

NEWS RELEASE



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NEW PARTNERSHIP RESPONDS TO SOUTH EAST PLAN

Government publication of the final South East Plan, setting the region's planning framework for the next 20 years, has received a cautious welcome by the new partnership body responsible for its delivery.

The South East Plan now:

- sets a housing target of 32,700 homes a year. Milton Keynes, Reigate and Banstead, Brighton and Hove, and Winchester face slight reductions on targets proposed last year, but this is an overall increase on the 32,000 recommended by inspectors.
- confirms Green Belt reviews at Oxford and Guildford
- has removed all references to 'minimum' housing numbers
- calls for infrastructure delivery programmes to be agreed before major new developments begin.

The new South East England Partnership Board now joins up local government – via South East England Councils (SEEC) – and the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) to make key regional decisions, and deliver an integrated strategy for transport, housing, economic development and the environment.

The change is a result of Government's decision to streamline regional decision-making. And to make way for these new ways of working, the South East England Regional Assembly – the body that prepared the South East Plan for Government - was dissolved on 31 March 2009.

The Partnership Board is now responsible for implementing South East Plan policies and creating a new, integrated strategy that incorporates SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy. It will work closely with delivery agencies, such as the Homes and Communities Agency, the Highways Agency and other stakeholder groups.

Former Assembly Chairman and now Chairman of SEEC, Cllr Paul Carter said: "We are pleased to see that Government has listened to our concerns, particularly removing references to minimum housing numbers. The global recession remains the big issue and these housing numbers seem somewhat hypothetical in the current economic climate. The big challenge to us in the South-east is how we create the environment where house builders have the appetite to take risks and build.

"The South East continues to require greater infrastructure investment than the Government has allocated; this remains a critical issue.

"The new Partnership Board provides everyone with an opportunity to develop our priorities in the region, ensuring we come out stronger after the recession, while improving our residents' quality of life.

"The South East is the powerhouse of the UK economy, but needs sustained Government investment if the region is to pull itself and the rest of the country out of recession.

"Building on the region's experience, the local government executive board members of South East England Councils and SEEDA board members will take forward the development and delivery of a single regional strategy."

Jim Brathwaite CBE, Chairman of SEEDA and Chair of the new Partnership Board, said: "Publication of the final South East Plan is a great milestone after years of hard work – but our focus now must be on delivering what it says. We need the homes set out in the Plan so that key workers can afford to live in the South East and we need better infrastructure to support the region's economy.

"Going forward, our economic performance is clearly critical to the South East's future success, so our role in bringing a business-led voice to the new integrated regional strategy is essential. We take our role in this new shared, decision-making forum very seriously and look forward to working with SEEC to agree the best outcomes for the South East. We have worked well together over the past 10 years but now the new integrated strategy offers potential for much closer alignment of policies and decisions that will help deliver a better quality of life for all our residents."

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Notes to Editors:

- **South East Plan**

The South East plan is the overarching sustainable planning framework for South East England until 2026.

The Plan was prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly. It will set the standards and principles for the physical development of the region until 2026 and will be used to guide the production of local plans and strategies by district and unitary councils.

The areas covered by the plan are the county and unitary council areas in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex.

The Assembly asked for public opinion on important choices from January - April 2005. Further local consultation on housing figures was carried out in autumn 2005 by local councils across the region.

To create the Plan, the Assembly also worked closely with organisations such as SEEDA and the Environment Agency to align spending and priorities for the benefit of the South East.

Housing

The housing figures of 32,700 a year are slightly down on the Government's own proposed change to the South East Plan in July 2008 (33,125) but higher than the Planning Inspector's report in September 2007 (32,000) and the Assembly's recommendations to Government in March 2006 (28,900).

All references to 'minimum' housing numbers – inserted by Government during its Changes - have been deleted.

Infrastructure

The Government has not reinstated its deletion of the Assembly's point that planning permission should be conditional on supporting infrastructure. However, the Government's policy makes it clear that where new development creates a need for additional infrastructure, a programme of delivery should be agreed before development begins.

The South East England Partnership Board

SEEPB comprises members from the Board of South East England Development Agency (www.seeda.co.uk) and South East England Leaders' Board members (the executive body of South East England Councils):

- **Jim Brathwaite** CBE is Chairman of SEEDA and Chairman of the Partnership Board. A member of the SEEDA Board since 2001, he is also Chairman of five businesses in Sussex.
- **Zenna Atkins** is a SEEDA Board member and an executive consultant specialising in social enterprise. She is also Chairman of Ofsted and Group Chairman of Places for People.
- **Dolores Byrne** is a SEEDA Board member and Managing Director, Innovation, at defence and technology company QuinetiQ
- **Keith Riley** is a SEEDA Board member and Managing Director, Group Technical Services, of Veolia Environmental Services plc.
- **Cllr Mike Appleyard** (Cons) Wycombe District Council
- **Cllr Mary Ballin** (Cons) Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- **Cllr George Beckett** (Cons) Winchester City Council
- **Cllr Louise Bloom** (Lib Dem) Eastleigh Borough Council
- **Cllr Paul Carter** (Cons) Kent County Council
- **Cllr John Furey** (Cons) Runnymede Borough Council
- **Cllr Tony Page** (Lab) Reading Borough Council
- **Cllr Tony Reid** (Cons) East Sussex County Council

Government information on the implementation of the Sub-National Review
www.communities.gov.uk/citiesandregions/thesubnationalreview/

- **South East England Councils**
South East England Councils (SEEC) represents all 74 councils in the region and is chaired by Kent County council leader Paul Carter. Its Leaders' Board will include representatives from district, unitary and county councils, with members from the three main political parties.

Cllr Paul Carter (Conservative, Kent County Council) has been elected Chairman of SEEC, and Cllr Louise Bloom (Liberal-Democrat, Eastleigh Borough Council) and Cllr Tony Page (Labour, Reading Unitary Borough Council) have been elected as Vice Chairmen.

- **SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency**, is the Government-funded agency responsible for the sustainable economic development of the South East of England – the driving force of the UK's economy. Through supporting businesses, encouraging innovation, developing skills and engaging with public and private partners, we aim to create a successful, sustainable future for the region.

- **SEEDA's support helped deliver the following** over the period 2005-2008,:
 - o 17,500 jobs created or safeguarded
 - o 32,500 people helped to get work
 - o 10,000 businesses created or attracted to region
 - o 137,500 businesses assisted
 - o £638m investment, 45% levered from private sector
 - o 200ha Brownfield land remediated
 - o 148,500 people assisted in skills development

- **The South East England Regional Assembly**

Motion to dissolve the South East England Regional Assembly is available here - http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/committees_2009.html

Members voted to dissolve the Assembly at its Plenary on 4 March 2009. This will take effect from 31 March 2009. The Assembly was a partnership of councils and communities in the South East region. It was established in January 1999 to give a representative voice to the region, which covers Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire and Surrey.

The Assembly was made up of 112 members including elected councillors nominated by the region's local authorities and 37 representatives from other sectors of the community (including business, trades unions, education, housing, health, sports, culture, tourism, faith groups, environmental, community and voluntary organisations) as well as the New Forest National Park Authority.

For more information, see the Assembly's website www.southeast-ra.gov.uk.

- **South East Photo Library**

The South East England Regional Assembly's photo library MediaStore, gives everyone the chance to access images of issues affecting the region. MediaStore draws on the knowledge of the Assembly to provide you with images from all over the South East.

- regularly updated with photos covering topics from housing to transport to flooding
- easy to access and download
- fully searchable
- a wide variety of high resolution images

There's no charge for this service, just **credit the Assembly** when an image is used.

To view images from across the region visit www.southeast-ra-mediastore.co.uk

- **For further information, please contact:**

Jill Wedge, Interim Head of Communications at the Assembly; Tel: 01483 555220/200;
email: jillwedge@southeast-ra.gov.uk

Steve Baker, PR Executive at the Assembly; Tel: 01483 555234/200;
email: stevebaker@southeast-ra.gov.uk

Heather Bolton, Communications Director, SEEDA; Tel: 01483 501398;
email: heatherbolton@seeda.co.uk

James Fulker, Press Officer, SEEDA; Tel: 01483 470155;
email: jamesfulker@seeda.co.uk

Jenny Whittle, Communications Manager, SEEC; Tel: 07855 767968;
email: jenny.whittle@live.co.uk