

Date: 6 March 2001
Time: 14.00 - 17.30
Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay
Title: FIVE COUNTIES REGENERATION FRAMEWORK

Purpose

1. To provide the Committee with the Five Counties Regeneration Framework for discussion.

Summary

2. Following the commitment to prepare a comprehensive regeneration strategy for South East Wales in response to the Corus closures the Five Counties Regeneration Framework has been submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government. The Framework contains an analysis of the economic challenges facing the sub-region, a vision for sustainable regeneration and recommendations for a strategy and action plan. On 31 January a range of projects recommended by the Framework were announced for funding from the Corus Recovery Package.

Background

3. The aid package announced by the First Minister on 3 May 2001 provided £66 million to support those facing redundancy and the communities hit by the closures. It included a commitment to prepare a comprehensive regeneration framework for the 5 counties most affected by the closures in south east Wales as a basis for Assembly Government decisions on the allocation of £32m set aside for the area.
4. Consultancy support for the project was funded from the Corus recovery package. Progress has been reported to the Cabinet Working Group, the All Wales Steel Task Force and the Steel Executive Group.

The Regeneration Framework

5. The 5 Counties Regeneration Framework has been prepared following an extensive programme of research and consultation. Elected members and officers from the five local authorities, Assembly Government officials, the WDA, ELWa and other stakeholders, have been fully involved in the preparation of the Framework.
6. Workshops were held with representatives of key stakeholders to develop a preferred vision for the sub-region drawing on analysis and research undertaken and the context

provided by 'A Winning Wales'. The Vision is based on recognition that a number of 'drivers of change' will influence the economy over the next 10 years. These include social and demographic trends; technological advancements; demand for higher skills; global competition; and sustainable development.

7. The preferred vision selected through the workshop process identified a number of key targets for achieving sustainable regeneration, including a highly skilled/knowledgeable workforce, a high quality property portfolio, an efficient sub-regional public transport system, SME growth and support for town centres as places to work and live.

8. The Framework includes the following recommendations:

Supporting Business

- Implementation of an accelerated WDA business property programme.
- Establishment of an Urban Regeneration Company for Newport.

Encouraging Innovation

- Acceleration of the Ebbw Vale Innovation Centre.
- Acceleration of the Torfaen Innovation Centre.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

- Establishment of a 5 Counties Enterprise Support Network.
- Funding feasibility on the potential for an international logistics and light manufacturing facility at Llanwern.
- Funding feasibility into health/social care projects in Blaenau Gwent.

Establish 5 Counties in the World

- Implement a Strategic Site development programme to offer an international class property portfolio.
- Support South East Wales Regional Tourism Partnership projects.

Learning Country

- Allocate funding for the proposed Learning Campus at Ebbw Vale.
- Allocate funding for the proposed Community Learning Network.
- Roll out Sure Start / Pacific Institute programmes in Blaenau Gwent.

Creating Strong Communities

- WDA and Finance Wales to consider a revolving Social Enterprise Development Fund.
- Support town centre regeneration programmes in Blaenau Gwent.

Improving Transport

- Allocate funding towards the re-opening of the Ebbw Vale Rail line.
- Accelerate TIGER public transport programmes.

Promoting ICT

- Improve broadband access through infrastructure provision.
- Provide dedicated support to business for e-procurement.
- WDA to identify business sites for accelerated broadband provision.

Implementation

9. The Framework recommends that a Five Counties Regeneration Forum be established consisting of representatives from the local authorities, Welsh Assembly Government, ELWa and the WDA. The Framework will form the basis of an annual three year rolling regeneration programme to be agreed and implemented by the Forum.

Commitments

10. Following consideration of these recommendations – made in the draft Framework - the Welsh Assembly Government announced on 31 January that the following projects would be given priority funding:

- Newport Urban Regeneration Company £10m
- Ebbw Vale Rail Line £7m
- Ebbw Vale Learning Campus £5m
- Community Learning Network £2m
- ICT infrastructure and support £3.55m
- Social Enterprise and town centre regeneration £2.4m
- Other projects and feasibility work £2.1m

Next Steps

11. The Assembly Government will now:

- Respond to the detailed recommendations made in the Framework.
- Receive a Designation Report for the Newport URC by the end of March.
- Consider the case for using the Framework to inform future investment
- As signalled in A Winning Wales, consider with local authorities and other partners the merits of promoting this co-operative approach to strategy development in other regions of Wales.

Cross Cutting Themes

12. The Framework has been prepared through an inclusive process involving a wide range of stakeholders from the public, private and community / voluntary sector. The Framework specifically seeks to initiate a sustainable approach to economic regeneration involving joint action and brings added value to the community regeneration process by identifying and addressing strategic sub-regional issues that will assist deprived communities in identifying effective regeneration programmes.

Compliance

13. Sections 40 & 85 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 in conjunction with Assembly functions for Economic Development, Education and Life Long Learning, Social Inclusion and Transport permits consideration of the measures contained in the Framework. These have been delegated to the First Minister. There are no issues of regularity or propriety. In accordance with FN1/01 this paper does not require prior ACO clearance but has been copied to the ACO Mailbox for monitoring purposes.

**Urban Unit
Communities Directorate**