



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister  

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Creating sustainable communities

*Annual Monitoring Report  
(AMR) – FAQs and Seminar  
Feedback on Emerging  
Best Practice 2004/05*

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# Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) – FAQs and Seminar Feedback on Emerging Best Practice 2004/05

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# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Responses to FAQs on the requirements for the Local Authority AMRs for 2004/05</b>	<b>7</b>
What are the minimum requirements for the LDF AMRs for 2004/05?	7
What happens if a LPA cannot cover all the above in its first AMR?	8
Do we need to measure all of the core and our local indicators every year?	8
Is there a model template for the LDF AMRs?	8
Is it sensible to monitor the performance of ‘saved’ policies when these are about to be replaced?	9
How long should the AMR be?	9
Some of the definitions for the core indicators are unclear	9
What is the relationship between PDG and the AMR?	10
If planning applications collected the right information from the outset it would save a lot of time and effort in regard to monitoring	10
What is OPDM doing to promote standard data specifications?	10
Retrospective SA and significant effects indicators	11
What is the difference between a significant effects indicator and a contextual indicator?	11
Are there any requirements for clearance of the AMRs under the functions and responsibilities regulations?	11
Annex – tables 3.2 and 3.3 of the LDF monitoring guide	12
<b>Feedback note on AMR seminars – Emerging Best Practice</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Emerging best practice</b>	<b>14</b>
Resourcing the monitoring function	14
Acquiring specialist information	16
Monitoring as a corporate activity	16
Initiatives to Facilitate Data Collection, Collation and Processing:	16
Current Good Practice in Data Collection, Collation and Processing within Regions	17
<b>Key stages in the preparation of LDF AMRs</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Additional examples of emerging best practice in the preparation of LDF AMRs</b>	<b>19</b>
North East Regional Assembly	19
East of England Regional Assembly (EERA)	20
South West Regional Assembly	20
Rushcliffe Borough Council – Experience and lessons of preparing an AMR	22
Wycombe District Council	23
The Government London Authority – Development database for monitoring	24

# Preface

Earlier this year a number of monitoring seminars were held throughout the English regions. The purpose of the seminars was to highlight the requirements and process of producing annual monitoring reports (hereafter referred to as 'AMRs'), identify any issues surrounding the production of AMRs and to identify and encourage the sharing of emerging best practices.

Following questions raised at the regional monitoring seminars the following advice is issued to amplify the '*Local Development Framework Monitoring: A Good Practice Guide*' (hereafter referred to as the 'LDF monitoring guide') which was published in March 2005. This additional advice contains responses to frequently asked questions (hereafter referred to as 'FAQs') which are complemented by examples of emerging best practice. The material contained within this note has been agreed between OPDM, Government Offices and the National Monitoring Liaison Group.

# Responses to FAQs on the requirements for the Local Authority AMRs for 2004/05

## What are the minimum requirements for the LDF AMRs for 2004/05?

Paragraph 3.15 of the LDF monitoring guide explains that the first AMR should be submitted (through the relevant Government Office) by the end of December 2005. It goes on to advise that:

- whilst the first AMR is only required to address the period of the year from 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005 since the commencement of the Act (i.e. October 2004 to end of March 2005), authorities are encouraged where possible to assess *the whole year 2004/05*. This will provide a more meaningful assessment of the plan delivery/preparation and a very helpful benchmark against which to assess the performance in the 2005/06 AMR round;
- the report should present an analysis, in particular taking account of the core output indicators set out in section four of the LDF monitoring guide, of existing ('saved') policies. [Note that information should be presented on as many as possible of the core output indicators and where not the AMR should explain how it is intended to address the gap or gaps in the future];
- in relation to the monitoring of local development document preparation, all AMRs should refer to the local development scheme (LDS) and the milestones contained within that scheme. Authorities should give an indication of progress and note if any adjustments to the scheme are considered necessary since the most recent version has come into effect under Regulation 11.

Taking account of what is said elsewhere in the guide, the first and subsequent AMRs should also:

- provide an executive summary of the key findings that the public can understand;
- summarise the monitoring framework – principles/methodology being followed. This could include how data was being collected by who and how it was being used in analysis, in relation to the core and other indicators;
- report on progress in the delivery of net additional dwelling provision set in the context of housing trajectories to demonstrate how policies are on track to deliver the necessary dwellings in the area; and
- summarise any actions that are proposed whether to bring the LDS back on track, to revise the LDS, to ensure that the policies are being implemented as they should or to revise those policies or to propose a new local development document/s.

## **What happens if a LPA cannot cover all the above in its first AMR?**

Authorities are strongly encouraged to cover as much of the above as they can. However, if authorities experience difficulties meeting the requirements of the Act and Regulations in terms of their first AMR, they will need to present as full an analysis as possible whilst setting out clearly what the problems are and how they will be overcome in the next report in December 2006. Authorities are encouraged to bring any serious problems to the attention of Government Offices prior to their submission in December 2005 as part of their regular discussions.

## **Do we need to measure all of the core and our local indicators every year?**

Authorities will need to do the best they can. However, it is appreciated that for some of the possible local indicators in particular it may well not be cost effective to collect information on a yearly basis. For example, in the case of qualitative information gathered by survey on perceptions for an area it may not be cost effective to repeat the survey every year. Authorities may find it helpful to discuss this issue with any sub-regional mentoring group or the regional group itself where questions of sub-regional or regional consistency arise. Provided there is adequate justification there is no reason why some indicators that are qualitative cannot be gathered more infrequently. However, these should be balanced where possible with other indicators that might help highlight changes in the absence of data on the indicators that cannot readily be monitored on annual basis.

Among the core output indicators OPDM and the Government Offices attach particular importance to the first AMRs reporting on delivery of net additional dwelling provision set in the context of housing trajectories as above.

## **Is there a model template for the LDF AMRs?**

Guidance on the content, structure and format of AMRs is outlined on pages 12 to 15 of the LDF monitoring guide and tables 3.2 and 3.3 are attached as an annex for convenience.

However, there is no detailed model template. Some of the regional monitoring groups are considering whether it makes sense to suggest a model template for the first AMRs in their regions. It would then be up to local planning authorities whether they wished to follow it. The use of a template may help authorities to focus on what is needed and tailor their responses appropriately while also helping to identify their monitoring gaps to address in the future.

In the light of these templates, consideration can be given next year, by OPDM, Government Offices, Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) and local authorities to whether a national template should be developed. However any such template would not be a rigid requirement but would need to allow each authority to be able to change its AMR to reflect its own diversity and context.

## **Is it sensible to monitor the performance of ‘saved’ policies when these are about to be replaced?**

Authorities should use their own judgement in deciding what is going to be most useful by way of monitoring ‘saved’ policies. Such information may be very helpful in some cases to inform the preparation of LDDs while in other cases, where the saved policies of adopted local plans or UDP has long expired, it may be of much less use.

However, authorities must bear in mind that regulation 48 of the Local Development Regulations, 2004 require the AMR to identify any policy (including ‘saved’ policies) which is not being implemented, the reasons why it is not being implemented, the steps (if any) that the authority intend to take to secure that the policy is implemented and whether the authority intend to prepare a DPD or a revision to a DPD to replace or amend the policy.

Where all the policies have long expired the simplest way of addressing the above may be to say that all the saved policies have expired from A to Z and that they are being replaced by the DPDs set out in the LDS. In other cases an authority may need to say that, although policies X and Y have not been used in 2004/05, this is because no relevant planning applications were made but the policies do not need amending or replacing. The authority can then give more detailed consideration in the AMR to those policies which have been applied in 2004/05 but which may not be being implemented as intended or are not working (eg having undesirable effects).

Until the saved policies have been replaced by saved policies from a local plan, or UDP that is about to be adopted under the transitional arrangements or by DPDs, the AMR will still have to comply with Regulation 48 as above and cannot simply stay silent on the saved plan.

## **How long should the AMR be?**

This is up to each authority and there are no rigid rules on the length of the report. However, it should be concise and written in plain English given that its audience will include local communities and stakeholders. It is desirable for it to be no longer than 25 to 30 pages, supported by non-technical commentaries, graphs, tables and maps. However, it is appreciated that some authorities are producing reports the main text of which is longer than this guideline.

## **Some of the definitions for the core indicators are unclear**

Some revisions to the explanatory notes in annex B of the LDF monitoring guidance are being placed on the OPDM website in the light of the queries raised. These include the transport accessibility indicator and the definition of employment space. The Government Offices or RPBs will let you know as soon as this information becomes available.



## **What is the relationship between PDG and the AMR?**

The 2006-2007 allocations criteria for PDG are currently being consulted on (closing 30 September 2005). This consultation sets out proposals for AMRs that are to be submitted both by December 2005 and by December 2006. The consultation document proposes that authorities will be rewarded for submitting an AMR by the end of December 2005, and that the AMR should contain up-to-date information on progress against milestones set out in the LDS. In the following year (2007/8) authorities will again be asked, through their AMRs, to assess progress against milestones as set out in their LDSs. They will also be asked to make assessments of their progress in delivering against their saved policies/LDF targets for sustainable development outcomes. ODPM will provide guidelines on this and set out 'bands' for assessment. There would be commensurate awards against 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent' progress in meeting their LDS milestones and delivering against their outcome targets.

Following the end of the consultation period, there will be an announcement of provisional allocations of the majority of the grant at the end of November 2005. Authorities will be invited to check their allocations at that time. The allocations for plan-making, housing, and e-planning, will not be available at that time, and will be announced early in 2006. Payments will be made early in the financial year 2006/7.

This could potentially help influence members and the executive of an authority to fund an enhanced monitoring function. This could also be accompanied by moves to help enshrine the AMR as a corporate document with a wider use and to develop a central data and monitoring function.

## **If planning applications collected the right information from the outset it would save a lot of time and effort in regard to monitoring**

As part of planning reforms and in an attempt to streamline the planning process and provide necessary information upfront a standard planning application form is currently being developed. Consultation on the proposed standard application form closed on 28th June 2005 and now responses are being looked at to inform the next stage. The current goal is to have a revised standard application form implemented on a transitional basis in March 2006 with it coming into full effect by March 2007.

## **What is OPDM doing to promote standard data specifications?**

The main aim of phase 2 of the PARSOL Land Use Monitoring Project is to develop a national specification and associated XML schema for the collection and transfer of planning monitoring data, in particular the core output indicators used in AMRs. The data specifications should match those used by the new standard planning application form (1 APP). Consultants are due to report on this new national specification towards the end of the year. The work involves close cooperation with LPAs and RPBs and a series of regional workshops.

## **Retrospective SA and significant effects indicators**

Where saved policies, which have not been subject to SA, are used as a basis for the preparation of LDDs, then those saved policies will need to be subject to SA and related significant effects indicators defined. However, where the saved policies are to be replaced there may be little point in carrying out any retrospective SA of them and identifying significant effects indicators.

## **What is the difference between a significant effects indicator and a contextual indicator?**

Significant effects indicators are a product of the sustainability appraisal process. They enable a comparison to be made between the predicted effects of the policies on society, the environment and the economy and the actual effects measured during implementation of the policies.

Contextual indicators should provide information on all the key changes that are taking place in an area that in many cases are unlikely to be caused by the implementation of the plan. Although there may be some overlap between the contextual and significant effects indicators in principle they serve different purposes.

## **Are there any requirements for clearance of the AMRs under the functions and responsibilities regulations?**

AMRs are a responsibility of the executive who can, if necessary, delegate to an officer although member buy-in is important. They do not, therefore, need to be cleared by full council.

## Annex – tables 3.2 and 3.3 of the LDF monitoring guide

The tables are repeated below for convenience but authorities are encouraged to read the guide and it is appreciated that since there were no LDDs in place for 2004/05 it will not be possible to monitor them in the first AMRs.

<b>TABLE 3.2 MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED IN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS</b>
<p>Reports should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) whether the timetable and milestones for the preparation of documents set out in the local development scheme have been met or progress is being made towards meeting them or, where they are not being met or not on track to being achieved, the reasons why (see section 6);</li> <li>(ii) whether policies and related targets in local development documents have been met or progress is being made towards meeting them or, where they are not being met or not on track to being achieved, the reasons why;</li> <li>(iii) what impact the policies are having in respect of national and regional targets and any other targets identified in local development documents and not covered by (ii) above. Local Planning Regulation 48(7) specifically requires information to be provided on net additional dwellings and local planning authorities should produce housing trajectories to demonstrate how policies will deliver housing provision in their area. This is discussed further in section 4;</li> <li>(iv) what significant effects implementation of the policies is having on the social, environmental and economic objectives by which sustainability is defined and whether these effects are as intended;</li> <li>(v) whether the policies in the local development document need adjusting or replacing because they are not working as intended;</li> <li>(vi) whether the policies need changing to reflect changes in national or regional policy;</li> <li>(vii) the extent to which any local development order, where adopted, or simplified planning zone is achieving its purposes and if not whether it needs adjusting or replacing; and</li> <li>(viii) if policies or proposals (including the local development order or simplified planning zone scheme) need changing, the actions needed to achieve this.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 3.3 POSSIBLE STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF AN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT**

This could include:

- an introduction, setting out key contextual characteristics, issues, challenges and opportunities in respect of the local authority area (including sub-areas). This can draw upon the spatial portrait, vision and objectives which authorities are required to develop as part of preparing the evidence base and the sustainability appraisal. Further details are set out in section 2 of *Policies for Spatial Plans*;<sup>1</sup>
- a section on local development scheme implementation;
- sections on the key elements of the local development framework and the relationships between them. These would include an analysis of policy performance and effects, focussing on the achievement of sustainable development. This could be undertaken on an authority-wide or more disaggregated basis. It is important that the report sets out information on all the relevant targets and indicators, including those identified through the sustainability appraisal, where this is available and relevant to the assessment of policy performance and effects;
- linked to the above, detailed content could vary from year to year reflecting particular local issues (e.g. flooding, closure of a major company, need for key worker housing etc);
- if appropriate, a section summarising the key findings including any key actions to be taken in revising the strategy for the area;
- appropriate use of illustrations (e.g. charts, graphs and maps); and
- presentation of data in a consistent format year on year.

<sup>1</sup> *Policies for Spatial Plans* was published by the Planning Officers Society in July 2005 and can be accessed via the POS website. See [www.planningofficers.org.uk](http://www.planningofficers.org.uk)

# Feedback note on AMR seminars

## - Emerging Best Practice

The recent seminars have helped to raise awareness and highlight issues, and identify emerging best practice in relation to data gathering and monitoring at and between the local and regional levels.

The seminars endorsed the key factors making for successful monitoring as set out in the OPDM presentations. These are:

- the establishment of regional monitoring groups which have acted as a forum for the exchange of information, development of systems and practices on monitoring and promotion of consistency and efficiency;
- a clear protocol on data specification and transmission of local data to the RPB. For example, the West Midlands region has developed a coordinated framework and structure for the monitoring and collection, analysis and reporting of data with a clear protocol on data specification and transmission. For more information please contact Paul Bayliss at the west midland regional assembly (phone 0121 678 1027 or email p.bayliss@wmra.gov.uk);
- agreement by the regional monitoring group and the Government Office in each region on any regional topics/issues that it would be helpful for the first AMRs in that region to address;
- in support of the regional monitoring groups, the establishment of sub-regional working in which the counties play a lead role in the two-tier areas. Joined up working between RPBs, counties and LPAs helps to enhance consistency as well as to discourage LPAs from approaching other data providers, such as the Environment Agency, in an uncoordinated way; and
- making sure that monitoring requirements are thought about from the start of the plan preparation process, developing policies with targets and indicators where practicable and with clarity about who should do what by when.

### **Emerging best practice**

#### **Resourcing the monitoring function**

The relationship between the AMR and PDG should help free up resources particularly if LDF monitoring is seen as part of the corporate monitoring process to help check delivery of the community strategy (see the FAQs).

Making the entire monitoring process dependant on one person has been shown to be a high risk approach. A more effective structure involves the sharing of monitoring functions amongst a team (policy or forward planning team in most cases) by either topic or thematic area basis. This approach spreads the knowledge and risk from loosing a staff member at a critical time.

In the two-tier areas there are examples of counties assisting through, for example, by taking the lead in establishing a central database and by obtaining information from the district authorities, analysing it and then feeding back the results to the districts and to the RPB. As well as their monitoring expertise in relation to their functions, including transport, minerals and waste, many counties have expertise on a wide range of other indicators ranging from employment density to labour supply and the working population. In most regions one or more counties are acting in this way. For example, in the West Midlands, Worcestershire County Council has a lead role in monitoring residential land throughout the region and Birmingham City Council has a similar lead role in relation to employment land.

There are also examples of joint monitoring groups across a number of smaller and less resourced authorities. These can help overcome the problems of different systems being used and different data capture by authorities for cross boundary areas, by sharing that data and agreeing a common way forward. This not only promotes consistency but also saves money.

The Coventry Solihull Warwickshire Association of Planning Officers (CSWAPO) is one such group. This long established group is comprised of senior strategic planners from each authority within the sub-region (covering county, district/borough and unitary local authorities) and meets every two months. Additionally, under the CSWAPO structure there is also a specific Information Officers Group (IOG) whose two key objectives are:

- to discuss monitoring issues, benefiting from others' experience and achieving greater consistency across the local authorities within the sub-region ; and,
- to raise others' awareness of monitoring issues, especially with regard to CSWAPO and Development Plans Forum.

The IOG meet every two months to discuss monitoring issues and have recently set up a secure website as a central point of reference for key documents, reports, useful links and a discussion forum (e.g. on the AMRs).

There are longstanding joint monitoring arrangements in Derbyshire led by the County Council via quarterly meetings with Derby City, all eight Districts and the Peak District National Park. Residential and industrial land databases are completed by all authorities according to a Data Protocol Agreement setting out definitions and procedures. Web based versions of these systems are currently being developed by consultants (the same consultants that developed the London Development Database) in a PARSOL compliant specification. For any further information please contact Jon Whitaker of Derbyshire County Council on Tel: 01629 580000 or email: [jon.whitaker@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:jon.whitaker@derbyshire.gov.uk)

The RPB can also play a major role in assisting in the analysis and exchange of data as mentioned above. For example, in addition to analysing and collecting data, the West Midlands Regional Assembly has developed with partner organisations a West Midlands Regional Assembly Data Analysis Resource (wRADAR) which is a web-enabled GIS system designed for region-wide data collation, mapping and spatial analysis.

## Acquiring specialist information

There was concern at a number of seminars that many smaller authorities and those that said they were under resourced would not be able to contribute the more specialised information needed for a comprehensive AMR. This is particularly seen as an issue for information relating to transport, open space, and biodiversity indicators.

Emerging best practice includes liaison with and gaining of information from the county council, including in its role as a transport authority, the RDA, the statutory environmental bodies (the Countryside Agency, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission of England, English Nature and the Environment Agency) and a wide range of other bodies. However in the case of these national bodies rather than swamping them with requests for information it is best practice to co-ordinate requests through the sub-regional or regional monitoring groups.

As well as having a Regional Monitoring Group in the West Midlands, they have recently formalised a series of thematic monitoring subgroups under the chairmanship of the relevant policy lead. The membership of these groups includes organisations and individuals with data or expertise to contribute (e.g. Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Housing Corporation, Wildlife Trusts, CPRE, business). These have already assisted the policy leads in assessing the information available to them, consider “hard to do” topics (e.g. biodiversity) and to mainstream monitoring.

## Monitoring as a corporate activity

Emerging best practice is to integrate the community strategy and LDF monitoring into a corporate planning process, particularly given the similar objectives or indicators in these documents and the need for both to respond to contextual changes. For example, the same team in Wycombe District Council responsible for the AMR also publishes corporate fact files on a wide range of themes – see [www.wycombe.gov.uk/factfiles](http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/factfiles)

At the regional level the RSS AMRs can feed into the monitoring work carried out by the regional observatories and be part of a common evidence base informing future reviews of the RDAs’ regional economic strategies and the Regional Housing Boards’ Regional Housing Strategies.

## Initiatives to Facilitate Data Collection, Collation and Processing:

### *Standard Planning Application form*

ODPM is currently re-designing a standardised planning application form, which will help to ‘front load’ the capture of information and achieve a more consistent approach of collating statistics in relation to planning control. Such information offers the opportunity for integrating planning application statistics into the monitoring of the LDF. Besides, the standardised application form, another major initiative (PARSOL) is currently underway which should provide support to local authorities in enhancing their monitoring capacity.

### **PARSOL**

The PARSOL (Planning and Regulatory Services Online) e-government project is developing a range of guidelines, benchmarks, schemas, systems and toolkits to assist local authorities in building effective and transparent online planning and regulatory systems. PARSOL is currently



developing a particular work stream relating to development of a national e-monitoring system, which would enable monitoring data and information to be transferred electronically between the national, regional and local levels. The project deliverables will be available free of charge to local authorities and there will be a series of guidance toolkits and demonstrator sites to help illustrate technical implementation issues.

### ***Greater London Authority Database***

As part of the process of monitoring the Spatial Development Strategy for London the Greater London Authority (GLA) is currently working with software developers Creative Design Projects to implement the new London Development Database (LDD). The system is designed to record the progress of planning permissions in the Greater London area. The LDD will replace the London Development Monitoring System (LDMS), which has been recording major planning applications in London since 1989. The ODPM and the GLA are working together to ensure it complements national surveys and monitoring in other regions. More information on the LDD is contained in the additional emerging best practice section.

### ***E-Planning***

As part of the Government's strategy to promote E-planning, ODPM has met representatives, from the RPBs to discuss how they are developing on-line methods of data collection, including GIS. There is increasing use by RPBs of on-line techniques to collect and use data. The South West, South East, and West midlands Regional Assemblies are among those leading the way (see details below)

### **Current Good Practice in Data Collection, Collation and Processing within Regions**

The South West Regional Assembly annually produces an updated regional monitoring manual, which sets out the monitoring regime in the region and includes a comprehensive list of indicators and draft targets. Local authorities are the main data source and the Assembly consults with the authorities at the beginning of each round of monitoring to refine the indicators and to address issues relating to the whole monitoring process.

Working closely with the local authorities, the Assembly has developed an online questionnaire system to enable the submission of RSS monitoring data electronically. Local authority data providers are requested to provide information on the implementation and effects of RSS via a web-based questionnaire. The system has been designed to make data submission as straightforward and efficient as possible and is annually reviewed. It contributes to the current drive towards e-government and it also means that local authorities can view and review their own data.

The South West Regional Assembly utilises the South West Information Database (South West ID) to disseminate the monitoring data collected. This is an expanding on-line library of information about South West England and has been set up by the South West Observatory to help promote the use of evidence in the region's policy making ([www.southwestid.org.uk](http://www.southwestid.org.uk)). The website is part of the Regional Assembly's ongoing commitment to the Regional Observatory and other stakeholders to produce a wider intelligence and research resource for the region.

The South East England Regional Assembly has, over the years, established and developed annual monitoring surveys in consultation with local authorities. Two electronic surveys collect information relating to housing, industrial, commercial and leisure development to inform regional monitoring of both the evolving RSS and the Integrated Regional Framework.



The surveys are distributed to all local authorities via the counties, who then collate the resulting returns, providing the Assembly with each local authority response and an overall county response. The Assembly can then compile a regional picture of development and change alongside a sub-regional breakdown at county and local authority level, fulfilling both regional and national monitoring requirements.

Local authority engagement in the development of these surveys has been crucial; as the suppliers of data it is vital the Assembly works together with local authorities on the development of data collection techniques. A number of local authorities also provide a testing service, ensuring the surveys are accurate and error free before distribution. Such partnership working has resulted in the evolution of an effective monitoring system that is continually developing.

The West Midlands Regional Assembly's wRADAR is a state-of-the-art web-enabled Geographical Information System (GIS) designed specifically for region-wide RSS data collation, with interactive mapping and spatial analysis. Data collection using the PARSOL XML scheme has been designed in to the system. wRADAR includes powerful matrix building tools enabling complex queries of data to be made in order to output RSS indicators for the RSS AMR. The databases include site level development monitoring covering employment land, housing, offices, retail, derelict land, leisure and hotel developments, green belt, as well as comprehensive socio-demographic datasets and multi-agency datasets and map layers.

wRADAR will also play a critical role in the production of LDF AMR, providing local level output of the defined RSS and national indicators from the same databases. This approach delivers exciting possibilities for remote working and conferencing and provides powerful multi-agency data sharing of Ordnance Survey mapping datasets, datasets available from central government and other agency sources and common access to monitoring data provided by local partners.

## Key stages in the preparation of LDF AMRs

Emerging best practice in preparing the AMRs is set out below.

**Stock take:** Look at what information is available and has been collected, used or reported on in the past and how this can be used to report on plan delivery and the performance of the core output and local indicators. This process should highlight gaps in information which should then be investigated as to how or who could help fill these. The regional monitoring group and any sub-regional co-ordinating arrangement, including through the counties, should help here.

**Coordinate:** Once an authority knows what data are available and the key gaps that exist, it makes sense to communicate and coordinate with other authorities and bodies to get an idea of the wider context including that of the surrounding authorities. It may be that some of these authorities or bodies collect the information already and are able to share it, or a number of authorities with the same information gaps may be able to develop a coordinated response to capturing the data. This arrangement is best addressed from a combined bottom up approach (district/county or unitary, RPB) and top down approach (RPB, county/district or unitary).

It is worth bearing in mind that after the monitoring system is introduced it should be much easier and quicker to improve and fine tune that system rather than starting from scratch year after year. In this sense it is worth identifying issues early, utilise a coordinated approach and use and share good practices to capitalise on limited resources and lessons from others.

**Help develop a template:** Where there is a regional initiative to develop a template help ensure it meets local requirements. A template could significantly help streamline and focus the development of AMRs once a local stock take has been undertaken and authorities know how to present what they are collecting. This will be of particular help to those who have limited time and experience in monitoring matters. However templates should allow flexibility and would be voluntary.

**Manage the process:** Once all the above have been completed it will be necessary to ensure that all relevant information is collected and analysed from its appropriate sources. This means maintaining effective communication whether it is internally or externally directed. Similarly the process of analysing the information needs to be project managed to a timescale to ensure it can be completed and checked in time to meet the end December submission deadline.

**Prioritise and phase:** Information is unlikely to be available on everything that authorities would ideally like to monitor. Authorities may need to prioritise and phase data collection on some indicators having regard to the advice in the LDF monitoring guide and the FAQs.

**Consult:** Partners in plan delivery will need to be involved in the preparation of the AMR from an early stage. Opportunities to consult the wider community, within what is a very tight timetable, may arise and different sections of the local community may have quite different views of what the key contextual changes reveal about the need for new LDDs or reviews of existing policies.

**Obtain Member clearance:** The AMR preparation process will need to allow for member clearance and it is important that Member buy-in is secured and the importance of the AMR is recognised by them. The AMR is in part a vehicle for the local authority to highlight any regional or national policy constraints on plan delivery as well as being a trigger for plan review. Both of these considerations will be important to Members. However, there is no requirement for an AMR to obtain full council agreement.

## **Additional examples of emerging best practice in the preparation of LDF AMRs**

### **North East Regional Assembly**

The North East Regional Assembly has an established monitoring sub group which meets on a regular basis to discuss issues concerning work on the Regional AMR. The membership of the monitoring group includes Local Authorities, the Government Office North East, the North East Assembly, NERIP (North East Regional Information Partnership) and TWRI (Tyne and Wear Research Information). NERIP is the regional observatory for the North East.

The prime function of the monitoring group is the preparation of the regional AMR, for which the responsibility is shared. The members of the group are currently considering whether the remit of the group should be extended to include representatives from outside groups i.e. the

Environment Agency and English Nature. In terms of the current collection of information, the RPB has a service level agreement with Durham and Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit to ensure that all information which is needed is gathered.

The North East is the smallest region in England and resources are a particular issue. The North East is at a very preliminary stage with e-data collection, analysis and presentation and welcomes the opportunity to take on board best practice that emerges from other regions within England. The 2003/04 AMR is available to view on the North East Assembly website [www.northeastassembly.gov.uk](http://www.northeastassembly.gov.uk)

### **East of England Regional Assembly (EERA)**

EERA has an AMR group (a sub-group of its Regional Research and Monitoring Group) whose membership is drawn from local authorities, EERA and representatives of the regional development agency (EEDA) and the Government Office. The monitoring group is responsible for data collection/collation aspects of the AMR preparation. A small number of county/unitary authority representatives on the group act as regional collators for each monitoring topic with information being gathered through county co-ordinators guided by a series of guidance notes and data collection forms. A system of on-line collection, sharing and reporting of information for the AMR is currently being explored through the AMR group. The AMR group also regularly reviews what information is collected to ensure it is still relevant to regional and local needs.

Last year, EERA set up a separate group to analyse the output from the data collection process. In previous years, the AMR primarily presented information, however, the establishment of the Analysis group is recognition of the AMR's key purpose which is to comment on the success or otherwise of the implementation of the RSS.

The East of England AMRs can be found at <http://www.eera.gov.uk/category.asp?cat=132> where there is also an interactive data atlas for the housing information in AMR 2004.

### **South West Regional Assembly**

#### ***Background – LDF AMR Workshops – sharing of best practice and scoping conformity***

The SW Regional Assembly held four workshop events in July 2005 combining Cornwall/Devon, Dorset/Somerset and Gloucestershire/Wiltshire and the Joint Strategic Planning and Transport Unit (JSPTU) of Former Avon County. It had become apparent that the prospect of undertaking LDF AMRs and Sustainability Appraisals (SAs) had caused some anxiety amongst local authorities. In particular, it was a concern that the identification and collection of baseline data, would be extremely time consuming and costly.

The purpose of the workshops was to agree a monitoring framework for LDFs to ensure the approach at the local level is integrated with the RSS monitoring process. This gave local authorities the chance to network with a wider group allowing for greater opportunities to share best practice, and put forward concerns/issues.

Topics covered included LDF implementation (Key output indicators, analysis and interpretation of results and key actions) and further development of the AMR Framework (landuse output indicators in short to medium term and development of “spatial” planning monitoring frameworks over medium to long term). An illustration of best practice was also given through the Mendip LDF/Community Strategy Monitoring. Members of Mendip DC were invited to discuss their Draft

Monitoring Framework, Community Planning Themes and the outline structure for their AMR 2005. ODPM guidance on the content/structure of the AMR was also reiterated.

Through these workshops it was agreed that each local authority would facilitate sharing of information via county led Strategic Information Groups:

### ***County Led Strategic Information Groups***

In the South West there are now county based versions of the Regional Strategic Information Providers group. (The SIP group aims to provide advice and support including local and technical knowledge and expertise to the Regional Assembly on monitoring and indicator development). The county led 'Sub-SIPs' will aid sharing of best practice and information and will play a pivotal role in both facilitating the production of the local planning authorities AMRs and the flow of data and interpretation to the RPB. The RPB attends the Sub-SIP meetings (set up and hosted by County Councils and held approx every 4 -6 weeks) to give a regional perspective and to encourage the local authorities to discuss workflows and resource implications for the production of the first AMR.

The Sub-SIP groups will also aid the coordination of which contextual indicators are intended to be monitored by local authorities. This will then enable scoping of whether datasets are available and where they can be found. In essence this exercise ultimately aims to facilitate data collection by reducing enquiries to a single request to potential data providers. Where datasets are readily available, Sub-SIP coordinators and County Councils will sign post their location.

The RPB and South West Observatory will continue to work with the regional SIP and Sub-SIP group members to match indicators against data available on South West Information Database (SWID – hosted by the Regional Observatory <http://www.southwestid.org.uk/index.do>), and distribute a list of what is available for use. Datasets not found on SWID will necessitate a cooperative approach to searching for and sharing of information by local authorities. The Sub-SIP groups are ideally placed to facilitate this work. The process of assessing availability and subsequently locating relevant datasets will ultimately be brought together within a SA Tool Kit.

### ***Development of Sustainability Appraisal Tool Kit for Local Government***

The South West Local Government Association (SWLGA) and South West E-Government Group (SWEGG) have recently received funding from ODPM to develop a 'One Stop Sustainability Appraisal Shop'.

ODPM guidance sets out that local authorities will be required to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on a range of plans and programmes. Policy Planning Statement 12 sets out that local authorities will be required to undertake SAs when preparing Local Development Frameworks, and these will need to fulfil the requirements of the SEA Directive. The SA Tool Kit project aims to avoid duplication by facilitating quick and easy collection of those baseline datasets that should be common to appraisals of all plans, and has the added benefit of GIS output.

The SA Tool Kit project will deliver a web-based tool kit to aid local authorities to undertake SAs/SEAs of their Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), and other plans and programmes (such as Local Transport Plans, Local Minerals and Waste Plans as specified in ODPM SEA guidance). These tools will comprise GIS datasets, guidance and a report facility. The datasets will have standardised definitions and draw from reliable data sources. In short, the tool kit will be an online 'One Stop Shop' for quick, easy, and free access to standardised and reliable core

baseline data for SAs for all local authorities. It will also provide links to guidance and good practice in undertaking SAs or SEA.

The SA Tool Kit project will be based around the Regional Sustainable Development Framework and utilises a regional tool that has been designed to access social, environmental and economic data in the region – the South West Intelligence Database (SouthWestID). It will also involve close partnership working with the South West Regional Observatory, other regional partners, local authorities, and SA/SEA practitioners. It is intended that the web pages and database will be hosted on the South West Observatory Planning Module's website which has a track record in collecting and displaying strategic planning information pertinent to local planning authorities.

A preliminary date of March 2006 has been set as a deadline for the 'live' running of the SA Tool Kit.

### ***Useful Links:***

South West Regional Assembly website:

<http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/swra/ourwork/index.shtml>

### ***For more information:***

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## **Rushcliffe Borough Council – Experience and lessons of preparing an AMR**

Rushcliffe Borough Council have undertaken a drafting exercise to gauge the complexity of the work required to complete the AMR. This exercise has shown that for Rushcliffe it is possible to complete the AMR core indicators section for the whole of the year 2004/05 from existing data. However, although this is possible, a significant amount of work will be necessary in order to extract some of the required data in the appropriate form.

Particular difficulties include the use of data for employment and retail floor areas where information may have subsequently changed after submission of the original application or where the planning application information was not fully completed. In addition, the measures relating to the accessibility of residential development will require a significant amount of manual mapping in order to provide the necessary information.

In the process of completing the AMR the same set of assumptions on thresholds from the RSS were used. However, using thresholds limits the amount of development that was picked up (by not including the total of areas that falls under the given threshold) within the Core Output Indicators, particularly in relation to employment and retail development.

Further work is currently being undertaken to develop reliable and consistent baseline data to measure plan changes against. Census data is not considered to be suitable for annual monitoring. Information about the progress of Local Development Documents will be incorporated into the AMR closer to the submission date.

In summary, Rushcliffe had no major problems with the compilation of an initial AMR although further guidance on issues such as thresholds would assist in ensuring the document provides meaningful and appropriate information.

For further information contact:

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Local.plan@rushcliffe.gov.uk

### **Wycombe District Council**

Wycombe District Council have recently developed a comprehensive data based monitoring system that is able to fulfil planning related requirements and general information requirements.

The development of the Wycombe monitoring system is based around the compilation of existing data sources, both electronically and paper based, into a centralised system. This centralised system now allows a range of variables to be analysed providing a greater range of use and application.

The monitoring system is now also able to be used for 'on-line' monitoring to give officers, councillors, other professionals and members of the public up-to-date information about development in addition to its use for producing annual reports, feedback and evidence for new policy development. Planning staff and consultants use the information for gathering evidence for appeals, sub-regional and regional studies, retail and employment issues. The system has the ability to run 'one-off' area or topic specific queries which is an advantage.

Since the completion of the monitoring system a 'blank' version of the database has been supplied to neighbouring authorities enabling them to enter their appropriate information in the specific tabular format. This allows the data to be mapped and linked back into Wycombe's main system. Work along these lines has already been undertaken with Chiltern District Council.

The format of the monitoring system and its databases are 'map based' so it is important that the right software is used to support its function. Most modern systems are compatible (MapInfo, Arcview, etc) but there are a number of authorities who only have a cad based GIS which is not compatible with a database. Wycombe use MapInfo and Microsoft Access which link very easily and are designed for this sort of output. It also allows maps to be copied across to Word easily, and Access databases into Excel spreadsheets.

Wycombe expect to complete a first draft of the 2005 AMR by the end of September. Most of the hard data has been collected with the exception of core indicator 3b on accessibility and an audit of open spaces which is due to be undertaken next year.

Wycombe have an extensive methodology for their system covering aspects which includes the development of the system, the collation of data, the input of data, analysis of data and the overall processes that sit behind the monitoring system.



For further information on the development and operation of the Wycombe District monitoring system contact:

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(note that there is an underscore between janet and chard)  
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### **The Government London Authority – Development database for monitoring**

The London Development Database (LDD) is an excellent example of a web based monitoring tool. It gives consistent and timely data on the development trends across London without entailing un-manageable amounts of data entry. The system can also be tailored for each London borough's own use to suit any specific monitoring requirements that may arise. Information can be viewed and tracked on a GIS base or as charts of data. More information on the LDD is outline below.

The LDD is designed to monitor the Mayor's London Plan which sets out the framework to guide London's spatial development. The LDD facilitates the electronic collection of every planning permission meeting agreed criteria from the 33 Local London Authorities storing the data in one central web enabled database. The information is then available via a web based reporting tool for strategic monitoring by the GLA, local London authorities and the Government (GOL and ODPM) to both measure performance of the London Plan and record how London is developing to meet the needs of its community.

Two of the key project objectives are for the developer to work closely with PARSOL in the development of an XML development monitoring schema so as to eliminate the need to re-enter information already held on borough systems and to provide a system that can be used as a blueprint throughout the country.

From the outset the aim was to engage with the 33 London boroughs in developing a system of joint benefit to the providers and recipients of data. Through stakeholder meetings, workshops, training sessions and newsletters this has been achieved with boroughs, now meeting deadlines imposed by a legal Information Scheme.

The IT requirement was equally demanding requiring the developer to not only copy existing paper based monitoring systems but enhance the functionality by:

- Incorporating an online GIS system with a refined search facility
- Designing and implementing a GLA Public page for displaying the details and location of sites.
- Producing an innovative method for drawing polygons online
- Ensuring through a Superseding Wizard that double counting is excluded
- Reducing repeat data entry by producing an upload facility
- Enabling a link to the existing Housing Capacity database so permissions can be matched with sites

Following a full OJEU procedure the contract was awarded in April 2004 with detailed analysis, design and development undertaken by Creative Database Projects (CDP). The first phase went live in June allowing boroughs to enter data. Phase 2 introduced in October provided GIS and the process to migrate existing data. The third phase, released in March 2005, brought the Superseded Wizard and the Housing capacity checking mechanism with Public Pages and a Reporting Tool to follow.

The database has been developed using a GIS system with an Oracle spatial database that enables the capture and plotting of geographic data with no software being required at the user end. Specialist screens are built using Java Struts and Ordnance Survey mapping. Business Objects tools provide powerful reporting that will be available to users over the web. The project will conform to PARSOL, (part of the eGIF initiative – a Government sponsored standard to enable exchange of files and information across Government and the public sector).

Given the Government emphasis on greater monitoring requirements, the LDD project was initiated to provide a robust and flexible system able to meet the needs of all parties.

Providing a repository for London-wide planning permissions, the database allows permission sites to be overlaid with spatial data including open space, public transport access, air noise and flood plains and are viewable in map format.

The following benefits encompass within LDD the ability to be flexible when the demands of monitoring requirements change:

- Far greater access to the analysis and information held on the system by the relevant stakeholders than was currently possible with the previous system
- Elimination of much of the manual data collection and input tasks currently undertaken by boroughs and the GLA planning monitoring team
- Allows boroughs to adapt LDD for their own monitoring needs including the addition of specific borough data fields

For further information on the Development or use of the London Development Database contact:

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More about the LDD can be seen at the following website:  
<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/ldd/index.jsp>