

FUTURES NETWORK WEST MIDLANDS - FNWM

Looking to the future in an uncertain world

A Prospectus

WHO WE ARE

The Futures Network West Midlands (FNWM) comprises individuals from professional and academic backgrounds who have experience of and a commitment to strategic and spatial planning, with a particular interest in the West Midlands.

OUR MISSION

To provide a voluntary, independent and non-party political network with the aim of opening up and examining key long term issues and potential futures facing the West Midlands.

BACKGROUND

In the West Midlands¹, there has been a long history of co-operative working at the strategic level over the last 50-60 years. This has been for good reason as a range of issues has needed to be resolved at this level.

Following the General Election in May 2010, most of the governance arrangements at the regional level were dismantled, including the abolition of regional strategies, regional development agencies and regional government offices. In turn, the emphasis shifted to 'localism' and the neighbourhood level.

Many people still believe, however, that the larger-than-local dimension remains very relevant and that the absence of a high level or strategic policy perspective is detrimental to the longer-term interests of the West Midlands and the country as a whole. This is also recognised to some extent in various sub-national initiatives such as the Regional Growth Fund, Local Enterprise Partnerships and the duty on local authorities and other public bodies to cooperate on planning as set out in the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Against this background, in April 2011, the Futures Network was established to bring together people who wish to contribute on a voluntary and collective basis to maintaining a strategic level of intelligence and debate in the West Midlands. The Network has now over 100 members.

¹ It is not intended that the work of the Network should necessarily be constrained by any fixed boundaries. The West Midlands Region is generally regarded as that area covered by the seven Metropolitan Boroughs of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton; the four Unitary Authorities of Stoke-on-Trent, Telford and Wrekin, Shropshire and Herefordshire; and the three Shire counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

Details of the activities of the Network since April 2011 are set out in the Appendix.

PRINCIPLES

- a. Membership of the Network is open to anybody who has an interest in the long term future of the West Midlands and is prepared to contribute positively to the work of the Network on a voluntary basis;
- b. The Network is managed by a Steering Group, which appoints an independent Chair, in consultation with the members of the Network. The Steering Group is also responsible for identifying a suitable person to speak on behalf of the Network, in cases where the Chair is unable to fulfil such a role;
- c. The focus of the Network is on developing a deeper understanding of the economic, social and environmental challenges facing the West Midlands, the interactions between them and the potential implications of alternative futures for its people and communities;
- d. Where appropriate, this intelligence is used as the basis for a peer review of the impact of public policy and associated governance arrangements on the above challenges, thereby seeking to influence national and sub-national policy making;
- e. Innovative and creative thinking is encouraged with the 'Chatham House Rule' applied in general discussions;
- f. All contributions to the work of the Network represent individual professional views and are open for constructive comment and critique by other members of the Network;
- g. The Network seeks to work in collaboration with other bodies and groups to promote dialogue on and discussion of strategic issues facing the West Midlands;
- h. Any published output from the Network is on a collective basis as agreed through the Steering Group and not based on any one interest or political perspective;
- i. In joining the Network, members agree to adhere to these principles and to respect and demonstrate high professional standards.

DEVELOPING AND OPERATING THE NETWORK

Following the issuing of an initial draft Prospectus in April 2011, a Development Group was established to promote the Network and to prepare a first Prospectus. Given the progress made, this Group has become the Steering Group of the Futures Network. As such it remains responsible for this Prospectus and for overseeing the activities and the further development of the Network. The Steering Group comprises individuals who, in joining the Group, commit to foster the Network, independent of their organisational, professional or party-political

background, in line with the Principles of the Network. All decisions by the Group are consensus-based.

Members of the Network are free to liaise as they wish but the intention is also to provide an operational framework by developing an on-going programme of themed meetings organised through the Steering Group. In this way, a range of intelligence will continue to be developed which members of the Network can use for their own ends or which can be promoted for use by others. When using material or intelligence produced by or gained through the Network, members agree to respect the Principles above and to quote the source of the material or intelligence.

Consideration is being given to the adoption of a constitution for the Network, following which this Prospectus will be amended accordingly.

JOINING THE NETWORK

If you would like to find out more about FNWM, please log in to [.....]. If you would like to join the Network, you can do so on the website or by e-mailing your details to dthew@blueyonder.co.uk In doing this, please state the areas of interest on which you would be prepared to make a contribution e.g:

Climate change
Culture
Environment
Economy
Governance
Housing
Infrastructure

Planning
Social/Community
Sustainable development
Technology
Transport
Other (please indicate)

January 2014

The Development of the Futures Network West Midlands: key dates and activities

First steps

Inaugural meeting: 18 November 2010

Establishment of FNWM Development Group and issuing of draft Prospectus: April 2011

Building the agenda: the evening debates

July 2011: First evening debate

Prospects for the West Midlands

Speaker: Paul Spooner, Homes and Communities Agency

October 2011: Second evening debate

Future prospects for the West Midlands Economy

Speaker: Professor David Bailey, Coventry Business School

March 2012: Third evening debate

Transport issues in the West Midlands

Speaker: Professor Alan Wenban-Smith, Independent Consultant

September 2012: Fourth evening debate

Demographic issues facing the West Midlands

Speaker: Dr Peter Lee, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham

August 2013: Fifth evening debate

The state of the West Midlands 2013: health, wealth and the pursuit of happiness

Speaker: Sherman Wong, Centre for Local Government West Midlands

October 2013: Sixth evening debate

The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Economic Partnership (GBSLEP) Strategic Plan

Speaker: David Carter, Birmingham City Council

Responding to consultations

October 2011: response to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on the Draft National Planning Policy Framework

January 2011: response to DCLG on the Environmental Report on the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands

January 2013: further response to Government consultation on the revised Strategic Environmental Assessment of the revocation of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

January 2014: consultation response to the GBSLEP Strategic Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth

The changing demography of the West Midlands and its consequences

2012/13: Preparation of a Background Report highlighting headline points from the analysis of 2011 Census results – Working Paper 1 *Demographic issues facing the West Midlands*, December 2013

March 2013: Seminar 1

Live long and prosper: the implications of demographic change for health inequalities across the West Midlands

Partnership event with the Learning for Public Health Network WM and West Midlands Councils

April 2013: Seminar 2

Beyond the 2011 Census: meeting housing requirements across the West Midlands

Partnership event with the West Midlands Housing Officers Group

Transport challenges facing the West Midlands

November 2013: Seminar

HS2 or what? Transport choices for West Midlands' regeneration

Partnership event with the Lunar Society Transport and Climate Change Group and the University of Birmingham Centre for Urban and Regional Studies

Keynote speaker: Professor Sir Peter Hall, University College London; Chair Gisela Stuart MP; panellists Professor David Bailey, Aston University Business School; Cllr Roger Lawrence, Wolverhampton City Council