
- Topic paper 13: Health
- Topic paper 14: Education
- Topic paper 15: Minerals
- Topic paper 16: Sustainable Waste Management
- Topic paper 17: Retail and Leisure
- Topic paper 18: Monitoring

Please bear in mind that these topic papers are raising many challenges that policies in the new RSS will need to address. The topic papers do not include draft policies and there will need to be a great deal of integration across topic areas before the policies are drafted. The purpose of this stage of consultation is to receive feedback on what direction you think RSS policy should take.

Please note that these topic papers have not been endorsed by the Assembly, or its advisory body the Regional Planning and Infrastructure Commission. They do not represent Assembly policy but give an important opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders to feed in to the further development of the new RSS for the Yorkshire and Humber region.

Your comments

We would like your comments on these topic papers. You can answer the questions that we ask in the papers or you can send us your general comments.

We need to hear from you by **Friday 25 February 2005** so that your views and ideas can be taken into account as we prepare the new draft RSS to submit to Government.

Please send your comments to

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All the topic papers and accompanying documents can be found at www.yhassembly.gov.uk

Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal

At each stage of the development of the new RSS, a Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal (SEA/SA) is being carried out. At this stage, this appraisal has particularly concentrated on Topic Paper 2 – Spatial Options. The report of this appraisal is also available from the Assembly.

Any queries

If you have any queries about the topic papers, or any aspect of RSS, please call the Regional Planning and Transport team on 01924 331590.

Topic Paper 8 - Water

Introduction

1. The European Union Water Framework Directive requires the publication of river basin management plans by 2009, and all surface water bodies to meet “good” ecological status and “good” chemical status by 2015. It seeks therefore to provide for a more integrated approach to the planning and management of water and water-related issues (flooding, water quality, abstraction, use, shape, coastal zone management).
2. This has implications for the supply, consumption and discharge of water in the region, which the regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for Yorkshire and the Humber needs to take into account.

Background

3. During the Selective Review of Regional Planning Guidance for Yorkshire and the Humber in 2002-4, the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly focused on the need to provide for a more partnership-based approach to integrated coastal zone management as well as a more integrated, pro-active approach to planning for flood-risk (including the preparation of strategic flood risk assessments).
4. At the Public Examination of the Selective Review (Feb 2004), the Examination Panel supported the approach taken towards both integrated coastal zone management and flood risk. The report of the Panel (May 2004) commended the approach towards planning for flood risk, and suggested it could provide a model for regions elsewhere on the UK.
5. Policy R1, in the RSS that was subsequently issued in December 2004 (based on the Selective Review of RPG) therefore, provides for local authorities and others to take an integrated, consistent and partnership-based approach to coastal zone management, whilst policy R2 provides for local authorities and others to take a similar approach in characterising, planning for and managing flood-risk. Policy R3, which remained virtually unaltered during the Selective Review process, provides for development plans and other strategies to consider water supply and quality, water conservation and drainage, and promote appropriate measures as appropriate.

Process

6. In 2004, the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly (YHA) invited various organisations to join a Regional Water Group (RWG) with a view to working up a position statement to help inform the new RSS and other strategies and guide the preparation of policy accordingly. The

Environment Agency agreed to chair the group with the YHA providing support.

7. The Regional Water Group comprises representatives from: Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber; Yorkshire Forward; Yorkshire and the Humber Assembly; Environment Agency; Yorkshire Water; British Waterways; Forestry Commission; Countryside agency; English Nature; local authorities (Leeds CC; Bradford MBC; Hull CC).
8. During the course of 2004, the RWG prepared a draft position statement, as outlined above. This provides a "vision" for the region's water resource in line with the following principles: -
 - strategic, integrated, pro-active, sustainable approach to coastal and river catchment characterisation, planning and management;
 - adequate, reliable and efficient supplies and use of good quality drinking water;
 - adequate sewerage and waste treatment system to handle current and proposed development;
 - minimisation of flood risks through prudent defences, pro-active planning and the creation of a financially insurable environment;
 - support of economic growth, tourism, regeneration and ecology;
 - consideration of impacts of climate change, the Water Framework Directive, etc;
 - integrated partnerships (especially for the coast).
9. The position statement identifies key issues to be addressed in view of the EU Water Framework Directive under four main headings (quantity, quality, use, shape) as follows: -
 - quantity: resources/abstraction; drought; floods (including public safety and insurance);
 - quality: pollution; coastal/estuarine bathing quality; diffuse pollution; ecological/biological status;
 - use: recreation; navigation; regeneration; tourism; development;
 - shape: artificial/modified watercourses (including coast and shoreline management plans).
10. In doing so, the position statement identifies specific "policy issues" and "key spatial issues" for the RSS to consider.

Key Issues

11. The key "policy" issues in the region identified by the Regional Water Group include the following: -
 - **general**: need for shorter, more concise and integrated policy in new RSS than exists at present;
 - **quantity**: need to keep the existing flood risk policy approval as much as possible, but also build in other aspects (e.g. sustainable urban drainage systems, ensuring the insurability of buildings in flood plains, water efficiency in new development);

- **quality**: need to ensure local planning authorities consult Environment Agency and statutory water companies with a view to minimising pollution and maintaining biodiversity, and in particular identifying and ensuring sufficient capacity for waste water treatment works;
- **use**: need to safeguard amenity in recreational areas, and in particular address worst bathing water compliance areas (using established guideline standards, but NOT Blue Flag criteria);
- **shape**: need to maintain/increase bodies of water (e.g. reservoirs, washlands, dams and mill-ponds) so as to utilise for flood purposes and help ensure adequate water supply to centres of population.

12. The key “spatial” issues in the region identified by the Regional Water Group include the following: -

- **quantity**: need to prevent development in areas of environmental drought and over-abstraction as identified in the Environment Agency’s Regional Water Resources Strategy and State of the Region’s Water Environment Report (e.g. south-east Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire); encourage ‘rain-water harvesting’ in urban areas; prioritise flood risk protection of existing urban areas to avoid blighting (e.g. Hull); reverse ‘gripping measures’ in upland areas to reduce flow-rates (i.e. measures that in the past have sought to better drain land);
- **quality**: need to avoid over-development in low quality river areas as identified in the Environment Agency’s State of the Region’s Water Environment Report; encourage development that causes less agricultural pollution;
- **use**: need to identify locations for increased hydropower facilities and optimal marina locations;
- **shape**: need to identify opportunities for managed retreat on coast and fluvial corridors.

13. However, it is also considered that many of the above issues are management – rather than land use planning – issues, and that some are already covered by national planning guidance.

Questions for Consultation

Taking into account the key "policy" and "spatial" issues outlined above, it is considered that the key questions for the pre-draft RSS consultation to address include: -

- 1. Should the RSS seek to provide a much more concise approach to the planning for water (including coast, flooding, resources, quality) than exists at present in the RSS and combine all water-related policies into one integrated policy for water?*
- 2. Should the RSS cover/promote components (e.g. sustainable drainage systems, better water quality) that are already covered by national planning guidance (PPG25, PPS23) or alternative development consent regimes? What would be the particular, distinctive Yorkshire and Humber approach?*
- 3. Should the RSS prioritise flood risk protection of existing urban areas to avoid blighting existing urban areas, and encourage specific development types in flood plains so as to ensure insurability of homes and business premises?*
- 4. Should the RSS seek to prevent development in areas of environmental drought, and over-abstraction and over-development low quality river areas?*
- 5. Should the RSS require local authorities to identify locations to help ensure sufficient capacity for waste water treatment works?*
- 6. Can the RSS encourage 'rain-water harvesting' in urban areas?*
- 7. Are there alternative policy approaches that RSS should be exploring, and if so, what are these?*

References and Background Documents

It is considered that the main references for planning for water in the region are: -

- Planning Policy Statement 11 on Regional Spatial Strategy (ODPM, 2004);
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 25 on Development and Flood Risk (DEFRA, 2001);
- Planning Policy Statement 23 on Pollution (ODPM, 2004);
- The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003;
- The Environment Agency's Water Resources for the Future (2001);
- The Environment Agency's Regional Water Resource Strategy for the North East (2001);
- Defra's Directing the Flow – Priorities for Future Water Policy (2002);
- ODPM's best practice climate change paper (ODPM, 2004);
- Defra's Making Space for Water Consultation document (2004).