Southern Staffordshire *Tomorrow!*

An Economic Regeneration Strategy for Southern Staffordshire

Our Vision:
We aim to foster the development of a diverse, dynamic and sustainable, low carbon economy that underpins an excellent quality of life for the workforce and residents of Southern Staffordshire
Contents

1. Chairman’s Introduction
2. Executive Summary
   2.1 Background
   2.2 Aims of the Partnership
   2.3 The Area
   2.4 Strategic Context
   2.5 The Strategy in Action
   2.6 Implementation
3. Background
   3.1 Southern Staffordshire
   3.2 The Southern Staffordshire Partnership
   3.3 Aims of the Partnership
   3.4 Relationship to Countywide Partnership & Local Strategic Partnerships
4. The Southern Staffordshire Economy
   4.1 The Area
   4.2 Economic Overview
   4.3 Competitiveness, Innovation & Enterprise
   4.4 Skills
   4.5 Infrastructure
   4.6 Communities
5. The Strategic Context
   5.1 The Regional Context
   5.2 The Regional Economics Strategy
   5.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)
6. The Strategy in Action
   6.1 Key Opportunities & Issues for the Future
   6.2 Support Entrepreneurship Diversification
   6.3 Raise Educational & Skill Levels & Improve Access to Jobs for All
   6.4 Create Competitive Locations for Investment in Quality Jobs
   6.5 Create a More Sustainable & Lower Carbon Economy & Environment.
7. Implementing the Strategy
   7.1 The Partnership
   7.2 Project Delivery - Leadership & Support
   7.3 Southern Staffordshire & Regional Advocacy
   7.4 Resourcing the Strategy - A Towns’ Programme

Appendix: The Story So Far
1. Chairman’s Introduction

Southern Staffordshire *Tomorrow!* is the successor to Southern Staffordshire *Now!* which was launched early in 2002. Almost five years on, though much progress has been made, many concerns remain and new ones have emerged.

Southern Staffordshire is a place that many see as an area of relative affluence and green expanse surrounding pleasant towns and villages. While there is truth in this image it also conceals a variety of challenges, which need sustained intervention from public, and private sectors working together round a shared agenda.

This strategy ‘Southern Staffordshire *Tomorrow!*’ sets out our view of the issues facing us, together with our vision for the future of our area, and what we intend to do as partners to bring it about.

The Southern Staffordshire Partnership provides the vehicle for the development of our shared agenda and for impressing its importance on those organisations, local, sub-regional, regional and national, which have the powers and resources to help us drive it forward.

We invite all those who share our vision to join us in helping to achieve it.

Tom Fanning
Chairman of the Partnership

October 2006
2. Executive Summary

2.1 Background

Southern Staffordshire comprises the districts of Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Tamworth, Stafford and South Staffordshire. It contains the towns of Burton upon Trent, Burntwood, Cannock, Lichfield, Rugeley, Tamworth, Uttoxeter, and Stafford and is interlaced with a series of villages and communities. The area is of a very significant scale, home to 595,000 people and nearly 22,000 businesses.

The Southern Staffordshire Partnership was formed in 2001 to develop an economic regeneration strategy for Southern Staffordshire and to represent the interests of the people, businesses and organisations of the area in relevant regional and sub-regional policy debates and forums.

The key partners are the 6 District local authorities, Staffordshire County Council, Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Staffordshire University, Business Link Staffordshire, Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council, Cannock, Burton, Tamworth and Lichfield Colleges, together with private sector companies - Midlands Expressway Ltd, Reeves Green Ltd, Busy Bees Ltd and Pirelli plc.

The first economic regeneration strategy for Southern Staffordshire - Southern Staffordshire Now! - was produced in April 2002. This strategy takes account of changes since then in the national, regional, Southern Staffordshire and local policy contexts and sets out the direction for the Partnership for the next 5 years.

2.2 Aims of the Partnership

In the light of the experience of the early years and the changing context, the Partnership commissioned consultants CSR Partnership to carry out an independent external review of the Partnership, which was completed in January 2005.

The outcome of the review was a vote of confidence for the Partnership and agreement on its continuing relevance, but with a greater emphasis on representational and advocacy roles, alongside the project development activity, which characterised the Partnership’s first phase.

Flowing from the review, the Partnership has adopted a new set of aims as follows:

- Identify major strategic issues affecting the southern Staffordshire economy and to work with local, sub-regional and regional organisations to realise opportunities and address problems.
- Monitor relevant regional/sub-regional Strategies (including the Regional Economic Strategy, the Regional Spatial Strategy) and articulate the interests of Southern Staffordshire as appropriate.
- Assist the area in accessing greater resources from public and private sector sources.
- Develop or facilitate or support initiatives that add value to the programmes of other agencies.
- Facilitate sharing of best practice in economic regeneration initiatives across the area.
Southern Staffordshire is characterised by a distinctive combination of key towns, containing much of its population and employment, and a large rural hinterland. The area is crossed by major roads: notably the M6, A5 and A38, and, of more recent vintage, the M6 Toll. Important rail routes including the West Coast Mainline and a number of commuter lines into Birmingham also traverse it.

Southern Staffordshire represents a substantial land area and has a population of over 595,000, around 12% of the population of the West Midlands region. In population terms it is bigger than Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire and almost twice the size of any of the metropolitan districts except Birmingham.

The area has many strengths as a location for people and business. Its series of towns are all within easy reach of major employment opportunities, public services, leisure offerings and open spaces. Each town has its own strong identity. It has good rail and road infrastructure linkages into the West and East Midlands and is well served by Birmingham Airport and Nottingham East Midlands Airport, both within an hour. Over a considerable period of time Southern Staffordshire has been a highly attractive destination for in-movers and has seen its population rise considerably.

Employment growth in Southern Staffordshire has also been strong in recent years. Much of this has due to the availability of industrial land, particularly Centurion and Relay Parks in Tamworth, Centrum 100 and Centre 38 in Burton upon Trent and Fradley Park in Lichfield.

This overall growth disguises significant losses in manufacturing jobs – 15,000 southern Staffordshire manufacturing jobs were lost between 1990 and 2002. Despite these losses, Southern Staffordshire, mirroring the regional picture, remains dependent on manufacturing industry for a significant proportion of its economic activity. Restructuring of the economy and a movement to service and distribution industries is certain to continue.
The growth in employment locally and benign national economic conditions mean that overall unemployment is relatively low across most of Southern Staffordshire, although there are still a number of wards where unemployment is unacceptably high.

Despite its strong recent employment growth and relatively low unemployment there is no room for complacency about the strength of the southern Staffordshire economy. On several key indicators southern Staffordshire under-performs the national average by a significant margin.

- **Manufacturing productivity (Gross Value Added)** in Southern Staffordshire is around 90% of the national average. However this masks the fact that for East Staffordshire the figure is 157% of the national average, whereas in all other districts it is below 75%. Looking at the economy as a whole the picture is worse still with Southern Staffordshire at 83% of the national average.

- **In Southern Staffordshire capital investment** as measured through capital expenditure is considerably below the national average. In manufacturing the level is 72% of the national average, whereas in the whole economy it is only 65%.

- **On average the business start-up rate** figure for Southern Staffordshire is 36, just below the national average of 37, but above the West Midlands figure of 33 - measured by the number of firms registering for VAT annually. There is considerable variation across the area from 32 per 10,000 population in Cannock to 42 in East Staffordshire¹.

- **Incomes are low in Southern Staffordshire.** Data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings in 2004 indicate that the mean hourly wage in Southern Staffordshire was only 90% of the national average. Southern Staffordshire is also below the West Midlands as a whole.

### 2.4 Strategic Context

Regional Strategies form an important context for the Southern Staffordshire strategy. The key ones are the West Midlands Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

#### The West Midlands Economic Strategy

The West Midlands Economic Strategy sets out 3 Key Delivery Mechanisms, which are intended to ensure that ‘…the 4 Pillars drive the region’s actions and responses effectively and with the greatest impact…’ The three mechanisms are Regeneration Zones, Business Clusters and High Technology Corridors.

Two of these mechanisms – Zones and Corridors- are geographically focused. The third, Clusters, are region-wide. Southern Staffordshire is not significantly assisted by either Zones or Corridors, apart from a very small part of South Staffordshire District, which is part of both the North Black Country and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and, also part of the Wolverhampton/Telford Technology Corridor.

#### Regional Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy sets out the framework for the spatial development of the region. The major focus of the Strategy is on the Major Urban Areas and, in particular, to promote regeneration and growth within those areas. To a large degree this implies restraint on development and growth outside those areas. Burton upon Trent, Cannock, Lichfield, Stafford and Tamworth are identified as strategic centres, drivers for sub-regional economies, crucially important to the economic well-being and the achievement of sustainable patterns of development. They are to be a key focus for regeneration activities as well as investment for public transport. In addition, several Southern Staffordshire towns are identified in the Spatial Strategy as local regeneration areas by virtue of containing at least one of the most deprived 20% of wards nationally. They are as follows: Burton upon Trent, Cannock, Rugeley, Stafford, and Tamworth.

---

The Regional Spatial Strategy Policy UR2 sets out the position as follows:

Local authorities and other agencies should seek to improve prospects in the following local regeneration areas by bringing forward local regeneration policies and programmes. Where possible access should be improved between concentrations of local deprivation and need within these towns and areas of economic opportunity, in line with policy T1. Any support for local regeneration programmes should not prejudice the need to focus resources within the Major Urban Areas.

This is an extremely welcome recognition of the regeneration needs of these towns and sets an important context for programmes and policies to address the needs of southern Staffordshire towns.

City Regions

Led by the 7 West Midlands Metropolitan Councils plus Telford and supported by the Regional Assembly, a bid to establish a formal City Region (based on the major conurbation and termed the ‘Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region’) is being backed up by emerging City Region Investment Plans and a Metropolitan Area Agreement covering economic development, regeneration and housing.

The Partnership has already indicated its support in principle, and has endeavoured to secure real involvement in planning and developing the City Region’s focus, recognising the permeability of administrative boundaries. The Partnership is clear that southern Staffordshire needs to engage proactively and constructively with this development.

This reflects the location of southern Staffordshire, with 3 of its Districts (South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase and Lichfield) bordering the metropolitan City Region and a 4th (Tamworth) heavily influenced by the Birmingham labour market. Parts of these districts fall within the economic geography of the metropolitan City Region.

In the context of seeking a better understanding of the role City Regions can have in driving regional growth the Partnership will development an engagement with the emerging Stoke City Region and well as those in the East Midlands near to Burton upon Trent.

The Black Country Study

3 Southern Staffordshire districts – South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase and Lichfield – border the Black Country and have strong economic and, to a degree, social and cultural, links with it. The outcomes of the Black County Study will become part of Regional Planning Guidance. The study is, therefore, an important policy development which is likely to have an impact on the Partnership area.

Southern Staffordshire strongly supports the regeneration of the Black Country, recognising the scale of economic decline and deprivation. At the same time we must ensure that this does not come at a price of damage to our environment and economy. Any agreement to support the allocation of employment land to meet the Black Country’s needs must take proper account of environmental and economic needs of Southern Staffordshire and be of an appropriate scale, nature and location.
2.5 The Strategy in Action

Our strategy for building on our strengths and meeting the challenges is founded on the following four key objectives;

1. **Support entrepreneurship, innovation and economic diversification**

2. **Raise educational and skill levels and improve access to jobs for all**

3. **Develop competitive locations for investment in quality jobs**

4. **Create a sustainable, lower carbon economy and environment**

The key proposals for each of these strategic objectives are set out below:

**Strategic Objective 1 - Support entrepreneurship, innovation and economic diversification**

The key proposals:

1A. Develop managed workspace plus and business incubation space

   - St Alban’s Business Centre Stafford
   - Rodbaston Food Incubator
   - Burton upon Trent HE Centre containing managed workspace units
   - Cannock Entrepreneurship Centre
   - Tamworth College Managed workspace

1B. Ensure the provision of support for high growth start-ups

   - Virtual support covering Objective 2 areas
   - Potential for area-wide funding from post-2006 European funding
   - Launch of Southern Staffordshire Reinvestment Fund

1C. Promote technology spinout businesses

   - Enrolment of first students in Staffordshire University Entrepreneurship Degree

1D. Develop move-on accommodation

   - Review of move-on needs and development of action plan
1E. Support the development of high value added sectors/clusters

The following sectors have been identified for priority action by the Partnership:

**Professional and Business Services**
- 100 Members signed up to the SucceSS Network
- New Centre of Vocational Excellence training centre at Tamworth and Lichfield College

**Construction Technologies**
- Links developed with Centre for Constructing Excellence
- Design Initiative extended to include wider involvement of construction and building companies

**Environmental Technologies**
- Eccleshall Biomass Power Plant
- Feasibility for Renewable Energies centre completed

**IT and Media**
- Continue development of IT and Multimedia provision at Stafford and Lichfield campuses - ongoing

---

**Strategic Objective 2 - Raise educational and skill levels and improve access to jobs for all.**

The key proposals:

2A. Raise workforce skill levels by supporting the Learning and Skills Council and Colleges to increase employer engagement
- Revised Staffordshire Workforce Skills Strategy
- Skills Hub

2B. Develop HE Centres across the area where there is demonstrable need
- Complete Burton upon Trent HE Centre
- Scope Cannock HE Centre
2C. Work in Partnership with Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council to link need and opportunity

- Develop joint approach involving Learning and Skills Council, Job Centre Plus, training providers and businesses

2D. Improving the participation and achievement of young people

- Development of the Tamworth TORC 14-19 Vocational Centre
- Feasibility for Rugeley Extended Learning Centre

Strategic Objective 3 - Create competitive locations for investment in quality jobs

3A. Provide a diverse range of site development opportunities including provision for higher added value sectors

- Complete feasibility for land south of Branston/Swadlincote Power Station
- Development of Kingswood Lakeside

3B. Support the continuing development of vibrant and sustainable urban centres

- Produce master plan for Burton upon Trent town centre
- Develop Tamworth Town Centre Strategy
- Lichfield City Wharf development completion
- Lichfield Birmingham Road Development completion
- Complete Cannock Town Centre Development masterplan
- Stafford Riverside development
- Stafford – former St. Georges Hospital

3C. Ensure that Southern Staffordshire assets are proactively marketed

- Support InStaffs in development of Professional Services brochure
- Southern Staffordshire Dream Team / Ambassadors Programmes

3D. Improve public transport links to employment centres and encourage ‘green’ transport plans

- Work with Staffordshire County Council, local transport operators and employers to improve transport links to industrial area and green transport plans
Strategic Objective 4 - Create a more sustainable and lower carbon economy and environment

4A. Promote high quality design in the built environment incorporating sustainability principles

- 2 Design Initiative Seminars/workshops per annum
- Bi-ennial Design Competition
- 2 Design and Heritage Champion Networking events per annum.

4B. Support the development of a lower carbon economy including the renewable energy sector

- Support Countywide roll-out of Climate Change Strategy
- Investigate potential of waste-to-energy power generation initiatives
- Promote take-up of renewable energy initiatives by public and private sectors

4C. Encourage the development of sustainable visitor economy which builds on and enhances the ‘green’ image of Southern Staffordshire

- being taken forward by Staffordshire Destination Partnership and Lichfield Tourism

4D. Adopt a Sustainable Procurement approach

- New Think Local Website covering Lichfield, Tamworth, Cannock and Stafford
- Develop Countywide Sustainable Procurement strategy

4E. Support the development of a sustainable rural economy

- This activity is being taken forward by the Staffordshire Rural Forum

2.6 Implementation

Partnership Organisation

The work of the Partnership is overseen by a Partnership Executive, which has representatives from the public sector funding partners, the private sector, Government Office of the West Midlands and Advantage West Midlands. Meeting bi-monthly, it oversees the work of the Partnership, which is co-coordinated on a day-to-day basis by the Director.
The Director co-ordinates the implementation of the strategy, identifies needs, works with partners to develop initiatives to address those needs in a cost effective manner, and influences organisations that control resources to direct them to the priorities agreed by the Partnership.

The Partnership produces an annual Action Plan setting out its key tasks and initiatives for the year, which is monitored by the Executive. Progress is reported to the Annual Forum – a meeting of Southern Staffordshire stakeholders, held every October to review progress and future activity.

**Resourcing the Programme**

Public sector resources for economic regeneration in Southern Staffordshire are scarce and getting scarcer. A major source of recent regeneration funding in the area has been the Single Regeneration Budget – a programme funded by Advantage West Midlands - which is now reaching the end of its life.

Until fairly recently much of the area was eligible for European Union Objective 2 funds, although this has now shrunk to very limited areas, mostly in Burton upon Trent, with a smaller area in Cannock. The Market Towns programme, which has benefited Stone and Uttoxeter in Southern Staffordshire, also has a limited time to run.

This will leave Southern Staffordshire with very limited regeneration resources. Although a number of agencies have ‘main programme’ funding, this is usually directed to very specific priorities with very inflexible rules and targets.

Against this background the Partnership is seeking a ‘Towns’ regeneration programme to be added to the Regional Economic Strategy as a fourth ‘instrument of delivery’ alongside Corridors, Clusters and Regeneration Zones and complementing the Rural Renaissance Action Plan.

This ‘Towns’ Programme would reflect and deliver the approach to the Local Regeneration Areas identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Partnership will work hard to gain acceptance of this approach as part of the review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy in 2006-7.

In the absence of such a programme the Partnership will continue to seek funding and support for its programmes from all available sources.
3. Background

3.1 Southern Staffordshire

Southern Staffordshire comprises the districts of South Staffordshire; Cannock Chase; Lichfield; Tamworth; East Staffordshire and Stafford Borough. It contains the towns of Burton upon Trent, Uttoxeter, Lichfield, Burntwood, Rugeley, Cannock, Tamworth, and Stafford interlaced with a series of villages and communities. The area is of a very significant scale, home to 591,660 people and 21,900 businesses.

While only a fifth of its wards are urban, the towns contain the majority of the population. At the same time it has significant environmental and green belt assets, which are an important contributor to biodiversity and to the recreational life of residents of both Southern Staffordshire and the neighbouring metropolis.

The distinctiveness of Southern Staffordshire arises from its position as a mixed urban/rural area – or ‘green arc’ - strategically positioned with significant transport, labour market and economic links to the major metropolitan conurbation of the West Midlands, the western side of the East Midlands and the north of Staffordshire.

3.2 The Southern Staffordshire Partnership

The Southern Staffordshire Partnership was formed in 2001 to develop an economic regeneration strategy for Southern Staffordshire and to represent the interests of the people, businesses and organisations of the area in relevant regional and sub-regional policy debate and forums.

The key partners are the 6 District local authorities, Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and, Industry, Staffordshire University, Business Link Staffordshire, Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council, Cannock, Burton, Tamworth and Lichfield Colleges, together with private sector companies - Midlands Expressway Ltd, Reeves Green Ltd, Busy Bees Ltd and Pirelli plc.

The Partnership exists to help the area to capitalise on the opportunities that its unique position presents. The Partnership’s major focus is economic – but alongside this the strategy recognises the important links to planning, housing, leisure and transport policies and seeks to address these as best it can with resources available.

The first economic regeneration strategy for the Partnership - Southern Staffordshire Now! - was produced in April 2002. The 4 and half years since Southern Staffordshire Now! has been an important and eventful period for the area and for the Partnership. We have seen the arrival of the M6 Toll motorway and the opening up of key development sites such as Kingswood Lakeside. We have also seen the completion of the Lichfield Garrick and of the Burntwood link road. Significant development has taken place in a number of locations including Centrum 100 in Burton upon Trent, and both Centurion and Relay Parks in Tamworth. On the downside, there have been some noteworthy closures and downsizing of major companies such as Automotive Lighting and Alsthom.
The policy environment has changed in a number of important ways with the evolution of the Regional Economy Strategy and adoption of the Regional Spatial Strategy, the discussions around the Midlands Way and, increasingly, City Regions. In Staffordshire we have seen the recent emergence of the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership and the emerging Local Area Agreement, of which enterprise and economic development is one of the main planks. Regional strategies have focused increasingly on the major urban areas with little reference to the surrounding towns and smaller settlements, and the intertwining of the economies.

Major changes are in train with the restructuring of business support in the region, which will mean the disappearance of Business Link Staffordshire and the reorganisation of the Learning and Skills Councils.

On a different level the greatest new challenge has emerged from the realisation of the threat that climate change poses to our way of life and the urgent need to find ways of reducing or at least stabilising our carbon emissions. At the same time there is also a growing awareness that increased Gross Domestic Product and economic growth do not in themselves guarantee improvements in our quality of life. This document begins to address these issues, but there will be much left to do to work through their implications and tackle them effectively.

In the light of these changes it is imperative for Southern Staffordshire to have a new economic strategy, which addresses our increasing knowledge of the local economy, as well as the shifting economic policy environment.

### 3.3 Aims of the Partnership

In the light of the experience of its first 3 years and the changing context, the Partnership commissioned consultants CSR Partnership to carry out an independent external review of the Partnership, which was completed in January 2005.

The outcome of the review was a vote of confidence for the Partnership, agreement on its continuing relevance, but with a greater emphasis on a representative and lobbying role, alongside the project development activity which characterised the Partnership’s first phase.

Flowing from the review the Partnership has adopted a new set of aims as follows:

- Identify major strategic Issues affecting the Southern Staffordshire economy and to work with local, Southern Staffordshire and regional organisations to realise opportunities and address problems.
- Monitor relevant Regional/Southern Staffordshire Strategies (e.g. Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy) and articulate the interests of Southern Staffordshire as appropriate.
- Assist the area in accessing greater resources from public and private sector sources.
- Develop, facilitate or support initiatives that add value to the programmes of other agencies.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practice in economic regeneration initiatives across the area.
3.4  Relationship to Countywide Partnership & Local Strategic Partnerships

It is important that the Partnership engages closely with the recently formed Staffordshire Partnership and the countywide Community Strategy. There is a need for a close dialogue in order to influence the direction of the economy of Staffordshire over the next 15-20 years – the life of the Community Strategy.

The 3-year action plan will be the Local Area Agreement (LAA) – which is to be in place in March 2007.

The Agreement will cover the whole of Staffordshire and will need to link into the City Regions to the north and the south of the County and the Local Area Agreement of the City of Stoke on Trent.

The Partnership is playing a vital role in developing the economic development and enterprise ‘block’ for the Agreement as well as giving support to the blocks covering sustainable development, children and young people and healthier communities and older people.

Delivery of the Agreement covering economic and sustainable development will require new mechanisms to be developed and we will commit energy and enthusiasm to shaping effective ways of working across Staffordshire. Crucial to this will be delivery at the District level.

Having the Southern Staffordshire voice articulating the more local issues strengthens the voice of Staffordshire. Acting in concert with and alongside countywide Partnerships, we can both influence and be influenced by the strategies, providing opportunities for Staffordshire to benefit through constructive collaboration and dialogue.

Links to Local Strategic Partnerships operating at the District level need to be strong and complementary, with the Partnership looking to influence strategies and add value where joint initiatives are appropriate. The Partnership is already working closely with District LSP Economic Sub-groups, and will need to develop working relationships with the emerging District Delivery Boards of the Local Area Agreement.

The Southern Staffordshire Regeneration Strategy is aligned to the five high level outcomes under the Economic Development and Enterprise Block of the LAA

- Enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Diversification
- Skills
- Sustainability
- Communities – closing the gap

We will work closely with the LAA Partnership Board and local delivery Boards to ensure the high level outcomes noted above are delivered and we will take a lead in ensuring the ‘Flagship’ project of enhancing business engagement is realised. This project recognises the challenges as well as the opportunities presented by a move to a regional model of business support, and the key role business has in creating wealth and underpinning sustainable economic growth. We will strengthen our knowledge of and engagement with the business community, and ensure our own knowledge base is widely shared.
4. The Southern Staffordshire Economy

4.1 The Area

Southern Staffordshire is characterised by a distinctive combination of a number of key towns, containing much of its population and employment, surrounded by a large rural area. The area is crossed by some major roads: notably the M6, A5 and A38, and, of more recent vintage, the M6 Toll. Important rail routes including the West Coast Mainline and a number of commuter lines into Birmingham also traverse it.

Southern Staffordshire represents a substantial land area and has a population of over 590,000, around 12% of the population of the West Midlands region. In population terms it is bigger than Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire and almost twice the size of any of the metropolitan districts except Birmingham.

The area has numerous strengths as a location for people and business. Its series of towns, each with their own strong identity, are all within easy reach of major employment opportunities, public services, leisure offerings and open spaces. It has good rail and road infrastructure linkages into the West and East Midlands and the area is well served by Birmingham Airport and East Midlands Airport, both within an hour’s travel. Over a
considerable period of time Southern Staffordshire has been a highly attractive destination for in-movers and has seen its population rise considerably.

An important feature of the Southern Staffordshire economy is the high level of out-commuting from much of the area into the West Midlands conurbation. This is most pronounced in Tamworth, Lichfield, Cannock and South Staffordshire. In 2001, almost 61,000 people travelled to work from Southern Staffordshire into the West Midlands Metropolitan area, whereas just over 18,000 from there travelled to work in Southern Staffordshire. This represents a huge loss to the daytime economy of our towns, an outflow of talent and a big contributor to carbon emissions and traffic congestion. In contrast, Burton-on-Trent has significant inflows from Derbyshire and Stafford is relatively self-contained.

### 4.2 Economic Overview

Employment growth in Southern Staffordshire has been strong in recent years. Much of this has been due to the availability of industrial land, particularly Centurion and Relay Parks in Tamworth, Centrum 100 and Centre 38 in Burton upon Trent, and Fradley Park in Lichfield.

![Total employees](chart.png)

New investment has taken place in logistics, manufacturing and, increasingly, in the service sector. Between 1990 and 2002 the number of employees in Southern Staffordshire increased by 40,000 net. Over half of this increase was in distribution and tourism. The rest was made up of expanding employment in financial & business services and in public sector employment.

This overall growth disguises significant losses in manufacturing jobs – 15,000 Southern Staffordshire manufacturing jobs were lost between 1990 and 2002.

Despite these losses, Southern Staffordshire, mirroring the regional picture, remains dependent on manufacturing industry for a significant proportion of its economic activity. Restructuring of the economy and a movement to service and distribution industries is certain to continue.

The economic forecast produced as part of the Economic Futures study commissioned by the Partnership shows a continued growth in employment between now and 2020 but at a much slower rate than during the 1990s, close to the West Midlands average. Within this, construction and business services are forecast to have the greatest growth.
The growth in employment locally and benign national economic conditions, mean that overall unemployment is relatively low across most of Southern Staffordshire; although there are still a number of wards where unemployment is unacceptably high.

The positive profile of the area is not a reason for complacency, and the changing world around us is setting increasingly rigorous challenges. The shifting architecture of public policy decision-making, the increasingly global nature of the economy and the pace of technological change all demand a pro-active and concerted response from Southern Staffordshire and its partners.

4.3 Competitiveness, Innovation and Enterprise

Despite its strong recent employment growth and relatively good performance on several indicators, Southern Staffordshire under-performs the national average by a significant margin on some key indicators.

**Productivity is Low**

Manufacturing productivity (Gross Value Added) in Southern Staffordshire is around 90% of the national average. However this masks the fact that for East Staffordshire the figure is 157%, whereas in all other districts it is below 75%. Looking at the economy as a whole the picture is worse still with Southern Staffordshire as a whole at 83% of the national average. Some of this shortfall is due to the industrial mix in the area. Even if this is allowed for, however, there still appears to be below average productivity across most sectors, indicating a competitiveness problem. The high level of productivity in East Staffordshire is probably explained by the presence of a small number of large, capital-intensive, manufacturing plants.

**Capital Investment is Low**

Capital expenditure gives a good indication of the level of investment in an area. Healthy levels of investment generally indicate a sound, forward-looking business base and an economically successful area. In southern Staffordshire capital investment, measured in this way, is considerably below the national average. In manufacturing the level is 72% of the national average, whereas for the whole economy it is only 65%. Again this is partly due to the industrial structure of the area, but also to the low levels of higher value investment occurring here.

**New Firm Creation and Survival Rates are below average**

Business start-up and survival rates are regarded as key measures of the entrepreneurial health of an area. An important indicator is the number of firms registering for VAT per year. The southern Staffordshire position shows variation across the area from 32 per 10,000 population in Cannock to 42 in East Staffordshire. On average the figure for Southern Staffordshire is 36, just below the national average of 37, but above the West Midlands figure of 33.

**Income and Wage Levels are Low**

Wage and income levels are an important measure of the wealth and well-being of the population. Data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) in 2004 indicate that the mean hourly wage in Southern Staffordshire was only 90% of the national average. Levels ranged from 82.3% in Cannock Chase district to 98.9% in South Staffordshire, with remaining districts in the 85-95% range. Southern Staffordshire is also below the West

---

2 Data from SCC Research Team based on Annual Business Inquiry 2001  
3 Data from SCC Research Team based on Annual Business Inquiry 2001  
4 Data from SCC Research Team based on Annual Business Inquiry 2001  
5 Small Business Service/Office of National Statistics Data for 2001 supplied by SCC.  
6 Caution needs to be used in considering district level figures due to the small sample sizes.
Midlands as a whole: the regional average was 91.5% of the national figure in 2004. Southern Staffordshire does appear to be narrowing the gap on both the region and the nation, but there is absolutely no room for complacency in this vital respect.

**Clusters**

The Partnership commissioned the Economic Futures study to identify the sectors and clusters that were going to be the key drivers for the future, particularly in relation to their capacity to deliver high quality, high wage jobs. Southern Staffordshire has a relatively diverse economic structure, and there are few true clusters. Only the brewing industry centred on Burton upon Trent has a realistic claim to cluster status.

The study found that Southern Staffordshire had at least average strength in 8 of the 10 clusters, which have been identified as growth clusters by AWM. Southern Staffordshire was assessed as strong in Food and Drink, Transport Technologies and Environmental technologies and as average in Specialist Business Services, Building Technologies, ICT, Media and Tourism. These were then evaluated as to their economic importance to Southern Staffordshire on the basis of the factors of cluster capability strength, GVA, employment concentration (LQ) and demand based employment forecasts.

A judgement was made on the scope for intervention on the basis of the capacity of the Partnership and the intervention strategies being pursued by other agencies. On this basis Business and Professional Services, Environmental Technologies and Building Technologies were identified as the priority sectors for future Partnership action.

Other important sectors in the area include Tourism, IT and Media, Food and Drink (particularly in East Staffordshire), Logistics, and Automotive/Advanced Engineering.

**4.4 Skills**

Historically, lifelong learning and employment based skills development do not appear to have a very strong track record in Southern Staffordshire. The area’s long-standing reliance on traditional large-scale industries, such as coal mining and manufacturing may have blunted employer and employee desire to continually up-skill. Pockets of poor educational performance are closely related to the most pronounced pockets of deprivation in Southern Staffordshire. The transition to knowledge based, service oriented and higher value added businesses will however require an across the board commitment to on-going skills development which reaches beyond the pockets of deprivation.

**Educational Achievement – around the average**

Overall educational attainment in Southern Staffordshire largely mirrors the national picture. In primary education, SATs results have been slightly above the national average and GCSE results have also matched UK and West Midlands levels at around 54% achieving 5 A*-C grades. However this masks significant variations between districts with Cannock, East Staffs and Tamworth performing below average and Lichfield, South Staffs and Stafford performing above.

Basic skills are key to the life-chances of individuals and a significant area of concern for employers and business performance. Using the DfES ‘Read-Write Plus’ data, it appears that Level 1 skills in Southern Staffordshire residents are slightly above the regional and national averages. However, Level 2 literacy skills are lower than the regional average in

---

1 Equivalent to GCSE pass at Grades D-G
2 Equivalent to GCSE pass at Grades A*-C
Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire and Tamworth and also below the national average in South Staffordshire. Where numeric skills are concerned the position is worse, with all districts below both national and regional averages, with Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire and Tamworth again having a particularly serious deficit.

When it comes to higher skill levels – NVQ Levels 3 and 4 - Southern Staffordshire overall averages are similar to the West Midlands region, but generally significantly below national levels. Cannock Chase and Tamworth, however, have much lower levels than other districts, while Stafford and Lichfield have the highest levels.

Much remains to be done therefore to raise skills across Southern Staffordshire. While there are particular issues in Cannock Chase, Tamworth and also in East Staffordshire, there is no room for complacency in other areas, given the importance of skills to improving productivity and economic performance generally.

4.5 Infrastructure

On the whole Southern Staffordshire has a strong set of infrastructure assets: it is connected to the West Coast mainline and cross country rail routes. The M6 runs right through the area as does the M6 Toll Road; providing major connectivity opportunities for the southern Staffordshire’s businesses and residents. The southern Staffordshire’s broadband coverage is now good. However, there are important issues, which threaten this overall picture.

Towns – under pressure
Concern is focused on Southern Staffordshire’s towns: Stafford, Burton upon Trent, Lichfield, Burntwood, Cannock, Rugeley and Tamworth, several of which are suffering from economic restructuring or are perceived as stagnating and lacking vitality. Their potential as hubs for employment, leisure, retail and residential provision is not currently being fully exploited. Many of them suffer from ageing shopping centres with limited leisure and cultural provision.

These towns have been developing their own visions with limited local resources and some progress has been made, but it is vital that additional help – preferably by way of a new regional economic programme be constructed to help them address these vital issues and realise their full potential to contribute to the development of the region.

Transport – better public transport
There is only limited evidence of transport issues restricting growth. However, there is growing congestion in the urban areas at peak hours, requiring active traffic management and encouragement to reduce unnecessary journeys. There is also mounting evidence of the need to improve transport to major industrial sites; where the lack of public transport is exacerbating labour and skill shortages.

Southern Staffordshire’s position as a significant supplier of labour to and, to a lesser extent, importer of labour from the Conurbation engenders significant cross-boundary traffic. Despite ambitions to reduce commuting, these journeys are likely to continue, if not increase, over time and there is need to improve public transport to accommodate this. In particular, significant improvements to southern Staffordshire rail stations are needed, including better and more parking. Station improvements will also help to improve the area’s image and the quality of life of residents who use these facilities.

Employment Development Sites – longer-term concerns
The number of major sites currently under development in southern Staffordshire provides an adequate short-term supply of employment land. Evidence from the study undertaken by Staffordshire County Council suggests that shortages are likely to emerge in both Cannock and Stafford over the medium-term and the long-term position is a cause for concern across southern Staffordshire.
The area is home to a diverse local population. Migration into Southern Staffordshire has been a key feature over the last 25 years, most noticeably into villages by metropolitan commuters seeking a higher standard of living whilst retaining access to nearby employment opportunities. In counter-point to this trend, outward migration has tended to lead to a loss of younger and more highly skilled local people. The population of southern Staffordshire is perhaps its greatest asset and investing in human capital is key to its future success.

Significant pockets of deprivation exist in southern Staffordshire. Not only is this a problem in its own right, it also impedes the growth potential of the area. The affected communities are blighted by deprivation across the housing, health, education and income domains.

The quantifiable aspects of deprivation are also compounded by a local culture, and approaches from other agencies, which may have restricted the capacity to develop sustainable wealth creating solutions locally. Many of these pockets are closely associated with the area’s former coal-mining towns and a number of its inner-urban neighbourhoods, but there is also a wider spread pattern of exclusion from services in rural localities.
5. The Strategic Context

5.1 The Regional Context

Despite its size and economic importance to the region, southern Staffordshire receives little recognition in key regional strategy documents, including the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy. The major thrust of these strategies is focused on the regeneration of the major urban areas in the West Midlands. While these areas face major challenges and have clear needs; there should be a balance of policies that support the economic prospects of neighbouring areas, and which recognises their economic significance to the region as a whole.

5.2 The Regional Economic Strategy

The current Regional Economic Strategy (RES) for the West Midlands is Delivering Advantage: The West Midlands Economic Strategy and Action Plan 2004-10. The Strategy is based on the Vision that by 2010:

‘…The West Midlands is recognised as a world-class region in which to invest, work, learn, visit and live and the most successful in creating wealth to benefit all of its people……’

The strategy is organised round four ‘pillars’ as follows:

- Pillar 1 – Developing a Diverse and Dynamic Business Base
- Pillar 2 – Promoting a Learning and Skilful Region
- Pillar 3 – Creating the Conditions for Growth
- Pillar 4 – Regenerating Communities

Crucially, in relation to southern Staffordshire’s position it sets out 3 key Delivery Mechanisms, which are intended to ensure that ‘the 4 Pillars drive the region’s actions and responses effectively and with the greatest impact’. The 3 mechanisms are Regeneration Zones, Business Clusters and High Technology Corridors.

2 of these mechanisms – Zones and Corridors- are geographically focused. The 3rd - Clusters, is, in theory, region-wide.

Southern Staffordshire is not significantly assisted by either Zones or Corridors. A very small part of South Staffordshire District is part of the North Black Country and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and, also part of the Wolverhampton/Telford Technology Corridor. The inclusion of this area of Southern Staffordshire in both these areas is largely because of the location of one major employment site – i54 (formerly Wobaston Road) - that is to be developed as a high-tech site, with a view to providing employment for Black Country residents.

The result of this spatial targeting is that southern Staffordshire (with the exception of the small part of South Staffordshire District) does not figure within any of the area-based initiatives, which form the basis for resource prioritisation. This is despite its economic importance as a supplier of labour and of employment to the urban conurbation.

It is effectively identified as being neither an area of need, nor one of high growth potential. It is however sandwiched between the North Black Country and North Staffordshire Regeneration Zones, both of which receive significant AWM resources.
The third Regional Economic Strategy Delivery instrument - Business Clusters, is intended to improve collaboration between companies in the same field and improve access to new technologies, research and development, targeted business support and supply chains, and shared expertise.

10 Clusters have been identified for support and development in the West Midlands. This mechanism can apply anywhere in the region, although there is no process for identifying its impact on particular localities, and, with a few exceptions, there are limited opportunities for local or southern Staffordshire bodies to access its funding.

Alongside these mechanisms, AWM have developed a series of Strategies focused on Skills, Enterprise and Rural Renaissance. These are important strategies, which should have an impact on southern Staffordshire. However their effect is hard to assess, given that they do not appear to make data available on a southern Staffordshire basis. Also given the focus of the Regional Economic Strategy there is a danger that these strategies will focus heavily on the Zones and Corridors, notwithstanding the needs within southern Staffordshire.

We are committed to securing greater recognition and support for our towns through the review of the Regional Economic Strategy.

5.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy sets out the framework for the spatial development of the region. The major focus of the Regional Spatial Strategy is on the Major Urban Areas and, in particular to promote regeneration and growth within those areas. To a large degree this implies restraint on development and growth outside those areas.

The Regional Spatial Strategy draws a critical distinction between Major Urban Areas and other towns falling outside those areas. It states that:

‘...Wherever possible economic growth should be focused on the Major Urban Areas, with an emphasis on creating greater opportunities for development and support for existing economic activities within agreed regeneration areas...’ (Policy PA1)

Southern Staffordshire does not necessarily wish to see major growth – indeed we are highly conscious of the need to protect and enhance our environmental assets. However we do wish to meet local needs by improving employment, housing and leisure opportunities for our communities where this is appropriate. Thus the Spatial Strategy does potentially provide a helpful framework.

The key is to ensure that a continuing strong input is made into ongoing Partial Reviews of the Spatial Strategy so that local needs in Southern Staffordshire are clearly recognised. These include town centre investment and the availability of employment land for a range of uses, including, particularly, office schemes and local housing needs. Our town centres need to develop and grow organically to enable us to provide good quality services and employment for our residents.
Two sets of Spatial Strategy policies have particular relevance to our urban areas:

**Local Regeneration Areas**

Local regeneration areas are identified by virtue of containing at least one of the most deprived 20% of wards nationally. In Southern Staffordshire, the following are identified in this category: Burton upon Trent, Cannock, Rugeley, Stafford and Tamworth.

Policy UR2 sets out the position as follows:

> Local authorities and other agencies should seek to improve prospects in the following local regeneration areas by bringing forward local regeneration policies and programmes. Where possible access should be improved between concentrations of local deprivation and need within these towns and areas of economic opportunity, in line with policy T1. Any support for local regeneration programmes should not prejudice the need to focus resources within the Major Urban Areas.

This is an extremely welcome recognition of the regeneration needs of these towns and sets an important context for programmes and policies to address the needs of Southern Staffordshire towns.

**Strategic Town and City Centres**

Policy PA 11 refers to town centres outside the Major Urban Areas as follows:

> A network of strategic town and city centres will be developed across the Region as set out below.

There follows a list of centres across the region that includes the Southern Staffordshire towns of: Burton upon Trent, Cannock, Lichfield, Stafford and Tamworth.

The policy then states that:

> This network of 25 town and city centres will be the focus for:

  i) Major retail developments (i.e. those of more than 10,000m² gross floor space, excluding floor space dedicated to the retailing of convenience goods);

  ii) Uses which attract large numbers of people including major cultural, tourist, social and community venues (see also PA10 and UR3); and

  iii) Large scale leisure and office (Class B1a) developments (i.e. those of 5,000m² or more gross floor space.

These are important statements, which provide a strong basis for the regeneration of our towns and their continued development to meet local and Southern Staffordshire needs.

However, Phase 2 of the partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy includes a more detailed review of the roles of these centres, and it is very important for southern Staffordshire to participate actively in this review to ensure that the needs of our towns and their residents and employers are safeguarded.

**City Regions**

City regions have become the increasing focus of attention in recent years, as the importance of core cities as key regional economic drivers has been recognised. Several Southern Staffordshire Districts have participated in the development of the West Midlands Metropolitan City region since its origins several years ago. This reflects the location of southern Staffordshire, with 3 of its districts (South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase and Lichfield) bordering the metropolitan City Region and a 4th (Tamworth) heavily influenced by the Birmingham labour market. These Districts are in economic geography terms, part of the metropolitan City Region.
A bid to establish a formal City Region, backed by City Region Joint Investment Plans and a Metropolitan Area Agreement covering economic development, regeneration and housing, is now underway, led by the 7 West Midlands Metropolitan Districts with the participation of Telford.

The Partnership has already indicated its support in principle, and has endeavoured to secure real involvement in planning and developing the City Region’s focus, recognising the permeability of administrative boundaries. The Partnership is clear that southern Staffordshire needs to engage proactively and constructively with this development.

**Black Country Study**

3 southern Staffordshire districts – South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase and Lichfield – border the Black Country and have strong economic and, to a degree, social and cultural links with it.

The outcomes of the Black Country study will become part of the Regional Spatial Strategy. The study is, therefore, an important policy development which is likely to have an impact on the Partnership area.

Southern Staffordshire strongly supports the regeneration of the Black Country, recognising the scale of economic decline and deprivation. The i54 development in South Staffordshire provides real opportunity to attract high quality jobs from which residents of the Black Country can benefit. The *Black Country Choices* document flags capacity issues within that sub-region and suggests that further employment land provision in Southern Staffordshire may be required to meet employment needs.

There may be scope to accommodate this, particularly in Cannock Chase district, subject to taking account of environmental and economic needs of southern Staffordshire and proposing development of an appropriate scale, nature and location. Any proposal to locate a Regional Logistics site in Southern Staffordshire is, however, likely to be vigorously opposed, on the grounds that there is already a substantial and growing logistics presence here. Logistics is a land hungry use with relatively low job density compared with other employment uses. A Regional Logistics site would potentially unbalance our economy and damage the environment and quality of life.

The 3 local authorities mentioned above are represented on the *Black Country Plus* ‘reference group’, which receives regular reports on the Study’s progress. The Partnership Director also sits on this group. However, given the relatively infrequency of meetings, it is essential to use other channels of influence to ensure that Southern Staffordshire’s interests are addressed.
6. The Strategy in Action

6.1 Key Opportunities and Issues for the Future

The area has a good quality of life and there are important opportunities to be grasped, which can strengthen and improve this. While economic performance in terms of overall jobs growth has been good in recent years, there are some significant economic challenges, which have been described in earlier sections.

We have a number of positive assets on which to build: a high quality of environment, reasonable skill levels, education provision and a diverse economy. Our challenge is to build on these strengths and address our weaknesses on the way to become an even better balanced and sustainable Southern Staffordshire.

Our strategy for building on our strengths and meeting the challenges is founded on the following four key objectives:

1. **Support entrepreneurship, innovation and economic diversification**
2. **Raise educational and skill levels and improve access to jobs for all**
3. **Develop competitive locations for investment in quality jobs**
4. **Create a sustainable, lower carbon economy and environment**

6.2 Support Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Economic Diversification

This objective is central to building on the strengths and addressing the weaknesses of the Southern Staffordshire economy outlined earlier. It aligns closely to key themes in the Regional Economic Strategy and builds on work that is already been successfully undertaken by a number of organizations; including Staffordshire University, Staffordshire Business and Innovation Centre (BIC), Staffordshire County Council, District Councils and Business Link. Close co-operation between agencies is vital to maximising the opportunities to develop and support growth businesses in Southern Staffordshire.

**Develop managed workspace plus and business incubation space**

Much is already being achieved in the development of high quality managed workspace (managed workspace plus) and incubation space in southern Staffordshire.

A key development is Stafford Technology Park where a range of incubator facilities under the management of the BIC and Staffordshire University provide high quality start-up space with intensive on-site entrepreneurial and technical support.

Lichfield Business Village is also a good example of managed workspace plus and similar provision is planned as part of the proposed HE Centre development at Burton upon Trent College. Southern Staffordshire needs to build on this provision in line with the Partnership study, which was completed in April 2005.

---

9 Southern Staffordshire Incubation Study – SQW Ltd, April 2005
This identified serious shortfalls in Managed Workspace Plus provision in Tamworth, Cannock and Burton upon Trent. The Burton upon Trent College development is likely to satisfy only part of this demand. A refurbishment of disused buildings to provide a Food Industries Incubator and office workspace is planned at Rodbaston College. Discussions about an Entrepreneurship Centre in Cannock, possibly linked to improve FE and/or HE provision, may also provide an important opportunity to drive forward the agenda in that area. Discussions have also begun in Tamworth with a view to identifying site and funding opportunities.

- St Alban’s Business Centre Stafford
- Rodbaston Food Incubator
- Burton upon Trent HE Centre containing managed workspace units
- Cannock Entrepreneurship Centre
- Tamworth College Managed workspace

**Ensure the provision of support for high growth start-ups**
Staffordshire BIC has developed support services and programmes for high-growth start-up businesses, which are currently provided to selected occupants of the Stafford Business Innovation Centre. The Southern Staffordshire Incubation Study identified the need for similar services to be available to potential high growth companies in other managed workspace centres across the area. Funding constraints are currently providing a barrier to this, with the restriction of Objective 2 European funding to limited areas of Southern Staffordshire. There may be greater scope as the European funding landscape changes after 2006.

Effective use of the BIC’s experience and expertise should be made by other providers including Staffordshire University, Colleges, the private sector and other providers of Managed Workspace plus to avoid duplication of services and missed opportunities for the development of high growth businesses.

- Virtual support covering Objective 2 areas
- Launch of Southern Staffordshire Reinvestment Fund
- Potential for area-wide funding from post-2006 European

**Promote technology spinout businesses**
Staffordshire University is the key higher education body in Southern Staffordshire. In recent years the University has begun to give serious attention to the economic potential arising from its intellectual property and to the need to develop the entrepreneurial skills of staff and students. The benefits of this are being seen in an increasing number of new start-ups by graduates and spin-outs from its research activities.

Staffordshire University is taking this a step further by developing a Foundation Degree in Business Start-up under contract from the Learning and Skills Council and by working with schools and Colleges to introduce enterprise to the curriculum. A very promising initiative has been the introduction of a ground-breaking Bursary scheme to enable students to establish businesses as part of their undergraduate degree. The pilot scheme suggests a high
success rate in establishing new businesses. This is a vitally important for southern Staffordshire and deserves the full support of all partners.

- Enrolment of first students in Staffordshire University Entrepreneurship Foundation Degree

**Develop move-on accommodation**

The full benefit of the drive to increase the provision for high quality business start-ups in southern Staffordshire will not be realised unless an adequate supply of ‘move on’ units is available in the area. Evidence on the position here is currently anecdotal – and there may be a case for further research to ascertain the level of need. In Stafford need has been identified and an extension to the Technology Park is being explored to facilitate move-on development. There are also plans to bring forward move-on accommodation at Kingswood Lakeside.

- Review of move-on needs and development of action plan

**Support the development of high value added sectors/clusters**

The Partnership’s Economic Futures Study analysed the sectoral composition of the area’s economy using the AWM priority clusters as the main basis. The analysis demonstrated the complexity of a cluster or sectoral approach. However following the study a consensus was reached giving support to some key growth sectors, which are listed below.

Other sectors, which are also important to Southern Staffordshire, include manufacturing (particularly automotive and food and drink), logistics and tourism and leisure. The major reason for not prioritising these is the existence of support from other agencies either regionally or Staffordshire-wide.

**Professional and Business Services** – this is a rapidly growing sector across southern Staffordshire, with particular strengths in Lichfield, Tamworth, Burton upon Trent and Stafford. There is significant potential for further growth and appropriate provision needs to be made in planning policy.

Support to the sector is planned through the Success project led by Southern Staffordshire Chamber, which was launched in the spring of 2006 and will focus on networking, identification of training needs and joint marketing amongst companies in the sector. This project has recently received funding from AWM, Southern Staffordshire Partnership, Learning and Skills Council and District Councils. It will bring to the whole of Southern Staffordshire the support that to date has only been available in Stafford through the Finest initiative, a network similar to Success, which has been operation for around 18 months.

A further important development is the establishment of the Learning and Skills Council funded Centre of Vocational Excellence (COVE) at Tamworth and Lichfield College, which will work with Success and other local agencies to provide timely, high quality and relevant training provision.

- 100 Members signed up to Success
Completion of new Centre of Vocational Excellence training centre at Tamworth and Lichfield College

**Building Technologies and Construction** – this, too, is a large and expanding, but very diverse sector in southern Staffordshire. At one end of the spectrum are large equipment manufacturers and distributors such as JCB, Caterpillar (Finnings) and Conder Structures, and at the other, a myriad of very small construction firms. Technological change and the move towards off-site construction and low energy buildings are likely to impact increasingly on the sector.

A bid in late 2005 from a Consortium involving Cannock, Rodbaston and Stafford Colleges and Pritchard Holdings to lead an AWM cluster project on modern manufacturing technologies in construction was unsuccessful. However there may be opportunities to link in to the Centre of Construction Excellence at Wolverhampton University and this need to be explored. The Partnership’s **Southern Staffordshire Design Initiative** also overlaps this sector and there should be further opportunities through that project to work with the Building Technologies and Construction sectors.

- Links developed with Centre for Constructing Excellence
- Design Initiative extended to include wider involvement of construction and building companies

**Environmental Technologies** – This sector has a small but strategically significant important presence in Southern Staffordshire. The two key sub sectors are renewable energy and recycling technologies. The Stafford Biomass project has been a pathfinder in the development of Biomass power generation and is currently on course to establish a demonstration project based on combustion of miscanthus grass grown by local farmers.

Lichfield District is a national leader in municipal waste recycling and there are opportunities to explore creative ways of utilising waste which is not currently recycled e.g. in the generation of power.

A further contribution to the development of the environmental technologies sector in Staffordshire would be the adoption of sustainable purchasing policies by public sector agencies in Staffordshire. The County Council is looking closely at this issue in the light of its work on Climate Change strategy.

- Eccleshall Biomass Power Plant
- Feasibility for Renewable Energies centre at Rodbaston College

**IT and Multimedia** – There is a small, but growing IT and Multimedia sector in Southern Staffordshire.

Staffordshire University’s deservedly strong reputation for its work in these sectors is an undoubted factor in stimulating these sectors, particularly through the start-up route. The University has recently developed a Multimedia and Film Centre at its Beaconside (Stafford) campus. The area provides attractive locations for firms in these sectors with the strongest locus in Lichfield and Stafford. The University is continuing to develop its provision in this field and there is significant potential for further provision of media courses at the Lichfield campus in particular.

- Continue development of IT and Multimedia provision at Stafford and Lichfield campuses - ongoing
There is widespread consensus on the central importance of skills to a dynamic and sustainable economy. Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council is the lead strategic agency for raising the level of skills across the County, including southern Staffordshire. It has a budget of around £166 million in 2005/6. This includes the core funding of FE Colleges and of school sixth forms.

The Staffordshire Skills Alliance, led by the Learning and Skills Council, has produced – and is implementing a Workforce Skills Strategy, which is currently under review. The Alliance is a Partnership of providers, businesses and strategic organisations including the Southern Staffordshire Partnership.

A major re-organisation and streamlining of Learning and Skills Councils is planned for 2006. This may have significant effects on delivery of Learning and Skills Council policies at local level.

**Raise workforce skill levels by supporting the LSC and Colleges to increase employer engagement**

Employer engagement and commitment is vital to the development of skills programmes based on identified employer needs. The Learning and Skills Council has been developing sector-based employer engagement groups across the area. It is important for partners to support and encourage this process and to help ensure that southern Staffordshire employers fully participate in the process.

An important strand of the Staffordshire Workforce Skills Strategy is the establishment of a Skills Hub to provide a ‘one-stop-shop’ for employers and individuals wishing to identify training appropriate to their needs.

- Revised Staffordshire Workforce Skills Strategy
- Skills Hub

**Increase higher-level skills in the workforce by improving access to higher education and supporting the retention of graduates**

High-level skills - graduate level and beyond - are vital to the development of the knowledge economy and higher added value business. With southern Staffordshire well below national levels of graduates in employment, the HE Full Circle (HEFC) project (funded largely by AWM) is a key one in addressing this issue.

HEFC – led by Staffordshire University - seeks to improve access to higher education by recruiting learners from non-traditional backgrounds using student champions, and fostering the development of Foundation Degrees as bridges between further and higher education.

HEFC encourages the retention of graduates by championing the idea of graduate enterprise and assisting graduates to develop their own businesses. In addition, the project is active in developing links with employers and in facilitating graduate placements in local businesses.

Currently the Learning and Skills Council has 2 European Social Fund Objective 3 projects running which target higher-level skills. These are ‘Adult Apprenticeships’ projects, which have been contracted with Newcastle College, and these are aimed at employed adults with low skills. The project enables the learner to achieve an NVQ Level 3 qualification and Technical Certificates.

- Through HEFC to deliver HE Taster sessions with Staffordshire
- Develop continuation strategy for HEFC project
- Achieve 612 Adult Apprenticeship NVQ Level 3 qualifications
Develop HE centres across the area where there is demonstrable need

The development of HE Centres is a key element in strengthening the HE/FE linkages, facilitating the delivery of Foundation degrees and bringing training facilities closer to local employers.

Staffordshire University and its affiliate Colleges are looking to develop Centres across southern Staffordshire: a centre has been established at Stafford College; funding for a new high quality centre at Burton upon Trent College is now in place (incorporating business start-up units); plans have been drawn up for a centre on the Tamworth campus of Tamworth and Lichfield College focussing on Professional and Business Services; in Cannock discussions between the University, Colleges and local authorities are taking place to determine a potential site and explore funding opportunities, linked to the Cannock Entrepreneurship concept.

- Complete Burton upon Trent HE Centre
- Scope Cannock HE Centre

Work in Partnership with Job Centre plus and the Learning and Skills Council to link need and opportunity

While unemployment levels are generally fairly low across southern Staffordshire, there are wards with higher than national average employment. In addition there are much larger numbers of people in receipt of disability benefits, many of whom are believed to be capable of work. Government policy is now to encourage people back into employment. With the employment opportunities arising as a result of development across the area it is important to link these needs and opportunities effectively.

- Develop joint approach involving Learning and Skills Council, Job Centre plus, training providers and businesses

Improving the participation and achievement of young people

Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council is working with schools, Colleges and other providers, through District-level networks to develop a common 14-19 framework in each District. These will seek to achieve clear progression routes and parity of esteem between vocational and academic pathways, delivered through the collaboration of all partners.

- Tamworth TORC 14-19 Vocational Centre fully operational
- Feasibility for Rugeley Extended Learning Centre completed

6.4 Create competitive locations for investment in quality jobs

Work is going on to bring forward employment development sites across Southern Staffordshire.

Land South of Branston and the neighbouring former Drakelow Power Station site (mostly in the East Midlands), i54 in Southern Staffordshire (and part of the North Black Country and South Staffordshire Regeneration Zone), and Kingswood Lakeside beside the M6 Toll are the major ones, but there are many other smaller ones.
A variety of organisations are engaged with planning and implementing infrastructure investment in southern Staffordshire. Prime amongst these are the Highways Agency, Network Rail, Midlands Expressway Ltd., Staffordshire County Council and private sector developers. Major recent projects (aside from the completion of the M6 Toll in late 2003) include the completion of the Burntwood By-pass in 2005 and commencement of work on the Rugeley by-pass (scheduled for completion in Dec 2007).

The widening of the Trent Valley line between Rugby and Stafford will take place over the next few years and will allow for even shorter journey times between southern Staffordshire and major destinations.

Provide a diverse range of site development opportunities including provision for higher added value sectors

At least in the short term, southern Staffordshire is well supplied with employment land. Major sites which are already under development include Kingswood Lakeside near Cannock, Fradley Park near Lichfield and Prime Point near Stafford. The i54 site in South Staffordshire District, bordering Wolverhampton, is also an important strategic site, currently in the ownership of AWM. The vision for i54 is for a high technology development providing 7,000 jobs by 2020.

The site is currently the subject of site preparation works and a planning application. In parallel, work is going on to appoint a private sector development partner.

It is important that the type of employment land in the area supports the diverse and dynamic economy. There is increasing concern that historic planning permissions may have been overly generous in the quantity of distribution (or B8) provision in the area. There are concerns that too much employment land may be eaten up by low-density logistics uses occupying, in some cases, buildings that damage the landscape. In this light there are particular concerns about suggestions from the Black Country Study and the Regional Logistics study that one or more large logistics sites might be located in southern Staffordshire. Such proposals are likely to be strongly resisted.

Vigorous action is needed to bring some of the identified sites forward, particularly in relation to Branston-Drakelow on the East Staffordshire/South Derbyshire border. This is a strategically important site, which is a clear demonstration of the objectives of the Midlands Way Smart Growth Initiative. This Initiative promotes cooperation and joint working between partners in both the West and East Midlands on collaborative actions, which will result in major mutual benefit in both regions. In the long-term the project could result in the creation of 200 reclaimed hectares of employment land and 7,000 jobs. It requires substantial public sector pump priming, but has major potential employment benefits for eastern and south eastern Staffordshire as well as southern Derbyshire.

At the current time southern Staffordshire appears well supplied with development sites. However there are concerns that further down the line shortages may start to develop, particularly in Stafford and Cannock. Dialogue will be needed with the Regional Assembly over the provision, which can be made through Regional Planning Guidance based on local

---

10 Staffordshire Employment Land Study 2005 – Staffordshire County Council Business Research Unit
needs, but it is vitally important that the economic regeneration of the area is not compromised by overly restrictive planning policies.

- Complete feasibility for Land South of Branston/Swadlincote Power Station
- development of Kingswood Lakeside

**Support the continuing development of vibrant and sustainable urban centres**

A key characteristic of Southern Staffordshire is the existence of a number of medium-sized towns: Burton upon Trent-on-Trent, Cannock, Lichfield, Stafford and Tamworth with the smaller towns of Burntwood, Rugeley, Uttoxeter and Stone. These towns have a vital role in providing the shopping, service, entertainment and cultural resources for residents of their surrounding areas. Their health is central to the economic and cultural life of Southern Staffordshire.

As discussed earlier Burton upon Trent-upon-Trent, Cannock, Lichfield, Stafford and Tamworth are recognized in the Regional Spatial Strategy as Strategic Centres. However, Phase 2 of the partial review of the Spatial Strategy includes a more detailed review of the roles of these centres, and it is very important for southern Staffordshire to participate actively in this review to ensure that the needs of our towns and their residents and employers are safeguarded.

There are many pressures on these centres: changing consumer requirements, traffic and parking issues, competition from adjacent locations, pressures for out of town retailing, ageing building stock.

To maintain and enhance their health requires an ambitious long-term vision for each centre, balancing conflicting pressures, and seeking continued investment in high quality facilities. A high quality of urban design, incorporating public art, attractive spaces and stimulating but safe environments is vital.

Ambitious town centre visions and master plans incorporating aspirations for high quality sustainable development need to be developed for each centre as a guide for investors, residents and stakeholders.

- Produce master plan for Burton upon Trent town centre
- Develop Tamworth Town Centre Strategy
- Commence Lichfield City Wharf development
- Commence Lichfield Birmingham Road Development
- Complete Cannock Town Centre Development masterplan
- Stafford – former St. Georges Hospital
- Stafford Riverside development
Ensure that southern Staffordshire assets are proactively marketed

Vigorous marketing is essential to ensure that these assets are brought to the attention of prospective investors.

InStaffs UK Ltd is the inward investment agency for Staffordshire, handling investment enquiries and carrying out a range of promotional activities and special campaigns (including the Capitalising on the M6 Toll project) which was one of the original projects in Southern Staffordshire Now! Funded by local authorities across Staffordshire, InStaffs markets the area under its overall Staffordshire brand and handles investor enquiries through to completion.

The Partnership has determined that creation of a separate Southern Staffordshire brand would fragment the overall Staffordshire marketing effort. However we have established a Promotion and Investment Group that works alongside InStaffs to ensure that Southern Staffordshire is fully represented in their marketing campaigns and to add value. We are particularly concerned to bring private sector perspectives to the table, including brokering access to marketing opportunities and to potential case studies.

- Support InStaffs in development of Professional Services brochure
- Identify Southern Staffordshire Dream Team/ Ambassador Programmes

Improve public transport to employment centres and encourage ‘green’ transport plans

Southern Staffordshire has important rail links both within and beyond its borders, into the West Midlands conurbation and beyond. The West Coast Mainline route through Stafford, Rugeley, Lichfield and Tamworth is a key transport artery. Journey times from Lichfield (for example) to London Euston are now under 70 minutes and less still from Tamworth.

However, the standard of comfort at many of the rail stations is poor. This situation is a discouragement to commuters and visitors alike and requires radical improvement. Services to London are infrequent and continually under threat – constant vigilance is needed to improve the position.

A number of southern Staffordshire employment sites are located away from immediate centres of population and there is evidence both from employers and employment agencies, such as Connexions, of difficulties for non-car users. There is a need for public agencies, transport operators and employers to work together to address these issues, perhaps through pump-priming funding for bus services.

The development of ‘green’ transport plans is linked to this and involves businesses and public sector employers working with employees to encourage less environmentally damaging impact.

- Work with Staffordshire County Council, local transport operators and employers to improve transport links to industrial area and green transport plans

6.5 Create a more sustainable and lower carbon economy and environment

Promote high quality design in the built environment incorporating sustainability principles

The quality of buildings and spaces has a major impact on the perceptions of investors and residents on the attractiveness of an area. Many mediocre developments
have been built in southern Staffordshire in recent years, although there are encouraging signs of a greater commitment to quality beginning to emerge. The Southern Staffordshire Design Initiative has begun to raise the profile of design issues, particularly through the Design Competition held for the first time in 2005, which celebrated the quality of the buildings, which had been constructed here in the previous 3 years. The Initiative is pushing forward with a series of workshop and other activities under a Steering Group comprising public and private agencies with a stake in the field. It is planned to repeat the Design Competition on a biennial basis.

- Two Design Initiative Seminars/workshops per annum
- Bi-ennial Design Competition
- Two Design and Heritage Champion Networking events per annum

Support the development of a lower carbon economy including the renewable energy sector

Climate change and the possible exhaustion of energy sources present an increasing threat to our environment, with potential impacts on biodiversity, weather patterns, and ultimately, the survival of advanced civilisations and the human species itself.

The County Council’s climate change strategy sets out the challenges and a proposed response from that organisation.

Southern Staffordshire, too, must rise to the challenge.

Far-reaching changes in energy conservation, procurement, construction methods, transport patterns and in technologies are required to address this issue. It provides both a challenge and an opportunity to economic development. There are potentially rich rewards for areas and individual businesses, which grasp the potential opportunities early and adapt to the changing requirements of consumers and regulators.

Southern Staffordshire should work with agencies like Staffordshire Business and Environmental Network, Midlands Environmental Business Company, the Environmental Technologies Cluster, Sustainability West Midlands and local businesses and their organisations to raise awareness of these issues. It should continue to support demonstration projects like the Stafford Biomass Project. Partners should systematically examine their procurement strategies to identify impacts on climate change and sustainability and take vigorous action. This should include working with local businesses to adapt and to innovate in response to the demand for environmentally friendly products. This will support and drive the development of the environmental technologies sector in Southern Staffordshire.

- Support Countywide roll-out of Climate Change Strategy
- Investigate potential of waste-to-energy power generation initiatives
- Promote take-up of renewable energy initiatives by public and private sectors
Encourage the development of sustainable tourism

Tourism is an important and fast-growing economic sector in Southern Staffordshire.

The Southern Staffordshire Visitor Economy Strategy set out the framework and key priorities for the Partnership.

The vision is to encourage the development of sustainable tourism, which builds on and enhances the ‘green’ image of southern Staffordshire.

Key elements of the strategy include: building on the ‘green’ tourism of Cannock Chase and the area’s countryside attractions; developing Lichfield as the prime heritage location (linked to other heritage attractions in the area including Tamworth Castle and Weston Park); joint promotional activities; and the marketing of sites including Kingswood Lakeside and Birmingham Road, Lichfield for 4 star hotel and conference centre development, in line with the Southern Staffordshire Hotels study.

The Visitor Economy Strategy for the Districts is now being taken forward under the banner of the county-wide Destination Management Partnership (DMP), which has integrated the Southern Staffordshire Visitor Economy Strategy with the Northern Staffordshire Visitor Economy Strategy to produce a Staffordshire Tourism Action Plan incorporating the above elements.

Key Southern Staffordshire projects include Heritage Lottery Fund bids for restoration of Heckenrode Glass and improvement of visitor facilities at Lichfield Cathedral, improvement of Lichfield City Parks and for heritage interpretation in Tamworth. Lichfield District Council is hosting a Destination Management system for Southern Staffordshire.

These initiatives are being taken forward by the Staffordshire Destination and Lichfield Tourism

Adopt a Sustainable Procurement Approach

Local purchasing is a cost effective and environmentally friendly way of retaining spend and employment in the local economy.

In Lichfield, the Chamber and Council have established the Think Local initiative with an online directory to encourage this. The Partnership is working on spreading this approach across Southern Staffordshire to achieve a greater financial base and coverage.

The development of the environmental or ‘green’ economy has huge potential. Responses to climate change, rising landfill costs and increasing public awareness are putting this at the forefront. Procurement by the public sector and large private sector businesses can play an important role in developing the market for ‘green products’ and stimulating the growth of

local environmental businesses. Recognising this we will seek to develop a Green Purchasing Initiative.

- New Think Local Website covering Lichfield, Tamworth, Cannock and Stafford
- Develop Countywide Sustainable Procurement strategy

**Support the development of a sustainable rural economy**

The Southern Staffordshire rural economy has undergone, and continues to undergo, significant change in recent years. Agricultural incomes have been declining, many services have deteriorated and there has been a decline in village shops.

A continuing influx of higher-income groups, many commuting, some working from home, has also put pressure on house prices.

In Staffordshire, the Staffordshire Rural Forum leads the strategic approach. A range of policy responses is required to address these issues, with the encouragement of economic diversification as a major plank of activity. This includes the ‘Taste of Staffordshire’ initiative, a range of business support and tourism projects.

- This initiative is being taken forward by the Staffordshire Rural Forum
7. Implementing the Strategy

7.1 The Partnership

Southern Staffordshire Partnership has a strong will and firm support for its policies. It operates primarily through an Executive, which comprises the 6 District Councils, the County Council, Business Link Staffordshire, Staffordshire Learning and Skills Council, Staffordshire University, a representative of the FE Colleges, Southern Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Staffordshire Partnership and 5 private sector representatives.

The Executive meets quarterly and reports formally on an annual basis to the wider Partnership, which includes additional representatives including local authority members.

7.2 Delivery – Leadership and Support

Unlike many other partnerships, the Southern Staffordshire Partnership has limited direct resources.

Its main funding comes from annual contributions from public sector partners to support the employment of a Partnership Director and a small operational budget. This means that it operates largely through influencing other organizations and by galvanizing activity round particular projects or initiatives, which are usually led by a single organization.

The work of the Partnership is directed by a Partnership Executive, which has representatives from the public sector funding partners, the private sector and Advantage West Midlands.

This body meets quarterly and oversees the work of the Partnership which is co-ordinated on a day-to-day basis by the Partnership Director.

The role of the Director is to co-ordinate the implementation of the strategy, identifying needs, working with partners to develop initiatives to address them in a cost effective manner and influencing organisations that control resources to direct them to the priorities agreed by the Partnership.

The Director works closely with the Strategic Co-ordination Group, which supports the Executive and the Director in developing the Partnership’s programmes and policies. A series of working groups and task groups takes forward particular areas of work and specific projects.

The Partnership produces an annual Action Plan setting out its key tasks and initiatives for the year, which is monitored by the Executive. The Annual Forum – a meeting of Southern Staffordshire Partnership stakeholders, is held in the autumn to discuss progress and future activity.
7.3 Southern Staffordshire and Regional Advocacy

Promoting the interests of Southern Staffordshire is a key function of the Partnership. Southern Staffordshire is a large and important area of the West Midlands region, yet its potential is seriously neglected in many regional policies and programmes. It is vital that we address this effectively, wherever possible working as part of wider interest groups.

There are a number of particularly important issues that need to be tackled as part of this representative drive. These include:

Working to influence the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy

As noted in Section 2, Southern Staffordshire receives scant mention in the current (2004-7) strategy. The Partnership will work hard to press for recognition of the needs and opportunities in the area. This will focus mainly on the needs of the towns and will press for a proper programme aimed at addressing these.

Working to influence the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

The Partnership will work through all available avenues to ensure that the Regional Spatial Strategy takes a balanced approach to the needs of Southern Staffordshire, recognising the need for restraint in sensitive areas of countryside and villages, but allowing development, which will increase sustainability and address identified local needs. This will again focus strongly on enabling sustainable growth in the area’s towns.

Influencing the City Region agenda to the benefit of southern Staffordshire

As discussed earlier, City Regions have been an increasing policy focus and it is likely that a City Region based on the West Midlands Metropolitan area will come into being in the near future. The Partnership, with others, has successfully championed the need for engagement, which recognises the role of areas outside the administrative boundaries of the Metropolitan Districts which have strong economic ties. We will seek to ensure that our role continues to be recognised and backed with resources where appropriate.

Maintain a close engagement in the Black Country study and a presence on the Black County Plus Group

The Partnership, along with a number of partner local authorities, are represented on the Black Country Plus group which forms a liaison channel between the Black Country Consortium and the surrounding areas.

Through this and other forms the Partnership will seek to reach agreement on issues of common interest, particularly regarding the release of employment land to help meet Black Country needs.

Influencing the direction of countywide strategies including the Staffordshire Community Strategy and the Staffordshire Workforce skills strategy

The establishment of the City of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Partnership in early 2005, and the formation of the Staffordshire Partnership in 2006 was an important landmark in strengthening the voice of Staffordshire. The Southern Staffordshire Partnership must work alongside other partnerships and agencies to drive the emerging Local Area Agreement agenda, particularly the Economic Development and Enterprise block.
Resorting the Strategy

Public sector resources for economic regeneration in Southern Staffordshire are scarce and getting scarcer.

A major source of recent regeneration funding in the area has been the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) – a programme funded by Advantage West Midlands - which is now reaching the end of its life. Programmes in Tamworth (Glascote Heath), Cannock and Burntwood have already come to an end. The two remaining Southern Staffordshire SRB schemes – in Burton upon Trent and Stafford – finish in March 2007. There is no replacement for SRB funding – it is being phased out by AWM in favour of its key instruments – clusters, corridors and regeneration zones. Smaller scale AWM-funded Market Towns programmes in Uttoxeter and Stone also have a limited life.

Until fairly recently much of the area was eligible for European Union Objective 2 funds, although this has now shrunk to very limited areas, mostly in Burton upon Trent, with a smaller area in Cannock. The future shape and distribution of European funding after 2006 is not yet clear but there is a possibility that major elements of it may be closely linked to Regional Development Agency priorities – as they currently stand this will divert it away from Southern Staffordshire.

This will leave Southern Staffordshire with very limited regeneration resources. Although a number of agencies have ‘main programme’ funding this is usually directed to very specific priorities with very inflexible rules and targets. In addition there is a strong tendency for main programme funding to be ‘bent’ towards priority areas – and indeed this is a specific intention of the Regional Economic Strategy.

Against this background the Partnership is seeking a ‘Towns’ regeneration programme to be added to the Regional Economic Strategy as a 4th ‘instrument of delivery’ alongside Corridors, Clusters and Regeneration Zones and complementing the Rural Renaissance Action Plan. There has also been a programme for Market Towns targeting towns with less than 20,000 population but the larger towns such as those in Southern Staffordshire have not benefited from any specific targeting.

This ‘Towns’ programme would reflect and deliver the approach to the Local Regeneration Areas identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Partnership will work hard to gain acceptance of this approach.
Appendix : The Story So Far

This Appendix sets out the progress that the Partnership has made on the 10 initiatives identified in the initial Partnership Strategy ‘Southern Staffordshire Now!’ and also outlines the progress on other initiatives which have been instigated subsequently.

1. Southern Staffordshire Now! Initiatives

Theme 1: Competitive and Ambitious Business Base

Sustainability Cluster – Renewable Energy Initiative

What we said:
……..will give Southern Staffordshire the leading edge in the manufacture of renewable energy products and processes. The sustainable waste management project will provide Southern Staffordshire with a flagship scheme in the form of a Sustainable Growth Park.

What has happened:
The Biomass project based in Stafford, and funded by Advantage West Midlands through the Stafford SRB programme has carried out significant research and development work with local farmers and businesses. A company has been established to develop a miscanthus-grass fired power station and planning permission has been obtained with a view to power generation coming on stream in the summer of 2007. Funding of £1.2m has been obtained from the DTI Bio energy Capital Grants scheme and a grant of nearly £1m from AWM. Farmers within a 25 mile radius of the site will grow the miscanthus grass.

A feasibility study was carried out on the Sustainable Growth Park concept, however it was not possible to identify a suitable site in southern Staffordshire. Joint working on waste disposal has taken place between local authorities in Staffordshire via the Joint Waste Board and investigations are continuing into ways of generating economic benefit from waste. Staffordshire’s performance on recycling has improved, and is heading for top performance ranking, and there are joint commissioning projects amongst the Districts in southern Staffordshire, one of which brought a new company into the area with significant recycling experience.

Building the Visitor Economy

What we said:
……….(this initiative) will build on the existing leisure, tourism and business visitor market opportunities in the sub region. It will bring together these separate attractions into a more coherent and planned offering.

What has happened:
With funding from Advantage West Midlands the Partnership commissioned the Southern Staffordshire Visitor Economy strategy from leading tourism consultants L& R Consulting.

The resulting Action Plan has been incorporated into the overall Staffordshire Plan. Many elements of the plan are being taken forward, including signposting initiatives, improved visitor facilities at Cannock Chase and new interpretation boards in Lichfield City Centre.

Heritage Lottery Fund bids are in development for restoration of Heckenrode Glass in Lichfield Cathedral, improvement of visitor facilities at Lichfield Cathedral, improvement of Lichfield City Parks and for heritage interpretation in Tamworth. Lichfield District Council is hosting a Destination Management system for Southern Staffordshire.


**Staffordshire a Centre for Food**

*What we said:*

............ The Centre for Food will endow the sub-region with an identified food related cluster of businesses, tying together the tourist potential represented by the current award winning Farmers Market in Stafford, the Great British Kitchen proposals for Stafford, with existing and future inward investments in a growing sector.

*What has happened:*

A Food Cluster group for Staffordshire has been established and a series of initiatives have been rolled forward including feasibility work on food incubator units at Rodbaston College. These are now likely to be constructed with support from AWM, Staffordshire County Council and the College. The Great British Kitchen Project had unfortunately to be shelved when funding for key elements was not forthcoming.

**Management Excellence Networks**

Management Excellence Networks will provide business managers with access to a programme of learning and insight through an informal and on-going package of seminars, study visits, and collaborative working opportunities. The aim is to develop local business acumen required for long-term sustainable business growth and prosperity.

*What has happened:*

The project was successfully delivered by Business Link from its main programme funding. By March 2004 14 events had been run and 417 businesses received assistance. Business Link have continued to run similar programmes following the success of this pilot.

**Higher Education Full Circle (HEFC)**

*What we said:*

HE in Gear will provide a comprehensive and integrated package to increase the volume, and contribution, of skilled workers in Southern Staffordshire. This initiative will focus on addressing and securing the benefits of wider take up of post-16 education, through innovative routes to educational involvement; the retention of graduates post-study and the development of facilities to encourage students to set-up businesses in Southern Staffordshire.

*What has happened:*

The project (which was re-designated as HE Full Circle) has been up and running since 2003, led by Staffordshire University with funding of over £3m from Advantage West Midlands over 7 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Opportunities</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Businesses Created</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Businesses Safeguarded</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses Advised</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Receiving Specialist Advice</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* to end Jan 2006

Much has been achieved in that short time, both in terms of meeting targets within budget and in developing innovative and successful strategies to meet the project aims.

The project focuses on developing foundation degrees providing appropriate, employer-led qualifications to extend participation in education, learning and training. Examples are
Investing in Workforce Skills

This project focuses on ensuring that Southern Staffordshire meets national targets by easing access to NVQ Levels 1 and 2 (and equivalent) skills linked to support and advice from learning advisors, to identify relevant learning and a suitable progression route.

What has happened:
The plans to upskill the lower skill elements of the workforce have been carried through by Colleges and other training agencies, funded by Learning and Skills Council programmes such as the Employer Learning Pilot.

Foresighting Business Competitiveness

What we said:
(This project) will comprise a suite of business competitiveness focussed activities centring on foresighting, intelligence and subsequent action-response proposals with a view to developing the sub-region’s competence in productivity, digital take-up and innovation.

What has happened:
As with the workforce skills project it did not prove possible to obtain funding for this initiative. However a number of local events have been held focusing on Environmental Technologies, Tourism and Leisure and similar activities are being funded by AWM at a regional level.

Capitalising on the M6 Toll

(Capitalising on the M6 Toll) will maximise the dividend to the sub-region from the new M6 Toll Road through a programme of promotion, tied to the land requirements of the Competitive & Ambitious Business Base Ambition. The initiative will work with land developers, planning authorities and potential in-moving businesses to package & promote sites.

What has happened:
With funding from AWM, Midland Expressway Ltd and other partners, Instaffs UK Ltd led a vigorous marketing campaign to draw regional, national and international property market attention to the potential economic opportunities arising from the opening of the M6 Toll in December 2004.

A number of events were organised for the property industry, together with brochures, a CD ROM and an advertising campaign.

Building Social Capital

This initiative will develop a jointly agreed and collective response to deprivation in the sub-region. Southern Staffordshire’s pockets of deprivation often get overlooked on the regional map. New approaches to deprivation will also be promoted within local districts designed to empower communities to take greater control of decision-making and the assets on their doorstep.

What has happened:
Funding for a facilitator to run a local learning pilot was obtained from RegenWM and five sessions were run in Lichfield, Tamworth, and Cannock involving community development staff and residents from North Lichfield, Amington (Tamworth) and Broomhill (Cannock). The focus was on sharing experience of approaches to community development and neighbourhood initiatives in areas without access to major regeneration funding.

Shire Towns Initiative

What we said:
Parallel to the Southern Staffordshire Now! strategy development process, a number of local partners have been developing a programmed response to the decline of a series of shire towns across the West Midlands, with a view to piloting the initiative in Southern Staffordshire. The economic restructuring facing towns such as Cannock, Tamworth, Burton upon Trent, Burntwood and Lichfield does not sit comfortably within one Strategic Ambition. After preparation of an advocacy paper by Staffordshire County Council and the Partnership, Advantage West Midlands agreed to commission a study of the issues in the region’s towns as part of the lead into the review of the Regional Economic Strategy. Although the study identified a range of issues, inclusion of a new delivery instrument for the Regional Economic Strategy was not accepted.

Nevertheless, recognition of the issues affecting the region’s towns was achieved in both the RES and in the subsequent AWM Corporate plan. There has been support for individual towns in Southern Staffordshire, particularly Burton-upon-Trent, where AWM have agreed funding of £2.5m to support the development of an exciting new University Centre at Burton College. Work has also been going on to achieve the development of the Land South of Branston, now as part of a wider cross-regional project involving the redevelopment of Drakelow Power Station.

The 3 year review of the RES allows us to again reiterate the case for policy support to the towns of Southern Staffordshire.

2. Other Initiatives Post Southern Staffordshire Now!

In addition to the projects set out in Southern Staffordshire Now! the Partnership has been involved in the development of a number of other initiatives and projects which are set out below:

Design Initiative

The Southern Staffordshire Design Initiative was launched in March 2005. Its objectives are to

- To influence and promote excellence in the design of public and private buildings and spaces in Southern Staffordshire
- To identify opportunities for signature buildings
- To identify opportunities for low energy buildings/developments
- To encourage the use of appropriate and exciting public art in all new public and private developments

The Partnership promoted a Southern Staffordshire-wide design competition in early 2005 with sponsorship and support from Staffordshire Life magazine. The aim was to find the best buildings and spaces designed in Southern Staffordshire within the previous 3 years. 37 entries were received in 4 categories and the prizes were presented by the President-elect of the Royal Institution of British Architects.

The Partnership has set up a local authority Design Champions group and is running a series of seminars on Design issues.

SucceSS

Having identified Professional and Business Services sector a key growth sector for the area, the Partnership has given its full support and backing to SucceSS – the network for this sector in Southern Staffordshire, covering South Staffordshire, Tamworth, East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Cannock districts. (Stafford Borough is covered by Finest, the equivalent network for North Staffordshire). The Partnership has actively supported Southern
Staffordshire Chamber in developing the project and has provided funding alongside AWM, the Learning and Skills Council, Staffordshire County and District Councils.

With funding in place, the project has appointed a Co-ordinator, with a launch which attracted significant numbers.

**SucceSS** is aimed at promoting the professional services sector in Southern Staffordshire targeting companies looking to relocate or invest in the region, gain awareness of the professional services sector or employ the skills of professional services companies within the region.

The network has been set up to encourage collaborative action amongst the professional services community and thereby facilitate business growth.

The size of the sector is substantial, with approximately 3,200 firms employing 22,700 people within the Southern Staffordshire region.

**HE Centres**

The Partnership has strongly supported Staffordshire University in the development of Higher Education Campuses across Southern Staffordshire, with the first project having been established and incrementally expanded in Lichfield.

In early 2006 AWM agreed funding of £2.5m to develop a University Centre at Burton College. Work on the £4.3m 3-storey, 2500 sq metre development in Abbey Street, Burton, is expected to start in April 2006, with the building opening to students in September 2007.

The Burton University Centre, operated as a campus of Staffordshire University, will provide higher education, training and skills through a state-of-the-art teaching, laboratory and workshop facilities.

The Centre will also be used as a regional hub for developing the skills of existing employees through a wide range of part-time courses, enabling people to develop their knowledge and skills at the same time as developing their career at work.

Over the next five years, the project will create 21 jobs, assist 321 people to find a job, create 14 new businesses at 12 months, assist 1267 people in skills development and find employment for 423 graduates in the private sector.

**Managed Workspace/Incubation**

In 2004 the Partnership commissioned a study of business Incubation and managed workspace requirements in Southern Staffordshire. This identified a considerable shortfall in high quality managed workspace business accommodation, particularly in Tamworth, Cannock and Burton-upon-Trent.

A Task Group was set up to address this and several projects are being pursued across Southern Staffordshire. These include:

- Incorporation of 15 managed workspace units in the Burton University Centre development
- Development of proposals for the food industries incubation facility at Rodbaston College
- Feasibility work on a proposal for a Cannock Entrepreneurship Centre incorporating managed workspace plus
- Work to identify potential sites for a Business Village at the Tamworth site of Tamworth and Lichfield College
- Support for Staffordshire Business Innovation Centre’s successful bid for funding to deliver outreach incubation support in Southern Staffordshire
Southern Staffordshire Reinvestment Fund

The Partnership has worked with the Black Country Reinvestment Society to establish a Southern Staffordshire Reinvestment Fund which will provide loans of up to £50,000 to:

- **Start-up businesses**
  individuals or groups planning to start, or who have recently started, a new private business for profit.

- **Small and Medium sized businesses**
  any private business employing less than 250 employees.

- **Social Enterprises**
  individuals or groups planning to start, or who have recently started, a business, the primary purpose of which is to trade to pursue social objectives and whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

Research Projects

The Partnership has commissioned and managed a number of research projects which have been used for the development of policy and projects including:

- *Southern Staffordshire Visitor Economy Strategy (2002)*
- *Southern Staffordshire Economic Futures Study (2004)*
- *Managed Workspace and Incubation Study (2004)*
- *M6 Toll Impact Study (2004)*
- *Southern Staffordshire Hotel Sites study (2005)*
- *Southern Staffordshire Towns – Case for Policy Interventions (2006)*
This document has been prepared by the Southern Staffordshire Partnership. The Partnership is a broadly-based regeneration partnership involving local authorities, the business community, higher and further education, and the voluntary sector across the 6 local authority districts of Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford, and Tamworth.

For further information about the Partnership and its activities please contact:

The Partnership Director
Donegal House
Bore Street
Lichfield
Staffs
WS14 9NL

Tel: 01543 308250
Fax: 01543 308200
Email: ssp@lichfielddc.gov.uk