

Rural Strategy 2004 Fact Sheet:

Regional Prioritisation

From piloting to the mainstream

- Defra's radical agenda of devolving decisions and funding will better ensure that the needs of rural people are addressed in mainstream regional-level strategies and delivery plans.
- Hitherto, the Countryside Agency has piloted innovative approaches to rural service provision and economic development, producing some excellent results, but
- The greater move towards development of regional and local decision-making and delivery arrangements – including through Regional Development Agencies, regional assemblies, local government and the voluntary and community sector – means we now need to devolve and mainstream through these organisations, to exploit their greater reach and wider responsibilities.
- Sustainable development needs to be embedded in all decision-making – at regional and local level.

How will this happen?

- Each of the Government Offices for the Regions is being asked to lead in brokering a framework at regional level that will achieve better prioritisation and decision-making in relation to rural areas (the process that Lord Haskins called 'Rural Priorities Boards').
- This framework should pull together existing plans and actions.
- It should be designed to allow better links to be made to wider issues (e.g.: transport and housing), identify rural needs and opportunities, prioritise and drive co-ordinated action, and help identify and share best practice.
- Delivery partners should be fully engaged in the decision-making process, and grass-roots customers given a clear voice (through Regional Rural Affairs Forums or a similar institution) to ensure that solutions meet the needs of rural people, and that they deliver benefits on the ground.
- Decisions and solutions need to be sustainable – tackling social and economic disadvantage at the same time as enhancing and protecting the countryside.
- Pathfinder 'joint venture' projects will take place in each region to look in detail at how to improve delivery (see Local Delivery factsheet).

What will be better?

- Greater regional and local discretion to prioritise and develop delivery mechanisms that meet the particular circumstances on the ground.
- Better joining up of urban and rural solutions.
- Better delivery of sustainable development through more explicit co-ordination and prioritisation.
- Greater collaboration between delivery bodies to ensure simpler, more efficient delivery to their customers.
- Regional 'ownership' of the processes of defining priorities and improving delivery will help spread best practice across different organisations and partnerships.

How and when?

The changes will be phased as follows:

- 2004/05: Government Offices for the Regions will broker and bring forward proposals for a regional rural delivery framework, to achieve regional prioritisation. This framework will encourage good practice in the identification of lead local partners. The Government Offices will also support the sub-regional pathfinders (see Local Delivery factsheet).
- 2005/06: An annual process of monitoring progress, updating and improving the evidence base and interpretation of need and opportunity within each region will begin. The New Countryside Agency (see separate fact sheet) will assist in monitoring the delivery of sustainable solutions and suggesting innovative solutions.

¹ For more detail see the Local Delivery fact sheet.

**Further copies of this factsheet
are available from:**

**Defra Publications
Admail 6000
London SW1A 2XX
Tel: 08459 556 000**

**PB99581
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
www.defra.gov.uk**

