

# Creating the conditions for growth

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By 'conditions for growth', we mean the aspects of the region (transport, land and premises for economic development and housing) which need to work to benefit the economy. If we do not improve these, any good ideas and actions about creating wealth through enterprise or providing access to opportunity, will not be successful.

## Transport

Transport is seen as being very important for growth. The current transport system in the region does not help the strategy, and we must improve it. The real alternatives to using private cars are currently limited and this is the main issue that we need to look at. There are a number of other important issues:

- The quality of the strategic road network varies. There are very bad traffic problems on several main routes. The problems of the M6 reflect badly on the region and do not help to attract visitors and investment. Building the Birmingham Northern Relief Road is a top priority in the region but it is only part of the solution.
- Rail is the gateway to the region for business and tourism. The planned improvements on the West Coast mainline (WCML) will help to relieve rail congestion in the Birmingham area and other centres. It is also intended to improve transport links to mainland Europe. We also need to look at the expansion of capacity on the WCML Coventry-Birmingham-Wolverhampton loop. We support the rail capacity study undertaken by the Shadow Strategic Rail Authorities and the transport operators in the region. The planned development of a strategic transport interchange that links Birmingham International to the airport is also a priority for the region.
- We would like to see a regional Eurostar service to the West Midlands running as soon as possible, given the potential business and tourism benefits.
- The West Midlands falls behind many other regions in terms of local rail and rapid transit alternatives to private transport. Without more investment, it will be very difficult to encourage those who use cars to use public transport, even if local policies for road pricing or car park taxes are tested.

- There is a choice of bus routes and services in the towns and cities although the timing, reliability and convenience of the services does not always encourage its use. We can improve the information on services. There are a number of examples of good practice in the region that have used electronic media and information technology to promote the use of services.
- There is a lack of public transport services, road and rail, in the countryside. This either forces more people to use cars or excludes people who do not have a car. We need to deal with this problem if the economic fortunes of the rural areas in the West Midlands are to improve.
- The local road network needs more investment, particularly if there are going to be more development sites. The spine road investments in the Black Country and Heartlands have made a significant difference to moving goods and people in those areas, as well as the overall views of businesses, developers and people living in the area.
- Birmingham International Airport is important to the future economic development of the region. Its advantages (fifth largest airport in passenger numbers in the UK) need to be improved and strengthened.

Advantage West Midlands are not a transport authority so our ability for direct investment is limited. However, we can lobby for resources and influence transport policies with regional partners, and in the context of the Regional Transport Strategy.

### Aim 5

#### ***Improve the movement of goods, services and people inside and outside the region.***

To achieve this, the region needs to identify strategic solutions which:

- are new and creative;
  - take account of the needs of all people in the region and
  - are within a sustainable development framework.
- We will need to support these solutions with a set of resources that will make sure they will be introduced.
- There are two elements that we need to include within this strategy.
- Movement through the region -**  
The West Midlands is at the centre of the country's transport network. This provides a clear economic opportunity to the region. However, moving goods and raw materials, often through the region, is a cause of major traffic problems at certain points in the region. If these are sorted out, this will help improve the development within the region.
- Movement around the region -**  
Transport and movement are main concerns to the whole region. In towns and cities, the main concern is the difficulties relating to traffic problems caused by people travelling to and from work. In the more remote areas of the region, people still need to use reliable transport. A significant factor is the changes in lifestyle that lead to increases in both the number of journeys made and their length.
- Current plans and ideas to deal with these issues are:
- to develop the region's place in the strategic transport network and create as many opportunities as possible for growth in the distribution industry;
  - to encourage people and freight to use rail;
  - studies to examine ways of reducing traffic problems in urban areas;
  - to improve access to all transport in all remote and more disadvantaged parts of the region;
  - to improve the rail system at important locations and multi-modal transfers;
  - Regeneration Zones linking need and opportunity, where improved transport will increase opportunities for the most disadvantaged to benefit from developing business;
  - to develop light rail transport as a way of connecting urban areas;
  - to review re-usable, disused rail lines to provide new public transport routes, especially in urban areas;



- to promote bus services throughout the region, especially routes that link communities to areas of employment;
- to create a network for action in logistics called the Logistics and Supply Chain Forum which will build on the region's excellence in this area and to transfer and spread best practices to all businesses in the region; and
- to have a regional agreement on the regional transport issues, success stories and solutions in the region and build a regional transport forum to include public sector, business and communities including users and providers. This will help in developing the Regional Transport Strategy, as part of Regional Planning Guidance.

## Housing

Advantage West Midlands has no direct responsibility for housing, but given the impact that investment and improvement in housing has on the regeneration of local areas, we intend to play an effective role in helping to co-ordinate connecting housing and regeneration strategies across the region. High quality housing can improve the region's image and the availability of a good choice and range of housing types in economic growth areas is often an important factor in securing inward investment. We also recognise that poor housing conditions directly affect people's quality of life, health and wellbeing. Improving housing conditions affects the health and wellbeing of inhabitants, and also creates employment and training opportunities for local people. We plan to work closely with the Government Office, the Regional Housing Partnership, the Housing Corporation, the National House Builders Federation and associated organisation and the Regional Housing Forum to set up a regional scheme for housing, leading to clear strategic priorities.

The considerations for these priorities should include the following:

- to positively support the re-use of brownfield land in towns and cities to provide quality housing provision in order to encourage people to move back into urban areas;
- to deal with the problems of unsuitable and unfit housing in some urban areas through clearance and replacement;
- support the provision of affordable housing (for sale and rent) in appropriate situations;
- to promote the development of mixed use schemes on larger sites to secure integrated sustainable development.

### Promoting mixed use development

Birmingham Great Park involves the redevelopment of a 200 acre former health authority site, combining commercial, industrial, leisure, retail and housing provision on the western edge of Birmingham. The site is well served by public transport and the high-quality physical environment includes footpaths and cycleways that link housing to the leisure and retail facilities. The site also includes a community health facility, childcare provision and a skills training centre.

### Sites and premises

Surveys of land and property in this region (Regional Industrial Land Survey, Major Investment Sites Study) have shown that there are major problems in the quality and availability of land and property for economic development in the region. In terms of providing the conditions for both existing and new businesses in the region to grow, the supply of land is very important. The commercial property market is very active so it needs the right kinds of premises to support its development.

### Aim 6

#### *Provide sites and premises of the right size and quality and in the right place.*

Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (RPG11) provides the current policy framework for developing land. This sets out a policy that aims to have a range of sites and premises available to meet the economic needs of the region. The range in each area needs to reflect the demands and opportunities available in that area. It also has specific policies about how this needs to be achieved within a sustainable development framework, with sites needing to have good public transport and roads. This framework will help to develop an action plan for sites and premises.

For inward investment, existing Regional Planning Guidance (RPG11) says that there should be up to two strategic sites in the

region that are suitable for a single large investor. Following a Major Investment Sites (MIS) study, only one site has gained planning permission so far. It is important that the region continues to bring forward sites within this current framework.

The West Midlands has large areas of brownfield land, owing to its industrial past, and it is already close to achieving the national target for the amount of development on brownfield land. However, the land available is often contaminated and derelict and the scattered ownership of small sites, particularly in urban areas, adds to the difficulties of bringing forward sites to develop.

The review of Regional Planning Guidance needs to look at how we can provide enough sites of the right size and quality to support the development of the regional economic strategy.

We and our partners, will develop the knowledge and understanding of the regions' property needs, and identify how the public sector can help to meet them.

# Regenerating communities in the West Midlands

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Community regeneration aims to deal with all areas of social exclusion that happen when people or areas have a combination of problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime rates, poor environments, bad health, poverty and family breakdown. In many cases, these problems are linked and over time it becomes difficult to separate the causes and effects. Dealing with social exclusion is one of the Government's highest priorities. For the West Midlands to take full advantage of the new economic opportunities created in the region, social exclusion must be one of the region's highest priorities as well.

The issue does not just relate to the large numbers of long-term unemployed but also to wide-ranging under-employment of people who are not officially working. It isn't just in inner-city areas, there are many people living in rural areas who face the same problems. The symptoms of economic exclusion are measured by the DETR on the Index of Deprivation. On this index, the West Midlands has two districts in the top 10 most deprived and six in the top 50 most deprived.

The causes of exclusion are complicated and often specific to particular individuals, groups

or geographical areas. No matter what the causes, the outcomes are usually the same. The lack of access to job opportunities can lead to lack of self-confidence and motivation. In some cases, the lack of motivation can start in schools, because people think they have no prospects. This can lead to poor educational achievement.

Promoting initiatives that improve educational achievement and skill levels helps to make sure that the workforce of the West Midlands can adapt and meet the needs of employers now and in the future. But for those excluded from mainstream economic activity, developing a learning and skilful region will not be enough. We need more focused solutions. Attracting investment needs to be accompanied by a motivated and skilled workforce, as well as dealing with the wider social and environmental issues. This will start the regeneration process, with improvements in education, health, housing, crime levels and jobs all supporting each other.

Regeneration activity works best when the focus comes from within the community, with local people dealing with local problems. Local communities will be best at recognising their own individual needs. From this, we can develop solutions that include and build upon their unique skills. For example, this could be building on the multi-cultural differences of the region or promoting the distinct role of market towns in serving wider areas in the countryside.

## **Aim 7**

***Encourage people to take part in economic and community life by targeting resources at communities and individuals that suffer poverty and social exclusion.***

The effects of restructuring the economy over the past 20 years or so have not been evenly distributed across society. While most people have benefited from increased standards of living, the poorest individuals and communities have become worse off. Regional averages hide the areas of very bad deprivation, some of which are next to wealthy areas. We need to reduce the gap immediately.

The idea of Regeneration Zones is being

## Regenerating communities in the West Midlands

developed to provide a framework for targeting resources. Within these and other deprived areas, the actions will be linked, often with other activities and national programmes. We will emphasise projects which try to deal with joint problems of ill health, poor housing, social exclusion and crime and disorder to create healthier, more stable and sustainable communities.

We need to target public resources so they are effective. There are many areas across the West Midlands that need these resources. A number of sub-regional Regeneration Zones will be set up, building on opportunities for investment but also linking areas of deprivation. The zones are likely to include brownfield sites for development. Measures paid for in the zones will need to show how local communities will benefit from investments. These measures will range from developing sites through to training and employment actions and other policies to support businesses and reduce social exclusion. The Regeneration Zones will provide a direct link between action to create wealth and develop business, and improving the community. The zones will make the best use of national and European funding for regeneration.

We have commissioned a study to advise us on the criteria for identifying Regeneration Zones in urban and rural areas across the West Midlands. The findings are due later this year but zones are likely to be:

- parts of two or more local authority areas;
- focused on development opportunities over a five to fifteen year period and
- co-ordinated by local partnerships on the basis of a business plan.

The health of individuals and communities is closely linked to economic growth and success. Regeneration activities should work with NHS strategies and policies to make sure that regeneration programmes are in line with Health Action Zone, Health Improvement Programmes and Healthy Living Centre initiatives. We will encourage schemes which deal with the health and wellbeing of deprived communities in urban and rural areas.

In the former mining areas, support initiatives will be designed to create new

employment, improve environmental and living conditions, build community capacity and infrastructure, and improve access to services.

### Community Renewal Initiatives

A wide-ranging 5 year programme aims to revitalise the former coalfield and ceramics area of Stoke-Cobridge. The scheme involves reclaiming and developing the former steel works at Etruria Valley, improving local educational performance, housing improvements for local residents, improving community safety and improving employment prospects in the area.

Funded through a mixture of public and private sector funds, including the Single Regeneration Budget, European Structural Funds and English Partnerships (now part of Advantage West Midlands), progress has been impressive. We are seeing increased business confidence leading to new shops and businesses setting up in the area.

Providing and improving land, buildings and transport are an important part of regeneration. This gives us the opportunity to attract new investment to an area, keep existing businesses and promote growth in local economies.

Crime and the fear of crime often deter people from investing. It can also lead to people feeling isolated and excluded within their own communities. Regeneration activities should fully include the local Community Safety Strategies. We should emphasise regeneration activity that encourages communities and business to play a leading role in local solutions.

Promoting culture and sport is important in providing jobs, attracting visitors and promoting the whole region as a place in which to live and work. Access to cultural and sporting activities supports the quality of life of the region. It is often the economically excluded that also do not take part in many of the cultural and sporting opportunities.

The history of the West Midlands has provided a unique cultural legacy, adding to



the unique mix of high-quality built and natural environments, the industrial history and major sporting and leisure facilities. For community regeneration, culture, sport and the built and natural environments have an important role in:

- developing pride in local life;
- encouraging people to take part in community life;
- increasing social inclusion and
- creating employment opportunities.

#### **Aim 8**

*Develop the connections between public, private, voluntary and community sectors so we can support the complete development of the region to the benefit of everyone who lives here.*

To achieve development from the bottom up, we must develop local groups in the voluntary and community sectors. It is important that the community plays a full and active role in identifying and carrying out regeneration activities. The voluntary sector plays a very important role in delivering the community regeneration activities in both urban and rural areas. This should be linked into better regional co-ordination and sharing experiences. There are important lessons we can learn from national programmes as well as other local schemes. It is important that the lessons from the New Deal for Communities initiative, findings from the Social Exclusion Unit and the aims of the Urban Task Force are included in the regeneration and economic development actions of the West Midlands. Activities need to be reviewed occasionally to take account of the latest ideas and changes in national policy, such as the Urban and Rural White Papers and Housing Green Paper.

There is also an important role for the business sector. We should encourage the private sector to take a full and active role in community regeneration. The existing work of Business in the Community provides an example of how we can do this. We need to build on this example to make social responsibility an essential part of business excellence. We also need to involve business

in promoting asset-based community development.

#### **Different thinking and new and creative approaches**

It is the ability of people, businesses and whole communities to adapt to change that defines the difference between success and failure. A central theme to this economic strategy is the need to accept new solutions to problems. Community regeneration should include the following.

Projects and individual strategies to:

- be outward-looking in their design;
- build in best practice from elsewhere;
- build links with projects in other areas and
- shape the solution to meet individual circumstances.

New approaches and ideas.

- the West Midlands should become the birthplace of new and creative approaches to regeneration.

Learning and using lessons from the 'New Commitment to Regeneration' areas.

#### **Linking disadvantaged communities with mainstream business opportunities**

Creating new business start-ups and developing existing businesses in disadvantaged communities helps individuals from these communities contribute to creating wealth while they achieve regeneration outcomes. We aim to make sure that we recognise the participation of the community and that it is more effectively linked to mainstream economic development. To achieve this we will:

- review the existing enterprise support systems to consider the need for improved links;
- consider a monitoring system for business in rural areas and
- develop an advice service to deal with the particular needs of the agri-food industry.

# Measuring performance



This Regional Economic Strategy has been prepared to help future and current actions by partners in the region. It also has a role in influencing the corporate and business planning of those inside and outside the region. Looking forward, there are three activities that we need to do:

- Defining targets - in the short-term, we need to do more work to define and develop a number of targets. We are doing this for the strategy as well as the new Objective 2 Programme for parts of the region. Setting targets will help us measure our progress towards achieving our vision.
- Monitoring progress - every year we will report on our progress towards reaching our vision.
- Reviewing the strategy - we will review the targets and aims in the strategy every three years to alter them in line with our experience and the changing region.

## Defining targets

So we can measure the progress of the region, we need to define a series of measures and targets. These measures will assess the conditions that the Regional Economic Strategy wants to change. The measures we choose will be understandable, and based on fair and reliable information.

These measures will feed in to a framework that relates them to the Regional Economic Strategy on a number of levels:

- Headline condition measures - Linked to achieving the regional vision.
- Thematic Conditions measures - Linked to achieving each aim.
- Output Response measures - A set of indicators to measure the effects the specific actions have.

Advantage West Midlands is developing measures which best show the performance of the region and the achievement of the aims and vision. We will publish these measures on the Advantage West Midlands web site. Some of these measures will be the same as those outlined by DETR, others will be specific to this strategy, possible measures are shown in the table opposite.

## Monitoring progress

The main aim of monitoring is to collect the information relating to a set of performance measures. Traditionally, this information has been used for project management and to show the efficient and effective spending of public money. This role will continue, but the process will be widened to:

- identify good practice;
- compare programmes run under different funding regimes and
- monitor progress towards meeting the vision for the region.

Our monitoring framework has to relate to and cover an enormous range of associated influences. It must be strong enough to work and influence all of these requirements which include:

- regional needs (the needs of Advantage West Midlands and those of other regional organisations);

## DETR suggested condition measures

Indicator	Year	West Midlands	England
GDP per Head UK =100	1996	93.5	101.7
GVA per Head £'000	1997 (p)	30.3	33.0
Total Household Disposable Income	1996	94.4	100
Gross Hourly Earnings £/hour	1998	8.9	9.8
Total Income Support Claimants	1997 Nov.	9.0%	8.4%
Workforce in Employment	1998 Summer	74.7%	74.8%
ILO Unemployment Rate	1998 Summer	6.4%	6.3%
Long Term Unemployed % of Claimants	1998 Oct.	28.9%	27.1%
% New Businesses Surviving 3 Years or More	1994	58.0	59.2 (UK)
Expenditure on R&D % of GVA	1997	3.7	7.5
% Employee Jobs in High Technology Sectors	1997	2.9	2.8
% of 19 year-olds with a 'level 2' Qualification	1997	67.3%	72.7%
% of 21 year-olds with a 'level 3' Qualification	1997	46.8%	50.6%
% of adults with a 'level 3' Qualification	1997	39.6%	44.0%
% of adults with a 'level 4' Qualification	1997	21.3%	25.3%

- EU structural fund needs (and requirements) - there are precise requirements driven by EU regulations;
- UK Government and national programmes (for example, the new Small Business Service, where it is not clear at present what monitoring requirements there will be) and
- local needs.

But, it must not be seen as a burden. All too often monitoring of a project or programme is seen as an administrative barrier to achieving results.

### Reviewing the strategy

The economy of the West Midlands does not stand still. It is constantly changing to respond to the demands of the world market. To reflect this the Regional Economic Strategy must change with the region. So we need to review the strategy regularly to keep it up to date. The first review will take place in 12 month's time. This will allow the work we have done to prepare action plans to be

linked into the strategic aims and the vision. After this first review, we will review the strategy and action plans every three years. Finally, in 2010, we will develop a new strategy that will set out a vision for the next ten years. So, the timetable for review will be as follows:

2001	First review
2004	Mid-term review
2007	Mid-term review
2010	Complete review

# Action programme

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This Regional Economic Strategy provides a regionally-approved framework for economic development in the region. It provides a regional context for existing activities as well as providing direction to new projects. There is an immediate challenge to identify how existing action fits into the framework. From this we will be able to see areas where further actions are needed and funding programmes should be targeted. Advantage West

Midlands is already working with partners and delivery organisations to put together detailed action plans. We will publish these in the spring of 2000. The issues covered in the action plans will, inevitably, be wide ranging. By working with partners in the region we have identified some areas where early actions are underway, these are set out in the table below.

## Early Actions

### Aim 1

To increase wealth and make the most of competitiveness within West Midlands businesses through innovation.

Implement the Regional Innovation Strategy.

- Employ a RIS Implementation Manager.
- Prioritise the RIS and Reconstitute the Steering group.

Promote new creative ideas and learning from others.

- Develop a programme of events.
- Investigate the possibility of a regional Innovation Award scheme to highlight those businesses that have particularly new and creative ideas.

Encourage the transfer of knowledge by working with the education sector, the science base and business.

- Use ICT to improve awareness of the region's Research and Development, developing a 'Knowledge Exchange' - a focal point and managed network for all sources of Research and Development and other knowledge.
- Improve links between education and business, through the Higher Education Reach Out Fund for Business in the Community.

Encourage enterprise through technology centres. Investigate development through the Faraday Partnership programme and linked services.

Encourage networking between businesses and looking at developing a network of InnovCos.

Build innovation in the region by:

- providing businesses with the people to help them, using short-term placement schemes;
- increasing entrepreneurship by looking, with the universities, at the possibility of setting up an 'Institute for Enterprise';
- helping to pay for these new ideas;
- increasing market intelligence with general information and design and manufacturing and environmental.

Development of a high technology cluster

- Advantage West Midlands will explore, with regional partners, developing a technology cluster within the West Midlands.

Develop a regional ICT strategy by:

- providing access to the region;
- developing e-business; and
- developing a regional e-portal.

### Aim 2

To transform the West Midlands economy by supporting the development of new and existing sectors to meet the demands of the future.

Introduce a series of Business Growth Task Groups that can create high growth and high value. These are:

- engineering design;
- food and drink;
- medical technology;
- the creative industries and
- tourism and leisure.

Support and improve the value of the three established sectors by building on the work that was already going on in:

- motor industry;
- ceramics and
- engineering.

These sector priorities will also need to be included in developing the tools for developing a wide-ranging and dynamic business base, with a series of projects and activities linked to each one. These are set out below.

- Strengthening and diversifying the regional economy.
- Best Practice Dissemination and Supply Chain Development.
- Planning for the future, through scenario planning.
- Improving access to finance for growth.
- Improving the region's international trading performance.
- Improving the effectiveness of business support services.

### Aim 3

Develop a workforce that is highly skilled and can adapt to meet the challenges that will face businesses in the next 10 years.

Support the development of existing and new 'Business Learning Networks' for each of the 8 core business sectors in the Strategy within the framework of the Business Task Groups. The network for the automotive industry (Automotive Skills Task Force) is already set up.

Provide a framework to build long-term relationships between schools, colleges and HEIs with the 8 core business sectors and with their local communities. Set up a regional exchange programme to increase exchanges between schools, colleges, HEIs and business including secondments.

Develop programmes with Local Learning Partnerships and other partners to achieve at least the target set for the region by the National Learning Targets.

Begin a pilot project to develop a virtual centre for management development, to raise management skills and encourage new, creative and competitive business through the application of analysis, planning, benchmarking, networking, best practice and customer care skills.



#### Aim 4

Develop a culture of lifelong learning and continuous improvement.

Develop a framework for Lifelong Learning in the the West Midlands to provide a basis for co-ordinating local and regional activities. This will include mapping existing education and training infrastructure, learning activities, identifying gaps, prioritising needs and developing project and funding strategies to fill the gaps. It will also identify reasons why the West Midlands is lagging in qualifications and basic skills levels.

Develop a framework to promote Lifelong Learning in the West Midlands to highlight the need for it, identify opportunities, raise awareness of best practice in learning within and outside the region, raise individual's hopes and develop a learning awards programme in the West Midlands.

Early activities include Advantage West Midlands sponsored Netd@ys (multi-media Awareness initiative) event. Work with Information Society Initiative (ISI) to produce a programme of e-business education through the West Midlands local ISI centres. Support the Manpower National Skills Festival at the NEC in July 2000 by an RDA stand and other activities.

Develop a Labour Market Learning Information framework and network to support the work of the National Skills Task Force, meet regional and local needs and provide a good intelligence across the region.

Develop a e-learning framework to co-ordinate ICT based learning and skills activities.

Establish a West Midlands Learning and Skills Forum to develop, monitor and evaluate the Learning and Skills Action Plan and to co-ordinate the framework development, monitoring and evaluation

#### Aim 5

Improve the movement of people, goods and services inside and outside the region.

Hold a regional conference on transport problems and solutions.

Develop a logistics supply chain forum.

Carry out research on transport networks within the region and through the region.

#### Aim 6

Provide sites and premises of the right size and quality and in the right place.

Continue to work with the West Midlands Employment and Land Advisory Group on a range of land and property supply issues, including a review of Regional Planning Guidance (RPGII).

Reclaim derelict or empty land for open space or leisure uses with local authorities and improve the environment of city centres, industrial estates and so on. All sites will be brought forward and projects delivered through programmes agreed with the local authorities.

Promote the importance of the region's economy and its aims that are in the Regional Economic Strategy, within the context of the Regional Planning Guidance.

## Action programme

### Aim 7

Encourage people to take part in economic and community life by targeting resources at communities and individuals that suffer poverty and social exclusion.

Birmingham Health Authority is leading a 'Family Support' scheme that tries to improve health and wellbeing but it also links into new and creative approaches to education and training. We will share lessons from this scheme across the region.

Under the SRB programme strategic schemes will be developed by local partnerships with full community involvement.

Warwickshire and Worcestershire Rural Retail Partnership are introducing a scheme to improve retail-based services in small rural communities. The results of this scheme will be added to the national model of good practice.

British Telecom is introducing a regional Community Excellence Awards Scheme.

The Birmingham Community Safety Partnership is leading an innovative, comprehensive community safety scheme with the possibility of wider use.

The Midland Community Enterprise Partnership will co-ordinate a review of good practice in the field of community enterprises.

Produce a set of criteria to identify Regeneration Zones, making sure there are areas of opportunity that can be linked to zones of need. Carry out a series of surveys with partners and stakeholders before producing a final set of proposals for zones.

### Aim 8

Develop the connections between public, private, voluntary and community sectors so we can support the complete development of the region to the benefit everyone who lives here.

Advantage West Midlands will set up a 'community regeneration mapping database'.

West Midlands Voluntary Service Network will develop a network of 'Badged' Community Capacity Building projects which can be used as examples of good practice, drawing on the experience of the voluntary sector.

A five year renewal programme is underway in the coalfield and ceramics areas of Stoke-Cobridge. Working with the public and private sectors there have been early improvements in business confidence.

# Local economic development

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Within this section, we have set out the economic priorities that are already being handled in parts of the region, and the actions that are being taken. This shows how the Regional Economic Strategy needs to set a framework for, and respond to this level of strategy and action.

## North Staffordshire including Stoke-on-Trent

Priority. Developing the workforce for the future.

Action. Make sure that the new Learning and Skills Council and Local Education Authorities can tackle the problems in North Staffordshire.

**Priority.** Building a better and safer environment.

Action. Continued help to upgrade the physical environment and tackle dereliction in older industrial areas.

Priority. Improve the competitiveness of business.

Action. Set up a high quality franchise of the Small Business Service in Staffordshire to deliver effective business support service.

Priority. Promoting social inclusion and community regeneration.

Action. Target deprivation and support voluntary and community groups as part of building communities.

## Southern Staffordshire

Priority. Economic regeneration - creating a dynamic and competitive local business sector.

Action. Provide high-quality business support services, in both urban and rural areas, including services to promote exporting for established and growing businesses.

Priority. Diversification - creating a strong economy with a broad base of companies.

Action. Attract inward investment, particularly in high value-added sectors, and encourage new businesses.

Priority. Sustainable development.

Action. Provide land, to give a balance between new employment and residential development in line with green belt policies, reuse brownfield sites, reduce commuting and by using environmental initiatives.

Priority. Developing skills.

Action. Working with the new Learning and

Skills Council to achieve the national learning targets, developing programmes such as winning managers, and putting the new deal in place.

Priority. Promoting social inclusion and community regeneration.

Action. Support and encourage existing SRB programmes and new SRB bids.

## Shropshire

Priority. Sustaining and developing Shrewsbury and market towns.

Action. Increasing our own companies through aftercare, develop the role of the private sector in inward investment.

Priority. Looking at the specific needs of sparsely-populated rural areas.

Action. Develop a range of multi purpose community centres in rural areas.

Priority. Helping key sectors to restructure and adapt to change - agriculture, tourism and care.

Action. To develop closer links and marketing skills with the agriculture and food sector, by improving access to information and delivering tourism products and establishing IT access and community information systems and skills development in the care sector.

Priority. Stimulate competitiveness through new business and added value in the business sector.

Action. To deliver 'Shropshire welcome friendly business culture' marketing product and business innovation campaign

Priority. Matching skills and business growth.

Action. To encourage lifelong learning and introduce new schemes to involve young people and encourage more management training.

## Telford and Wrekin

Priority. Inward investment.

Action. To maintain the flow of appropriate inward investments from overseas and within the UK in automotive components, electronics, polymers, food processing and services and to achieve 25 new investments generating a net increase of over 500 jobs in 1999/2000.

Commission market research on certain industrial sectors and produce quality promotional literature.

Priority. Tourism and conferences.

Action. Create one convention and visitor bureau organisation by combining the Wrekin Tourism Association and Telford and Shropshire Conferences.

Priority. Developing the workforce.

Action. Carry out research to clearly identify the potential workforce, their skills, and preferred employment, education, training and childcare options.

Priority. Local area regeneration.

Action. Active involvement in the Wellington, Newport and Oakengates Economic Partnerships.

Priority. Business development.

Action. Promote and expand the Business Development Centre and support the LA21 Business Round Table and the BESST scheme.

Priority. Combating poverty and social exclusion initiatives.

Action. Develop long term Credit Unions within the local area, and within local companies.

### Black Country

Priority. Diversify the economy and develop core-manufacturing strengths.

Action. An innovation strategy developing closer links between business and higher and further education institutions and associated initiatives to develop technologically based small and medium sized firms including provision of an integrated package of support through a dedicated Black Country Investment Team.

Priority. Deal with educational underachievement and raise skill levels.

**Action.** Raising hopes amongst young people through outreach programmes and targeted services for disadvantaged groups.

Priority. Carry forward the key development opportunities and transport investment.

Action. Identify and bring forward key development opportunities including, for example, the major sites at Bescot, Castle Gate and other development opportunities near motorway junctions and intersections.

Priority. Improve the quality of life.

Action. There is a need to encourage more green spaces in the area through the Black Country Forestry initiative.

Priority. Regenerate local communities.

Action. Specific initiatives should be designed

to support Ethnic Minority Employment Creation, a particularly important measure given the links with business, community and human resource action programme aims.

Priority. Develop new and effective partnerships arrangements.

### Birmingham

Priority. Promote Birmingham as the regional capital and Britain's second City and secure further national and international businesses to establish their operations within the region.

Action. Enhanced Marketing of Birmingham and the region to potential investors and occupiers.

Increase investment in world class infrastructure to ensure the City remains competitive as a business and world class meeting place.

Establish a new public and private funding partnership to treble passenger numbers on the region's transport systems within 20 years.

Priority. To secure the sustainable regeneration of Birmingham's communities to provide long term prosperity and social well-being, especially for inner city and other disadvantaged areas.

Action. Ensure that new opportunities for growth and investment maximise the potential for business growth and investment and the potential and diversity of Birmingham's multi-cultural communities and their entrepreneurial and employment capacity.

To direct new opportunities for investment towards the revitalisation of run-down communities, improve existing communities, encourage investment and revitalisation of housing and create a higher quality City environment.

Identify and promote the diversity of business in the multi-cultural community and develop the skills and learning capacity of the City's people through targeted training programmes.

Priority. Build, through new sub-regional alliances, regional prosperity which links "opportunities" for investment directly with the learning, employment and improvement "needs" of local communities, across the Region.

Action. Targeting recruitment and training programmes to meet the needs of communities through new strategic alliances between Birmingham and its neighbours to link this directly with opportunities for growth in employment in businesses within the sub-region(s).

Priority. Encouraging significantly improved competitiveness through innovation.

Action. Support an innovative cluster of growth sectors, with the University and Centres of Excellence in the City, to provide a new and enhanced technological capacity for the City.



### Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull

Priority. Encouraging Innovation to improve competitiveness.

Action. Develop an Innovation Cluster by using a strategic corridor in the sub-region that draws upon facilities at the Coventry University Technopark, the University of Warwick Science Park, the Technology Park at Warwick, the Innovation Centres at Binley (Coventry) and Bermuda, Blythe Valley Business Park and other business parks in Solihull, plus leading companies that include Alstom, Jaguar, Land Rover, Oracle, Peugeot, Rover, Rolls-Royce and TNT.

Priority. Support investment in local business.

Action. Stimulate the wider use of information and communications technologies for developing business through programmes such as Coventry and Warwickshire 2000 and the 'Solihull ICT initiative'.

Priority. Area regeneration.

Action. Support for Advantage West Midlands' concept of Regeneration Zones to use funding to focus on the economy of a specific geographical area. Other regeneration priorities have been identified in North Solihull, communities in the Northern Warwickshire Coalfield, Leamington Spa Old Town and North East Coventry. Focus on city and town centre management and regeneration programmes.

Priority. Community regeneration.

Action. Use a total approach to regeneration that takes account of issues such as lack of transport to local jobs and training opportunities and the social exclusion of long-term unemployed people.

Priority. Develop workforce skills.

Action. Use existing networks to encourage greater understanding of the changing skill needs of local employers among employees and potential employees.

### Worcestershire

Priority. Economic development should be sustainable and recognise the importance of maintaining local distinctiveness.

Action. Supportive actions for: Heart of England Fine Foods marketing and development campaign, Centre for Cider Production at Hindlip and Pershore College.

Priority. Improvements to transport and communications links are urgently needed to prevent congestion, increase accessibility and encourage other types of transport to the car and lorry.

Action. Encourage contribution of businesses and the community to sustainable transport measures, for example car sharing, green commuter plans for

employers, green transport plans for schools and community initiatives for example work carried out with the Safari Park.

Priority. The issue of low skills attainment and associated low wages is a serious threat to economic growth.

Action. Investigate low pay and its effects on the economy, prioritise actions to make sure there are more skills in these geographical areas and industrial sectors, encourage diversification where possible into higher added-value markets for example ADAPT project with food growers and processors in Wychavon.

Priority. Innovation in all sectors and services and support for business start-ups should be encouraged.

Action. Identifying clusters and networks and measures to encourage them, for example Objective 4 project in carpet cluster in Kidderminster.

Priority. Measures to use rural and urban links need to be identified and new initiatives developed.

Action. Study being carried out with University of Birmingham, into 3 case study areas: specialist food and drink, hidden employment and market towns.

### Herefordshire

Priority. Encourage sustainable business development and growth.

Action. Encourage local inter- trading and supply within the county and develop organic farming.

Priority. Encourage inward investment appropriate to the needs of Herefordshire.

Action. Promote the Herefordshire Inward Investment Partnership as a one- stop shop for people with questions on inward investment.

Priority. Improve infrastructure, communication and workspace to increase the competitiveness of the local economy.

Action. To carry out a strategic approach to providing infrastructure and workspace within the county and then put in place key infrastructure and workspace schemes within the county.

Priority. Develop innovation, including research and development, to improve competitiveness and the skills base of Herefordshire.

Action. Develop geographical clusters and sectional networks for business.

Priority. Improve the knowledge and skills base of the residents and workforce.

Action. Support and develop schemes, which aim to promote lifelong learning.



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