



Observatory Business Plan 2008/9

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Context

The Business Plan for 2008/9 is set against a context of the recent external evaluation of the Observatory, which looked at both past achievements and future opportunities for the organisation. The outcome of the evaluation was extremely positive and the recommendations are taken forward through this Business Plan.

There are also a number of national and regional policies that influence the work of the Observatory, including the findings of the Sub National Review and the subsequent Pre Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review which highlight the need for an Integrated Regional Strategy.

The regional economic and spatial strategies are both under revision and the 2008 State of the Region process will be able to look at both these strategies and also position the Observatory as the central shared intelligence base for the proposed integrated strategy.

1.2 Planned activity

There is a substantial level of planned activity, including the development of a regional integrated modelling tool, the development of a regional perceptions indicator and our work for the Regional Skills Partnership, including the further development of the framework of skills performance indicators to allow its adoption across all English regions

We plan to undertake a number of gap filling projects, including a major project on demographics that flows from our State of the Region Report Update 2007.

Our website is currently undergoing a substantial revision, and the new site will be operational in April 2008. This will enable us to deliver enhanced access to data and intelligence for regional partners.

We will hold high profile seminars to engage both the data and intelligence community and policy colleagues, and our annual conference will focus on the State of the Region 2008, incorporating discussion around the Integrated Regional Strategy and forming a regional evidence base.

1.3 Delivery mechanisms

In order to have most impact, the Observatory must act as an effective facilitator of regional partners to ensure that the research that is carried out is linked closely to policy needs. The Observatory will continue to develop the Regional Data and Intelligence Network, and ensure that the Topic and User Groups both inform the Observatory's activities and also help deliver the Business Plan.

We will continue to host both the ONS regional statisticians and the Cultural Observatory.

1.4 Resources

The Observatory plans to increase its staffing resource to strengthen its research capabilities to deliver the evidence base needed for an integrated regional strategy. The Observatory is dependent on grant funding from key regional organisations and on technical assistance from European funds. It also needs to secure a number of commissioned research projects in order to cover its costs, the most significant of which is staffing.

1.5 Key risks to achievement

There are a number of risks associated with the achievement of this Business Plan. Perhaps the most critical are the uncertainty of future funding, and the uncertainty surrounding the transition to the Integrated Regional Strategy.

There is a robust risk strategy in place to minimise the impact of such risks.

2 Context

2.1 Evaluation outcomes

The Observatory commissioned an external evaluation in summer 2007 to look back at achievements over the five years since the creation of the Observatory and to look ahead at the changing policy environment and partners' expectations for future activity.

The key findings of the evaluation were that the Observatory had made substantial progress in delivering its strategic objectives. In particular, the evaluation found that the Observatory...

“...has achieved a great deal in its first five years of operation. It has successfully established itself within the regional architecture and has grown in size and capacity. (The Observatory) has successfully generated a large volume and wide range of outputs and has met the requirements of major funders, namely AWM and the RSP. It is well regarded amongst its partners, and has raised the region's game in data and intelligence activities. The key challenge now ... is to improve the effectiveness and influence of its activities in order to maximise the impact of, and benefit which can be derived from, its work.”

The recommendations arising from the evaluation focus on four key areas:-

- Being clear about what the Observatory does
 - o Revisiting the strategic objectives
 - o More effective evidence on data and intelligence leadership
- Making the Observatory more influential
 - o Seek to pursue a programme based approach with key regional groups
 - o Forge stronger links with senior policy and decision makers in order to drive the strategic direction and activities of the Observatory and the RDIN
- Making the Observatory more effective
 - o Review the operational integration between the Skills Team and the Research team.
 - o Fewer and more in-depth Seminars
 - o Enhanced PR/Communications capacity and expertise

- Positioning WMRO for the future.
 - o Position WMRO with the skills and expertise needed to work across the spectrum of regional strategic themes.

The Partnership Board has accepted these recommendations and the responses to the recommendations are evidenced throughout this Business Plan.

2.2 National policy influences

There are a number of national policies which influence the work of the Observatory. Some of the more recent changes include the outcome of the review of sub national economic development and regeneration (SNR), which was announced in July 2007 and the 2007 Pre Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review (2007 CSR).

The SNR recommended strengthening the local and regional tiers to ensure these are responsive to local economic conditions. The key recommendations for the regions included introducing a single regional strategy in every region that merges the current Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy. The 2007 CSR stated that:-

“The Government is committed to introducing a single integrated regional strategy, which will bring together the economic, social and environmental objectives for each region. The regional strategy will set out how economic development interventions will deliver the regional growth objective and how spatial planning within each region will support delivery of the agreed increase in housing numbers. These objectives are currently set out separately in the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy. The new single regional strategy will build the support of Local Authorities, businesses and other partners from within the region, as well as from central departments and agencies.”

The 2007 CSR also built on the initial response to Christopher Allsopp’s review of the regional information and statistical framework needed to support the Government’s regional economic performance PSA target, whereby the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the RDAs worked in partnership to establish a full regional statistical presence from April 2007. The 2007 CSR enables the RDAs to continue to provide funding to sustain the ONS’s regional presence. The ONS has also committed to deliver real regional Gross Value Added per head estimates to enable more accurate comparison of regional growth rates by 2009.

2.3 Regional issues

At a regional level, we have a newly revised West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) and the Regional Spatial Strategy is also undergoing a phased revision. The WMES contains a number of headline performance indicators as well as a more detailed monitoring framework to help review progress.

A new Ministerial post of Regional Minister was created in the summer, and Liam Byrne MP is the first West Midlands Minister. He has set a number of challenges for the region, including the production of a regional skills action plan.

The Regional Skills Assessment produced by the Observatory in November 2007 notes that skills are at the centre of the national and regional policy agenda. There is increasing recognition that increased investment in training and development by employers and raising the skill levels of individuals are the key to improving economic performance and tackling deprivation and exclusion.

In response to the Minister's challenge, the first regional skills action plan was published in March 2008, and was underpinned by analysis from the Observatory on:

- The region's recent skills performance
- The 'scale of the task' to achieve the targets set for 2011 and 2020 by the Leitch Review of Skills
- The potential economic benefits for the region if the targets are met in terms of increased GVA, jobs and productivity

The Observatory will have a continuing role in updating this action plan and reviewing the region's progress in achieving the targets contained therein.

The State of the Region update report 2007, published in October 2007, raised some questions for the region concerning demographic change and climate change.

The Observatory's recent work on the economic impact of migrant labour has shed new light on the issues faced by the region, and there is a strong appetite for further research in this area.

2.4 Positioning of the Observatory

The position of the Observatory must be set in the context of the outcomes of the evaluation and the changing policy context at both national and regional level.

The strategic objectives of the Observatory have been reviewed and refined, to be clearer about what the Observatory does. They are set out below.

Strategic Objectives

1. Support regional policy decision-making through the provision of intelligence based conclusions and (where appropriate) policy implications.
2. Monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of regional strategies and programmes.
3. Engage the region in determining regional data and intelligence priorities and seek better alignment of regional resources.
4. Coordinate and facilitate the delivery of agreed new research priorities where appropriate.
5. Provide effective access to intelligence to encourage higher standards of evidence - based decision-making.
6. Lead best data and intelligence practice by sharing best practice for research methods and specifications, backed up by an enquiry service.

The outcomes of the SNR provide a significant opportunity to position the Observatory as the regional centre of data and intelligence to underpin the proposed integrated regional strategy. This will be a major focus for the Observatory in 2008/09.

3 Planned activity

3.1 Activities to support strategic objectives

The planned activity for 2008/9 is set out in this section of the Business Plan, demonstrating how the activity will support the strategic objectives.

3.1.1 Support regional policy decision-making through the provision of intelligence based conclusions and (where appropriate) policy implications.

3.1.1.1 State of the Region 2008

Following publication of the 2007 State of the Region Update report, the first four year cycle of reporting has been completed. In preparation for the second cycle of reporting, we have carried out research amongst users of the report. This found that, whilst the report was highly regarded in terms of its style, format and content, it had limited impact on the work of users. In particular, the reports have had limited influence on regional strategies and policies.

In order to increase the influence of the State of the Region report, and the Observatory more generally, we are proposing a more process-centred approach. This will take the form of an ongoing dialogue between the research community, led by the Observatory, and policy makers and service providers in the region. This would involve a series of workshops and other discussions culminating in the Observatory's Annual Conference. Whilst the Observatory would co-ordinate this process, it will also draw in evidence from researchers across the region, including from academia.

Rather than a single annual report, the process will generate a series of shorter, thematic reports highlighting data and intelligence evidence linked to key policy debates. These will be directed primarily at policy makers and service providers but will contain links to the underlying evidence so they will also be of value to researchers. Whilst some of these will be produced by the Observatory, others will be the responsibility of other regional (or local) agencies. They may include existing reports which will be "kite-marked".

Following the Annual Conference, a synthesis report will be produced which draws together the key conclusions of the process and provides a commentary on what they tell us about the State of the Region. This report will continue to be published as a hard-copy document but will come with an accompanying electronic medium which will provide access to other outputs from the process and a variety of related material.

3.1.1.2 Integrated Regional Policy Model

During 2007/08, the Observatory let a contract for the development of the first stage of an Integrated Regional Policy Model. The model is expected to be delivered early in 2008/09. Unlike most existing models, it will project future developments of economic, demographic and environmental dimensions together, using the relationships between the different dimensions. Rather than modelling these issues for the Region as a whole, the model will cover each of the 34 local authority areas in the Region and will take account of the interactions between neighbouring areas.

The Integrated Regional Policy Model will provide a powerful tool for evaluating the impacts of policy interventions. This will include impacts across the full range of policy areas, not just those which are immediately affected by the interventions. It will also allow spatial effects of localised policy interventions to be assessed, including those on the remainder of the Region. As such, the model will be particularly important in developing the evidence base to support future regional strategies.

Once the first stage of the Integrated Regional Policy Model is in place, we will decide whether to proceed to a second stage. This will involve developing a model which will project outcomes at more local level, using around 900 middle-level super output areas in the Region. This potentially provides an even more powerful tool with wider potential applications. The second stage of the model will also allow the Observatory to deliver the remainder of the longstanding Brownfield to Greenspace project. In order to deliver stage 2 of the IRPM we will need to raise funding from a range of regional partners. We are investigating the possibility of building a partnership with academia to develop this model, which would also allow us to access research council funding.

3.1.1.3 Regional Skills Partnership

As part of a proposed three year programme of work for the Regional Skills Partnership, we will be reviewing the changing needs of the labour market to inform the planning and strategic thinking of partners, and continue the development of a the Skills Action Plan. This will include the interrogation of published and other secondary sources of intelligence, together with findings from gap filling research commissioned by the Data Group and partners. Key activities include:-

- Regional Skills Assessment 2008, highlighting key strategic issues and informing the planning and policy development of key RSP partners
- Dissemination of the results of two key “gap filling” projects, namely:-
 - exploration of the issues and drivers influencing the attraction, retention and employment of graduates in the region
 - Research to assess the ‘scale of the task’ to achieve the targets set for 2011 and 2020 by the Leitch Review of Skills and exploration of the potential economic benefits for the region if the targets are met in terms of increased GVA, jobs and productivity
- Sector specific analysis relating to manufacturing (informing partners’ work on delivery of the regional manufacturing strategy) and energy and environmental technologies (feeding into a partnership project being co-ordinated by the LSC)
- Providing better access to data and analysis for providers of careers information advice and guidance via a regular e-bulletin.
- Cross sector balance sheet highlighting the demand for skills and supply of education and training in customer service
- Employment, skills and training needs of older workers, aspirations and barriers
- analysis relating to presenting data and analysis in an accessible format for providers of careers information advice and guidance, forecasts and scenarios of future skill requirements for key sectors and industries, learning, skills, employability issues for mature workers and a cross-sector balance sheet for customer service skills

3.1.1.4 Cultural Observatory

In December 2007, we entered the third year of our arrangement with Culture West Midlands to host the Cultural Observatory for the Region.

The key priority of the Cultural Observatory during 2008/09 will be the development of the evidence base for the review of the Regional Cultural Strategy. This will involve the preparation of three major evidence papers, on Prosperity, People and Place. These will be delivered during the course of the summer. The Cultural Observatory will continue to be involved in the review process thereafter.

As in previous years, the remainder of the work of the Cultural Observatory will be guided by the Cultural Research & Intelligence Group (CRAIG). This is likely to include some original research, perhaps around the perceptions of the cultural sector and the sector's role in place-shaping. Work will also continue in mapping the research resources available to the cultural sector and in identifying gaps in the evidence base.

3.1.2 Monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of regional strategies and programmes.

3.1.2.1 WMES monitoring

During 2007/08, the Observatory developed a framework of monitoring indicators for the new West Midlands Economic Strategy. We also produced a baseline report for these indicators, which was published alongside the strategy. During 2008/09 we will publish a monitoring report showing progress against these indicators. We will also review the indicator set to ensure that it continues to provide an appropriate range of information.

The WMES Monitoring Framework baseline report contained proposals for developing four new indicators (in addition to the perceptions indicator which is discussed below). These cover industrial and commercial waste, e-business, rural deprivation and the natural environment. We will work with colleagues from other regional agencies to develop suitable indicators for inclusion in the framework prior to producing the monitoring report.

3.1.2.2 ONS - regional GVA

Since April 2007, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Regional Statisticians have been based at the Observatory. During the year, a workplan has been developed which includes their involvement in a number of collaborative projects, such as the Regional Perceptions Indicator, in addition to their ONS responsibilities.

2008/09 will see significant progress with certain key regional data, which the Regional Statisticians have contributed to. Central to this are improvements to the calculation of regional Gross Value Added (GVA). These changes will significantly enhance the range of economic data available to the Observatory and will improve the service we are able to provide to customers. We will continue to work with the Regional Statisticians to improve the quality and range of information available at regional level, not just in the economic field.

We anticipate that the Regional Statisticians will play a significant role in the major project looking at the demographic profile of the region (see 3.1.4.1). Other collaborative projects will be identified during the course of the year. We also expect to enhance the advice, information and training which we are able to provide to the region in conjunction with colleagues from ONS.

3.1.2.3 RSS monitoring

2007/08 also saw the Observatory contribute a chapter to the Annual Monitoring Report for the Regional Spatial Strategy for the first time. The chapter covered progress towards the Urban and Rural Renaissance policies of the RSS. We will again produce a similar chapter for the 2008/09 AMR.

3.1.2.4 Regional Perceptions Indicator

The Observatory has been commissioned to develop a Regional Perceptions Indicator, which will be one of the headline impact measures for the West Midlands Economic Strategy. During 2008/09, we will be developing the methodology for the indicator and carrying out a pilot study, in collaboration with an external contractor and with methodological experts. The pilot will report during the autumn and, if it is successful, we will begin preparations for carrying out the first full survey during 2009/10.

The headline perceptions indicator is likely to be a composite indicator built up from five components - covering perceptions of the region as a place to invest, to work, to learn, to visit and to live. Each will include perceptions from both within the Region and from the rest of the UK. Some dimensions will also include an international perspective. Perceptions will be gathered from individuals, businesses and key opinion-leaders.

3.1.2.5 Single Integrated Regional Strategy evidence base

During 2008/09, the region will begin assembling the evidence base for the single integrated regional strategy. The Observatory expects to play a major role in the programme. Details of the work involved are not yet clear but it is expected to be a major component of our work during the year.

The first element of the evidence base will be the production of a Regional Integrated Economic Assessment. Work on this began in 2007/08, including the collection of a wide range of information from the region's local authorities. The initial version of the RIEA is due to be completed by the end of June 2008.

Some of the other projects mentioned above will feed into the evidence base, most notably the State of the Region process and the Regional Spatial Policy Model.

3.1.2.6 Skills research

We will continue to evaluate the impact of the Regional Skills Partnership through the emerging framework of regional skills performance indicators. Over the last 3 years we have developed and populated the framework with data and produced a summary index that tracks overall performance.

3.1.2.7 Other Research Projects

During the year, the Observatory will carry out a wide range of additional research on behalf of partners in the region. Past trends have seen the amount of work commissioned from us increasing and we expect this to continue. Amongst those projects already identified are a survey of e-business adoption by SMEs in the Region, and the development of a regional index to monitor progress; continuing work on monitoring the indicators and targets in Local Area Agreements; a range of regular monitoring reports including the Rural Regeneration Zone, Regional Manufacturing Strategy, Access to Finance Indicators, the impact of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area, social inclusion indicators, innovation indicators and the indicators in the Regional Sustainable Development Framework; and developments of our Geographical Information Systems capability, including presenting a wider range of data through the website.

3.1.3 Engage the region in determining regional data and intelligence priorities and seek better alignment of regional resources.

Gap filling remains a priority for the work of the RDIN. This year, we plan to promote the gaps identified through the RDIN, and utilise the topic group members to prioritise gaps and identify partners responsible for filling them. The Observatory will continue in its role as facilitator for this exercise, but only undertake work where no other suitable partner is available.

As part of our programme of work for the Regional Skills Partnership, we will lead the discussion with regional partners, through the Skills Data Group, to determine the key gaps in the skills evidence base.

3.1.4 Coordinate and facilitate the delivery of agreed new research priorities where appropriate.

3.1.4.1 Demographics

We are currently developing a specification for a major project investigating the demographic profile of the Region's population. This will provide detailed evidence about how the population of the Region has changed in recent years, how it is currently composed and how it is likely to change in the future. It will draw heavily on existing evidence but will also involve some primary research.

3.1.4.2 Skills research

We plan to address gaps in the regional skills evidence base that have been identified as a priority by partners. These include:-

- Establishing a baseline for basic skills in terms of the skills required by employers, skill and qualification attainment by individuals, what is being offered by schools, colleges and other skills providers.
- Following up key issues raised by the migrant workers research, notably in relation progression in employment
- Following up the 'raising aspirations' project with further research on the skills issues and barriers faced by disadvantaged and 'hard to reach' communities.
- Gathering 'real' intelligence from businesses on their skills and training needs and their perceptions on gaps in provision from sources such as train to gain and the skills brokerage service

3.1.4.3 Migrant labour

In 2007/08 on behalf of regional partners we managed a significant project looking at the economic impact of migrant labour. This project has raised a number of issues and there are a number of strands being taken forward.

3.1.4.4 Register of consultants

The website development referred to below will facilitate the creation of a new register of consultants. This will fill a gap in regional knowledge, identified by the Economy and Labour Force topic group, as there is currently no easily accessible place to conveniently find out who is capable of conducting social policy and related research.

3.1.5 Provide effective access to intelligence to encourage higher standards of evidence - based decision-making.

The Observatory's current website has been in use since May 2005. During the last two and half years we have added considerably to its capability and have seen the fruits of this in very substantially increased use. We have also during the same period conducted two user satisfaction surveys and the results of these, together with the recent evaluation report, have identified the need for us to re-organise the content of the website, provide new ways of navigating around it and to help it better support our wider communication plans.

As a result of this we have taken the decision to completely revise the user visible parts of the website, which will provide both a new image and a better user experience. Work is already underway on building the new site and we plan on launching it by the end of April 2008.

Once the new website is operational we plan to provide new services or to extend and improve existing ones, as noted earlier in this section. We also plan to extend the scope of Instant Atlas, so that includes topological underlays and linked maps that drill down into local data and issues.

In addition to these planned activities we will also investigate, with a view to implementation, the potential and costs of what can be termed dataset discovery. We see this as an activity to bring together all our disparate on-line data into a single web accessible repository that allows easy drill down, extraction and exploration across different themes. At this stage the work is still conjectural and needs discussion with the research managers and further research and analysis, but it could offer significant advantages to both us and our users. We will complete the analysis and develop the business case in the coming year.

3.1.5.1 Regional Information Services

Since its creation the Observatory has provided various on-line information services to the Region and beyond. Some of these services are very time consuming and it is a persistent challenge to get external organisations to submit information to them. This raises questions about their value and sustainability.

During the coming year we will definitively establish the value and cost-benefits of the on-line information services we currently offer, modifying or withdrawing these where necessary. The services for review are: the resource catalogue, regional organisations, the directory of specialists and research gap handling. The first of these is the most important as it is the most expensive to create and maintain.

Subject to the review above, we plan to continue expanding the resource catalogue with 300 new externally submitted resources added.

Past experience has shown that creating interoperable links with partner's websites is a good way to increase the effective size of the information services we provide. We therefore propose to create new interoperable links between our website and those of two partners.

3.1.5.2 Integrated Regional Strategy

The development of the new integrated strategy will undoubtedly create the need for us to respond with new or revised information services delivered through our website. Since the content of the IRS is currently unknown it is not possible to say at the moment what these services will be. However, as the work on drawing up the IRS continues, we will strive to understand and define what website support is needed, modifying our plans as necessary.

3.1.5.3 Regional Data Sharing Protocol

This popular tool was created and launched over two years ago. It is now time to review and revise it to ensure that it remains relevant and useful. We will undertake this in the coming year.

3.1.5.4 RDIN Seminars

RDIN seminars have been noted as a popular programme by the RDIN, however, it has proved difficult to sustain high quality seminars when aiming for a programme of one seminar per month. This year, we plan to deliver six seminars during the year, four of which will be delivered through the RDIN topic groups. In particular, we plan to hold seminars on ONS methodology, Geographical Information, Population Change and Introduction to Evidence. Other seminars will be planned later in the year.

3.1.5.5 Annual conference

Following the highly successful 2007 conference, we are already planning the 2008 annual conference. We expect to focus on the State of the Region process as its main theme, incorporating discussion on formulating a regional evidence base in support of an Integrated Regional Strategy and, as in previous years, we will continue to charge for attendance at the conference.

3.1.6 Lead best data and intelligence practice by sharing best practice for research methods and specifications, backed up by an enquiry service.

The redeveloped website referred to above will provide facilities for the current research enquiry service to take place through the website and for an enquiry database to be built up that is publically searchable. At present enquiries are handled off-line with little external re-use of the information provided in response to enquiries.

We also plan to hold seminars on best data and intelligence practice as part of the annual programme of seminars.

3.2 Key performance indicators

The measurement of the Observatory's achievement of strategic objectives, and business plan, will be through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The suite of KPIs agreed by the Board is set out below.

Key Performance Indicator	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
	Actual	Target	Target
Overall customer satisfaction rating	3.03	3.00	3.00
Customer rating of State of the Region Report/process	3.15	3.00	3.20
Composite measure of partner engagement	2.83	3.0	3.0
Composite measure of web access and enquiries handled	n/a	+20%	+15%
Average project satisfaction rating	Not available	2.50	3.0
Ratio of non core/grant income to total income	0.33	0.38	0.45

Staff satisfaction rating	2.9	3.00	3.00
To be tracked to monitor additional investment in June 2007			
Average monthly number of catalogued resources viewed	10,563	12,000	15,000
Average monthly visits to the website	34,536	40,000	45,000

4 Delivery mechanisms

4.1 Partnership working

By its very nature, the Observatory works in partnership with a number of regional organisations. Whilst much of the work falls to the Observatory, there is an emphasis on our role in being a catalyst for activity, be it a debate around policy implications, reaching agreement on regional research priorities or ensuring best practice.

4.2 The Regional Data and Intelligence Network (RDIN)

The RDIN plays a key role in both informing the activities of the Observatory and also in helping deliver the Business Plan, particularly through the four topic groups and the User Group.

4.2.1 Topic groups - work plans

Draft work plans for the Economy and Labour Force, Geographical Information and Society Demography and Health and Environment and Natural Resources have been developed. There are essentially three key strands of work for each topic group, identification of regional research gaps, advising the Observatory on data and intelligence issues and leading the work to share and promote good practice across the region. In this vein, the topic groups have developed challenging work programmes that are set out in Annex 1.

In addition, all groups will make a concerted effort to widen its membership and encourage individuals involved in policy as well as data leads within the Region to join topic groups.

4.2.2 User group

The User Group has recently agreed to change its role to enable it to have greater opportunity to influence the work of the Observatory. Essentially the group will meet twice yearly, once to provide input into the forthcoming business plan, and secondly to review progress towards meeting the objectives set out in the business plan. They will also act as a conduit between the Observatory Partnership Board and all topic groups.

This year two RDIN Board representatives have been nominated to the Partnership Board, Claire Edwards - Chair of the GI topic group and Amanda Turner, User Group member. It will be the role of the RDIN Board representative to provide a report on RDIN activity to the Partnership Board for discussion, and to feedback to the User Group and Topic Groups the key issues from the Board, thus providing high level guidance on the work of the RDIN.

4.3 Role of RSP data group

The Observatory's work for the Regional Skills Partnership will continue to be delivered in partnership with the RSP data group. This group, chaired by the Observatory, shares data, analysis and research findings across regional partners. It takes an overview of the range of research being undertaken in the Region, identifying gaps in the evidence base. Together with members of the RSP Progress group active in developing skills policy, gaps are prioritised for subsequent gap filling research, and the data group is a source of advice and expertise to develop research proposals.

The RSP data group also provides links to other regions, government and other national bodies through representation on the RSP cross-regional research group.

4.4 State of the Region Steering group

The State of the Region process will continue to be overseen by a steering group drawn from regional partners with expertise in the policy and/or research in the themes addressed by the report. This will help ensure that the process is relevant, in considering areas that meet the needs of policy colleagues, and is informed by recent research.

4.5 Cultural Observatory

The work of the Cultural Observatory is closely linked to that of the regional Observatory, through the location of the cultural analyst(s) within the research team. The synergy between the work streams continues to benefit both organisations.

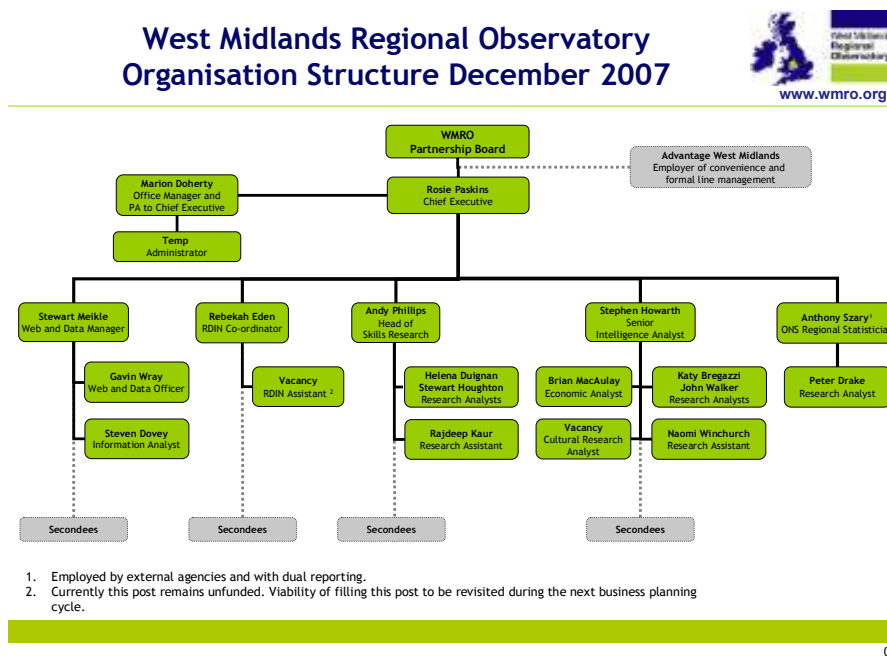
4.6 ONS

Since April 2007, the Observatory has hosted two ONS regional statisticians. We will continue to work together to ensure that we maximise the links between the Observatory's work and that of ONS.

5 Resources

5.1 Staff requirements

The Observatory’s staffing position was strengthened in early 2007 with a number of new appointments. The current organisation structure is given in the chart below:-



There are no changes required to the web and data team, following the recruitment of the Information Analyst in January 2007.

The RDIN team was supplemented over the last year by a sponsorship officer. This post was discontinued in October 2007 after disappointing results from our efforts to secure general sponsorship income. For 2008/9 we will employ a summer student to secure sponsorship for our annual conference.

One post in the current structure remains aspirational. This is the post of RDIN assistant. As in previous years it is unlikely that our funding can support the addition of this post to the permanent structure. The general administration team will support the RDIN coordinator and the move to fewer seminars will also relieve some of the pressure.

The skills research assistant post was made a permanent addition to the skills research team during the year. The demand for skills research remains high and the RSP Board is expected to approve the work programme for the data stream later this month. However, the resourcing for the skills team is dependent on the availability of funds from key members of the Regional Skills Partnership (the LSC, AWM, Hefce and FDF) together with an ESF grant for technical assistance. At present the overall funding is uncertain.

There will be a need for additional research capability to respond to the opportunity presented by the SNR and the need for an evidence base for the Integrated Regional Strategy (ISR). In addition, one of the Research Analysts has returned from maternity leave to work on a part-time basis. The transition to the new (ISR) is currently under discussion and in the absence of any detailed information, the Business Plan assumes that we will recruit two additional Research Analysts and one additional Research Assistant during the year. This could be by secondments.

We will continue to host the ONS regional statisticians (up to 33% of whose time is available for regional work) and the analyst from the Cultural Observatory. We will also seek specific secondments for particular projects as the need arises.

5.2 Summary of forecast income and expenditure

The summary draft budget for 2008/9 is set out below together with the forecast outturn for 2007/8 which is based on the management accounts to end October 2007. While income is expected to be broadly similar to the current year, there is a significant increase in costs, most notably in staff costs and associated overheads. More detail and explanation is given in the remainder of this section.

Summary of Funding and Expenditure		
Detail	2007/8 (Forecast)	2008/9 (Budget)
	£	£
Sources of Funds		
Consortium funding	446,000	479,900
Sponsorship	14,500	17,300
Grant Funding	250,000	260,474

Other Revenue	877,025	856,707
Total Funding	1,587,525	1,614,381
Expenditure		
Staff	747,000	910,788
Overhead	39,300	95,864
Premises	107,600	126,278
Project & Consultants	77,000	62,000
Operational	209,800	219,010
Set-up	1,000	1,030
Depreciation	14,800	18,000
Total Expenditure	1,196,500	1,432,969
Surplus (Deficit)	391,025	181, 411

5.2.1 Sources of income

The main sources of income are set out in the following table.

Summary of Funding		
Detail	2007/8 (Forecast)	2008/9 (Budget)
	£	£
Consortium Fees		
Advantage West Midlands	419,500	452,900
Regional Assembly	25,000	25,000
Sales and other income	1,500	2,000
Subtotal: Consortium	446,000	479,900
Sponsorship		
State of the Region	500	2,000
Newsletter	0	100
News Bulletins	0	100
Annual Conference	14,000	15,000
Seminar Programme	0	100
Regional Economic Model	0	0
Subtotal: Sponsorship	14,500	17,300
Grant Funding		
EU Technical Assistance	250,000	260,474
New ERDF Technical Assistance	0	0
Subtotal: Grant	250,000	260,474
Other Revenue		
Net project revenue	531,950	465,682
Carried forward	345,075	391,025

Subtotal: Other	877,025	856,707
Total Funding	1,587,525	1,614,381

Consortium income is budgeted to increase by £40,500. This is because revenue from Advantage West Midlands in 2007/8 was reduced by £40k that was changed to capital to reflect the costs of the office reconfiguration in November/December 2007.

The current core funding from AWM finishes at the end of 2007/8 and an application for further funding is in preparation. It has been assumed that the current level of revenue funding will be maintained.

Consortium funding from the West Midlands Regional Assembly is assumed to be at the same level as previously although there can be no assurance of this until the Assembly's budget is finalised.

ERDF funding for technical assistance is broadly similar to this year, reflecting the grant profile.

No income has been assumed for ESF technical assistance until 2009/10, given the current lack of clarity of both funding available and procedures for application.

Other revenue is expected to fall slightly, but this is the net effect of a drop in net project revenue partly offset by an increase in in-year surplus which is discussed further below.

5.2.2 Net project revenue

An analysis of net project revenue is shown in the following table.

Project Income and Expenditure		
Detail	2007/8 (Forecast)	2008/9 (Budget)
	£	£
Project income		
Other major projects	202,400	340,909
Secondees	30,000	30,000
Other internal projects	126,600	190,000
Regional Skills Partnership	350,000	350,000
Outsourced research	289,500	227,273
Sales and other income	0	0
Total income	998,500	1,138,182
Project costs		
Other major projects	104,500	300,000
Other internal projects	18,550	15,000
Regional Skills Partnership	120,000	157,500
Outsourced research	223,500	200,000
Sales and other income	0	0
Total cost	466,550	672,500
Net project revenue	531,950	465,682

Our most significant project is the programme of work undertaken for the Regional Skills Partnership. The income for the current programme finishes in March 2008 and an application for further funding is currently with AWM . The LSC, one of the key funding partners, has indicated that it will continue to fund at the current level and discussions are continuing to secure this funding stream.

Other major projects included in the Business Plan relate to the work on the Regional Perceptions Indicator and the evidence base for the ISR.

5.2.3 Analysis of expenditure

As noted earlier the main expenditure of the Observatory is on staffing and related overheads.

Summary of Expenditure		
Detail	2007/8 (Forecast)	2008/9 (Budget)
	£	£
Staff		
Staff	730,000	895,788
Temporary staff	17,000	15,000
Subtotal: Staff	747,000	910,788
Overhead		
Travel and expenses	6,000	6,180
Welfare	300	309
Recruitment	10,000	34,125
Relocation	6,000	30,000
Training	12,000	20,100
Parking	5,000	5,150
Subtotal: Overhead	39,300	95,864
Premises		
Rent	72,000	74,160
Service and maintenance	10,000	25,750
Utilities	3,000	3,090
Insurance	1,600	1,648
Rates	21,000	21,630
Subtotal: Premises	107,600	126,278

Projects & Consultants		
Website development	45,000	30,000
State of the Region	25,000	25,000
ARO Subscription	7,000	7,000
Subtotal: Projects	77,000	62,000
Operational		
Finance and HR SLA (AWM)	25,000	25,000
IT SLA (MPPL/Tempus)	25,000	28,000
Network access	15,000	1,000
Telecoms	2,000	2,492
Office equipment	7,500	9,345
Software	3,000	6,000
Consumables and stationery	14,000	17,444
Petty cash	1,000	1,246
Website/ICT operations	12,000	16,000
Marketing and dissemination	10,300	12,875
RDIN Events	20,000	20,000
Catering & Room Hire	5,000	5,150
Professional fees	2,000	2,000
Irrecoverable VAT	63,000	70,120
Contingency	5,000	5,000
Subtotal: Operational	209,800	219,010
Set-up		
IT Set up	1,000	1,030
Office move and setup	0	0
Lease agreement	0	0
Subtotal: Set-up	1,000	1,030

Depreciation		
IT Equipment	5,000	6,823
Furniture	3,800	3,276
Fixtures and fittings	6,000	7,901
Subtotal: Depreciation	14,800	18,000
Total Expenditure	1,196,500	1,432,969

Some key changes are considered below.

5.2.3.1 Staff costs

Staff costs assume an additional two research analysts and an additional research analyst, as noted earlier. These add approximately £XXX to the staff budget.

5.2.3.2 Overheads

Overheads show a marked increase because of the budgeted costs of recruitment and relocation.

5.2.3.3 Website development

The Observatory is currently undergoing a major revision to the website. These costs will not recur next year.

5.2.3.4 Premises

The service charge for the current year is stated net of a repayment of overcharged costs for the previous five years. Costs will revert to the normal level next year.

5.2.4 Capital expenditure

This year the main capital expenditure has been on the office reconfiguration.

The Observatory has not previously had to give much consideration to maintenance and replacement of its IT assets. However, now that the Observatory is five years old, we find that some of the equipment bought at the start is now wearing out and falling behind in capability. We therefore plan for the following be upgraded or replaced in the coming year.

- Upgrade and standardise MS Office throughout the Observatory.
- Replace older desktop equipment, especially any which is or becomes more than five years old during the year.

Additional staff will also require additional IT equipment.

A brief summary of capital expenditure is given below.

Summary of Capital Expenditure		
Detail	2007/8 (Forecast)	2008/9 (Budget)
	£	£
Computer Equipment	1,000	9,900
Furniture	4,000	1,200
Fixtures and Fittings	40,000	1,000
Total	45,000	12,100

6 Key risks to achievement

We have classified our key risks into four types: Strategic risks that may jeopardise our strategic objectives; financial risks that could undermine our budget and create financial problems; project risks that arise from our need to take on and satisfactorily deliver research on a semi-commercial basis; and operational risks that might threaten our work programme.

The risks the Observatory faces and the actions planned in mitigation are detailed in the following table:

Area of Risk	Risk Weight ¹		Consequences	Planned Actions
	L	I		
S: Strategic Risks				
S1: Failure to secure effective strategic support from partners	M	H	The Observatory becomes sidelined and increasingly irrelevant to regional research and intelligence	Ongoing communication and marketing programme at all levels (including through Partnership Board and RDIN) with partners and other organisations in the region, so that they think of the Observatory first. Proactive dissemination of research outputs to highlight publicly the work of the Observatory
S2: Failure to secure reputation for independent analysis	L	H	Our analysis is not trusted and would need to be duplicated or, at least, validated, undermining our key value proposition	Ensure effective peer review of all output for QC and validation Maintain independent Observatory identity in all events and publicity
S3: Unsuccessful in engaging with key regional policies	M	M	Reduced use of evidence to inform key strategies. Inability to develop comprehensive strategic overview of the Region for the ISR	Pro-active engagement with partners and appropriate policy forums to identify Observatory role as we move towards ISR

¹ L = likelihood of risk occurring; I = impact of occurrence. Arbitrary scale: L=low, M=medium, H=high.

F: Financial Risks				
F1: Failure to secure sufficient Consortium funding to deliver strategic objectives	L	H	Curtailment of activity and delay, possibly indefinite, in meeting objectives. Pressure to reduce staff. Possible spiral of decline.	Continue engagement with partners to demonstrate delivery of objectives and to highlight the value of what is delivered Use the Partnership Board to champion the core role of the Observatory throughout the sectors they represent
F2: Unable to secure sufficient project work and revenue	M	H	Unable to secure necessary funding to meet Observatory costs. Reduced impact in regional research	Pro-actively seek projects, and seek support for them Ensure in-house capacity to deliver probable projects Maximise value of existing project work to promote Observatory offer
F3: Unable to achieve scale necessary to cover overheads	M	M	Cannot establish sustainable funding regime before grant funding expires. Need to reduce staff and activity. Possible spiral of decline.	Direct investment of grant funding towards revenue generating activity Increase research capacity to undertake a greater proportion of funded work
F4: Unable to secure ERDF and ESF technical assistance grants under new programmes	M	H	Insufficient funds to deliver activities set out in the Business Plan	Direct engagement with European Programmes Director at AWM to ensure programme strategy reflects need for TA for the Observatory and that applications are timely.
P: Project Risks				
P1: Poor delivery quality of project output	L	H	Loss of reputation, undermining the overall role of the Observatory	Establish quality acceptance criteria in advance for all projects Maintain strong QC processes including appropriate peer review of all projects Ensure and continuously develop Observatory skills and knowledge

P2: Cost pressure from clients squeezes margins	M	M	Loss of income. Project work becomes non-viable	Provide realistic project proposals and monitor their accuracy Resist scope-creep Be clear and transparent on project costings Decline non-viable projects if necessary
P3: WMRO challenged over state aid for commercial projects	L	L	Legal action and possible penalties. Possible loss of valuable income source	Ensure all project work generates income to cover full costs Maintain a project by project P&L based on robust costing model Keep complete records of proposal, costing, and staff time allocation
P4: Time committed before contracts agreed	M	M	Failure to convert project into contracted work results in loss of income. Early investment of time may not be recovered even if project goes ahead, resulting in project losses	Monitor and minimise time allocated to developing proposals and bids Seek to secure a signed contract before starting work on any project and, where this is not possible, minimise pre-contract work and only then on large projects with strategic partners
O: Operational Risks				
O1: Cannot secure funded secondees from partners	H	L	Ability to manage growth and match capacity to short term project demand will be constrained, resulting in slower progress towards objectives and reduced participation by WMRO in regional research and analysis	Promote awareness among partners of the value of projects requiring seconded capacity Seek Board support in identifying and securing appropriate secondees Demonstrate value to potential seconding organisation of filling the position Effectively define requirement, job role and person spec to simplify search process
O2: Breakdown of the RDIN as an effective vehicle for communication with practitioners in the region	L	H	Loss of visibility of regional projects. Inability to link up initiatives and best practice. Loss of key resource and source of data and intelligence	Continually review the role, programme, membership and remit of the RDIN to ensure it is appropriate and valuable Offer an added-value programme of seminars, conferences and publications to RDIN members Maintain RDIN involvement in the programme and development of the Observatory

O3: Poor staff retention and/or failure to recruit suitable employees	M	M	Reduced capacity to deliver objectives. High cost of staff recruitment and replacement.	Ensure effective staff management, coaching and development Provide appropriate training opportunities Seek to provide high value, high visibility projects for Observatory staff Ensure resource levels adequately match demand
O4: Need to focus on securing project income deflects management focus from strategic objectives	L	M	Failure to deliver core objectives. Potential loss of engagement by partners	Ensure effective Board scrutiny of activity, priorities and progress through regular updates Use objective setting and quarterly and annual performance appraisal at all levels to monitor progress Review KPIs to track Observatory performance and achievement quantitatively
O5: Failure to match capacity to demand for work	M	M	Inability to deliver requested support, undermining reputation and potential influence in informing key strategies	Adopt a planned approach to capacity building through the annual Business Plan and internal work planning mechanisms

Appendix One: RDIN activity

Topic groups - work plans

Work plans for the Economy and Labour Force, Geographical Information and Society Demography and Health have been developed. There are essentially three key strands of work for each topic group, identification of regional research gaps, advising the Observatory on data and intelligence issues and leading the work to share and promote good practice across the region. In this vein work programmes have been developed.

Economy and Labour Force

The Economy and labour Force topic group have agreed to the work programme below. Essentially there is one key areas of work, to support the development of the Integrated Policy Model, through engagement on the Technical Advisory Group and User Group, advisory bodies set up to support the development of the tool.

KPI	ELF Topic group Work Plan Project – 2008/09	Target date	Lead
C	Identify critical data and intelligence gaps and needed data enhancements. Agree the priority for filling those gaps and identify appropriate actions and resources to fill them.		
	1. Identify one gap in data and intelligence as a priority for regional research.	Jun 08	All
C	Disseminate good practice information to the region through the development of a six monthly economy and labour force e-bulletin.		
	2. Members to provide at least six articles for the ELF-bulletin. The bulletin should be produced twice a year.	Aug 08 / Mar 09	All
	3. WMRO to provide editorial responsibilities for the ELF-bulletin, formatting and circulation to the RDIN.	Aug 08 / Mar 09	Brian MacAulay
C	Promote and lead the work to share information within the scope of economy and labour force data and intelligence within the region and other central bodies		
	4. Members to develop one seminar on economy and labour force for the RDIN.	Jan 09	Anne Green
	5. WMRO to provide co-ordination and administrative support for the development of the seminar.	Jan 09	Observatory
C	Advise the Observatory on the development of the Integrated Policy Model, with a particular focus on developing a marketing and dissemination package for the model.		

KPI	ELF Topic group Work Plan Project – 2008/09	Target date	Lead
	6. Provide advisory support to the development of the Integrated Policy Model.	Sep 08	Hamish Wilson Clive Lloyd Sam Richardson
	7. Contribute to a marketing and dissemination package for the model to the technical and user community	?	Hamish Wilson Clive Lloyd Sam Richardson
H	Undertake two mapping projects per year within the theme of economy and labour force		
	8. Agree to undertake two mapping projects one on graduates in the regional labour market and a second project on innovation	April 08	All
	9. Identify resources for inclusion within the mapping project.	May 08 Nov 08	All
	10. Secure resources to upload all resources to wmro.org.	Sept 08	All
	11. Facilitation of the mapping project.	Mar 09	Steven Dovey
C	Review the objective of the topic group over time and evaluate the work of the group on a regular basis to secure feedback for reporting to the User Group and the WMRO Partnership Board.		
	12. Provide a quarterly report to the WMRO Partnership Board.	Ongoing	Anne Green
	13. Develop work programme on an annual basis.	Jun 08	Anne Green
	14. Ensure the work programme is reviewed at every meeting, and published on the WMRO website.	Quarterly	Anne Green
C	Nominate up to three representatives of the topic group to the User Group. The representatives will act as the main conduit between the WMRO Partnership Board and the RDIN.		
	15. The Chair and at least two representatives from the topic group to attend two User Group meetings per year.	Jun 08 Dec 08	Anne Green Clive Lloyd
	16. The Chair of the topic group to provide feedback from the WMRO Partnership Board to its group members	Quarterly	Anne Green

Geographical Information

Whilst the Geographical Information topic group have agreed a number of projects for 2008/9, there are two that have been identified as a priority for the group. Members have agreed to develop an annual Geographical Information Science day for the Region. This occurs nationally each year and encourages the sharing of information within the field of geographical sciences. For the GI day on 19th November 2008 the GI topic group is organising a one day regional GI event. The aim of the event will be to promote the use of GI to the RDIN and the wider audience. The event will consist of seminars, a workshop and exhibition space, with the hope of attracting sponsors for the event.

Secondly the group have agreed to develop a proposal to map Geographical Information System facilities within the region. At present it is not known which organisations are using GIS, what regional GI projects are being developed or exactly how many GI website are available for public access. The aim of this gap filling exercise is to map GIS facilities in the region so that best practice can be shared more widely.

KPI	GI Topic group Work Plan Project – 2008/09	Target date	Responsibility
B	Promote and lead the work to share geographical information data and intelligence within the region and other central bodies.		
	1. Address issues regarding the OS copyright in sharing information and bringing together OS PGA and SLA's so physical information and datasets can be shared.	Mar 09	Russell Hornsey
F	Disseminate good practice information to the RDIN and RDIN topic groups on use of geographical information.		
	2. Members to provide at least six articles for the GI-bulletin. The bulletin should be produced twice a year.	May 08	All
	3. WMRO to provide editorial responsibilities for the GI-bulletin, formatting and circulation to the RDIN.	Nov 08	John Walker
	4. Members to develop an annual GIS day for the Region.	Nov 08	Claire Edwards
	5. WMRO to provide co-ordination and administrative support for the development of a GI seminar.	Ongoing	Rebekah Eden
H	Identify gaps in regional geographical information, data and analysis and develop project proposals for filling them. Prioritise gaps identified and seek appropriate actions to fill those gaps.		
	6. Develop the proposal to map GIS facilities within the region, and identify resources to fill this gap.	June 08	Christopher Styche
H	Review and update the catalogue of digitised boundaries and ensure that the catalogue is up to date and new data sources are added as appropriate.		
	7. Identify data resources for inclusion within the catalogue of digitised boundaries.	Sep 08	All
	8. Identify and secure resources to populate the catalogue and maintain the data.	Sep 08	All
	9. Secure an interoperability project with the Catalogue of digitised boundaries and GIGateway.	Sep 08	Diane Edwards
L	Advise WMRO on the appropriate delivery methods for geographical information functionality, data and analysis to meet regional user requirements.		
	10. Advise the Observatory on the GIS interface for the economic modelling project	tba	Brian Chaplin
I	Review the objective of the topic group over time and evaluate the work of the group on a regular basis to secure feedback for reporting to the User Group and the WMRO Partnership Board.		
	11. Provide a quarterly report to the WMRO Partnership Board.	Ongoing	Claire Edwards
	12. Review work programme on an annual basis.	Ongoing	Claire Edwards
	13. Ensure the work programme is reviewed at every meeting, and published on the WMRO website.	Ongoing	Claire Edwards
I	Nominate up to five representatives of the topic group to the User Group. The representatives will act as the main conduit between the WMRO Partnership Board and the RDIN.		
	14. The Chair and at least two representatives from the topic group to attend two User Group meetings per year.	Ongoing	Claire Edwards
	15. The Chair of the topic group to provide feedback from the WMRO Partnership Board to its group members	Ongoing	Claire Edwards

Society Demography and Health

The Society Demography and Health work programme is summarised below.

KPI	SDH Topic group Work Plan Project 2008/09	Target date	Lead
C	Identify critical data gaps and needed data enhancements. Agree the priority for filling those gaps and identify appropriate actions and resources to fill them.		
	1. Develop a proposal to address the information requirements on population movements in the region.	April 08	Richard Wilson
C	Disseminate good practice information to the RDIN on data relevant to the theme of society demography and health.		
	2. Members to provide at least six articles for the SDH e-bulletin. The bulletin should be produced twice a year.	May 08 / Oct 08	All
	3. The Chair to write the editorial article for each e-bulletin.	May 08 / Oct 08	Richard Wilson
	4. WMRO to provide co-ordination and administrative support for delivery of the SDH e-bulletin	May 09 / Oct 08	Raj Kaur
C	Advise WMRO on the development of a set of indicators to measure social inclusion.		
	5. Provide advisory support to the development of the West Midlands Social Inclusion Indicators.	Jun 08	Gareth Wrench/ Chris Allen
	6. Provide access to data where available (particularly health indicators).	Jun 08	Richard Wilson
C	Promote and lead the work to share information within the scope of society demography and health data and intelligence within the region and other central bodies.		
	7. Members to develop a seminar on a related SDH topic for the RDIN	Jul 08	All
	8. The Observatory to provide co-ordination and administration for the seminar	Jul 08	Observatory
C	Identify standards for information governance. (testing robustness and reliability of data)		
	9. Engage with ONS on official standards that are in place.	Oct 08	Peter Drake
	10. Develop a dissemination package of ONS standards to the region, (through the e-bulletin process)	Oct 08	Raj kaur
H	Actively map information resources to provide effective access to data and intelligence, for the creation of a well organised, comprehensive and easily accessible resource base for Observatory clients.		
	11. Identify themes and resources for inclusion within mapping projects.	Mar 09	All
	12. Identify resources for inclusion within the mapping project.	Mar 09	All
	13. Secure resources to upload all resources to wmro.org.	Mar 09	Steven Dovey
C	Review the objective of the topic group over time and evaluate the work of the group on a regular basis to secure feedback for reporting to the User Group and the WMRO Partnership Board.		
	14. Provide a quarterly report to the WMRO Partnership board	Ongoing	Richard Wilson
	15. Review work programme on an annual basis.	Jun 08	Richard Wilson
	16. Ensure the work programme is reviewed at every meeting, and published on the WMRO Website.	Quarterly	Richard Wilson
C	Nominate up to three representatives of the topic group to the User Group.		
	17. The Chair and at least two representatives from the topic group to attend two User Group meetings per year.	Jun 08 Dec 08	Richard Wilson
	18. The Chair of the topic group to provide feedback to its members from the WMRO Partnership Board meeting.	Quarterly	Richard Wilson

Environment and Natural Resources

The Environment and Natural Resources Topic Group has undergone a number of changes in membership and its priority is to review the needs of the partners and ensure that they work together on common issues and needs.

At this stage it appears that the top priority for the group is climate change. The group will identify existing information that can be shared, highlight what could be measured to assess our ability to adapt to or mitigate climate change and any gaps that need to be addressed.

The group will review current work items and assess if they should be continued or addressed in another way e.g. Brownfield site decision database may not have sufficient momentum due to the pressures on brownfield sites for development, housing etc. The incorporation of the concept into Stage two of the Regional Spatial Policy Modelling project will be considered.

The group will also consider how it can contribute to State of the Region Report to ensure Environment and Natural Resources are fairly represented within the report, and address environmental issues raised by the SoRR since the last full report. It will also consider its role within the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) and look to inclusion in any agreement with the Observatory for monitoring activities of the IRS.

Finally the group will review potential partner projects and develop in accordance with the funding and decisions timetable of partner organisations and review the influence of the group to progress environmental issues for their own organisations and collectively for the West Midlands as a whole.

KPI	ENR Topic group Work Plan Project 2008/09	Target date	Lead
C	Identify critical data gaps and needed data enhancements. Agree the priority for filling those gaps and identify appropriate actions and resources to fill them.		
	1. Promote the existence and use of the WM Physical Environment Domain Indices of Deprivation.	Dec 08	Shelley Howard
C	Disseminate good practice information to the RDIN on data relevant to the theme of society demography and health.		
	2. Members to provide at least six articles for the SDH e-bulletin. The bulletin should be produced twice a year.	Jun 08 / Dec 08	All
	3. WMRO to provide co-ordination and administrative support for delivery of the SDH e-bulletin	Jun 08 / Dec 08	John Walker
C	Advise the Observatory on the development of indicators appropriate to measure environment themes.		
	4. Provide advisory support to the development of the West Midlands Quality of the Environment Composite indicator.		?

KPI	ENR Topic group Work Plan Project 2008/09	Target date	Lead
	5. Provide advisory support to the development of the regional monitoring framework for climate change.		?
	6. Provide access to data where available.		All members
C	Promote and lead the work to share information within the scope of environment and natural resources data and intelligence within the region and other central bodies.		
	7. Members to develop a seminar on a related ENR topic for the RDIN	Jan 09	All
	8. The Observatory to provide co-ordination and administration for the seminar	Jan 09	Observatory
H	Actively map information resources to provide effective access to data and intelligence, for the creation of a well organised, comprehensive and easily accessible resource base for Observatory clients.		
	9. Identify themes and resources for inclusion within mapping projects.	Mar 09	All
	10. Identify resources for inclusion within the mapping project.	Mar 09	All
	11. Secure resources to upload all resources to wmro.org.	Mar 09	Steven Dovey
C	Review the objective of the topic group over time and evaluate the work of the group on a regular basis to secure feedback for reporting to the User Group and the WMRO Partnership Board.		
	12. Provide a quarterly report to the WMRO Partnership board	Ongoing	Shelley Howard
	13. Review work programme on an annual basis.	Jun 08	Shelley Howard
	14. Ensure the work programme is reviewed at every meeting, and published on the WMRO Website.	Quarterly	Shelley Howard
C	Nominate up to three representatives of the topic group to the User Group.		
	15. The Chair and at least two representatives from the topic group to attend two User Group meetings per year.	Jun 08 Dec 08	Shelley Howard
	16. The Chair of the topic group to provide feedback to its members from the WMRO Partnership Board meeting.	Quarterly	Shelley Howard

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