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Spatial Analysis Unit newsletter launches

This quarterly newsletter is designed to regularly update the Association of Regional Observatories and stakeholders with current events and news of note. Please feel free to circulate this to those who might be interested.

West Midlands: Fit for the Future?

The West Midlands Regional Observatory's annual conference furthered the 'Fit for the Future?' debate aimed at preparing the region for economic recovery.

A mix of 160 policy makers and researchers gathered in Birmingham to discuss ideas raised in the Observatory's Fit for the Future? book, debate the future of the West Midlands and help develop the evidence base for the forthcoming Strategy for the West Midlands.

Released earlier in the year, the Fit for the Future? book comprised ten chapters, written by ten different authors, reflecting their views on how the region could best place itself in readiness for the economic upturn (report in the August edition of the ARO newsletter).

The key-note speaker at the conference, Richard Woolhouse from Centre for Cities, began the day with a stark picture of recession and recovery. He said, "Recovery from recession in the West Midlands is likely to be a long slog, and there will need to be a significant period of



L-R: Rosie Paskins (Chief Exec WMRO), Richard Hyde (Chair WMRO), Richard Woolhouse (Centre for Cities).

adjustment. Projections show that it will take until at least 2020-2021 until Birmingham once again reaches the peak levels of employment seen in 2008."

As the West Midlands prepares for a slow and difficult recovery, the Observatory will focus more and more on finding better evidence to inform the future state of the region. Through shining some clear lights on what's ahead, the Observatory can help the region's decision makers to make better decisions - better evidence leading to better policy, for a better region.

Podcasts, videocasts and notes from the 2009 conference are available on wmro.org.

Events coming soon

November

27th: Global Recession: Regional Impacts on Housing, Jobs, Health and Wellbeing, London

December

2nd: Turnaround strategies for failing local authorities, Nottingham University Business School
3rd: NERIP Annual Conference 2009 - "Coming out of recession", Newcastle

9th: Developing local economic solutions through your Local Economic Assessment, London

10th: Responding to worklessness and NEETS in your area, London

Further details on these, and other, events can be found on the Events calendar on the ARO website.

North West Regional Intelligence Unit: thinking spatially about the regional economy

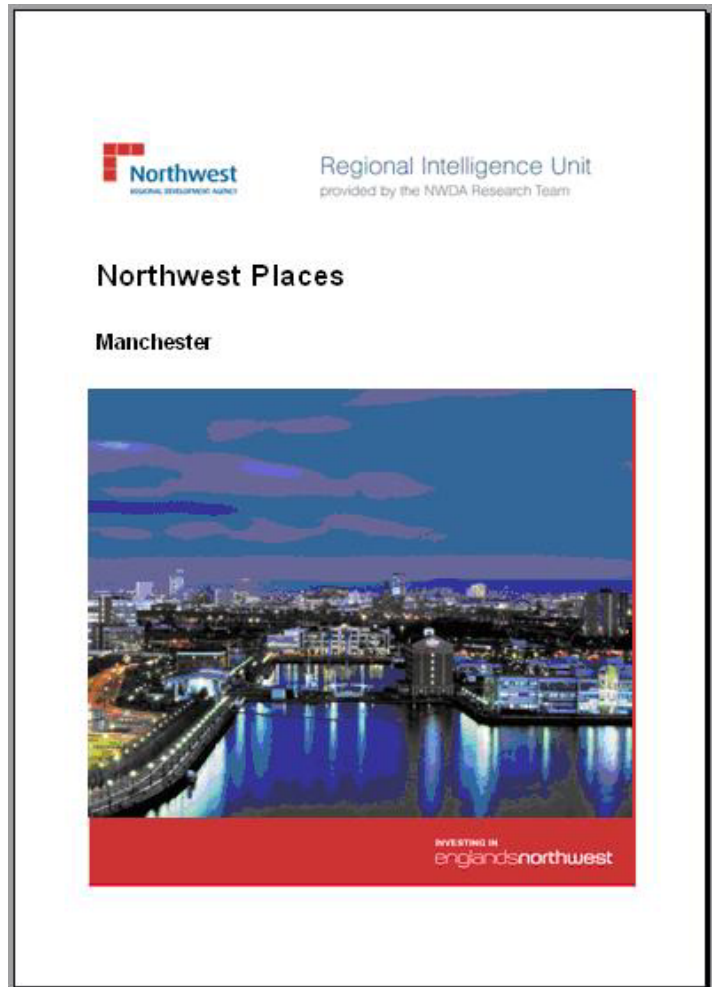
Thinking spatially about the regional economy is the key to developing new ideas and ways of connecting both at the local and global scale. The Northwest is very diverse geographically, socially and environmentally. For example, Cumbria is a predominantly rural sub-region; in contrast, Greater Manchester is home to the region's largest city, is predominantly urban and contributes 40% of regional GVA.

The RIU has undertaken work to examine places and their potential as part of developing our economic understanding of the region and preparing the evidence base for the development of a regional strategy. The work analyses the potential for growth at Northwest local authority level and building this up to functional geographies by examining interactions between places.

The NWDA has worked closely with an expert advisory group from Manchester's Centre for Urban Policy Studies, the University of Sheffield, and Pion Economics. The work has built up robust evidence of the past performance of places in the region; the future growth potential of different places; the region's varied labour markets and housing markets; and also the development of softer quality of life measures for different locations.

Place Profiles

The RIU have produced 33 Place Profiles which made the outputs from the research accessible and useable for Local Authorities and a wider audience. The purpose of these profiles is to factually represent the outputs of the work streams alongside contextual information, most notably the historic development of places which is crucial in understanding why certain places are the way they are today. These profiles informed the next stage of the research, which is drawing places together into functional economic geographies, by examining linkages and patterns between places. These profiles were produced in consultation with Local Authorities and Sub-regional bodies within the Northwest.



Technical Reports

The technical side to the study centred around three areas of work; connectivity, agglomeration and performance. The first of these examines the connections between places in terms of commuter flows between different districts in the Northwest. This work demonstrates the importance of Greater Manchester which dominates outflows from Cheshire, Lancashire and to an extent Merseyside.

The agglomeration work stream examines the economic benefits of the concentration of business activity. The methodology employed takes a central point in each district, identifies a hinterland around that place and works out the productivity 'gain' to that place from having access to the business and employment base within the hinterland.

Finally the performance work stream analyses the link between the economic performance of places and their mix of economic assets. Using a range of indicators the analysis demonstrates which factors most impede GVA per employee (the performance measure). The analysis is available for every district in England.

All reports are available from the NWRIU Website here: <http://www.nwriu.co.uk/researchprogramme/2755.aspx>

It's been an eventful year for Yorkshire Futures. Communications Manager Ian Aspinall picks out some of the highlights, key reports and staff changes during 2009.

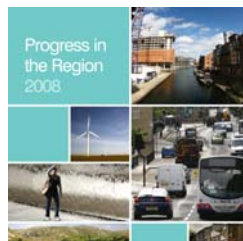
January

The 'Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants in Yorkshire and Humber' report is launched at the Refugees and Migration Conference in Leeds. This literature review synthesises the regional literature on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to highlight key themes and identify research gaps and recommendations.

February

Following three successful years at Yorkshire Futures, Les Newby leaves his post as Director and returns to Yorkshire Forward to take up a new role as Assistant Director of Integrated Strategy.

March



Our flagship publication 'Progress in the Region' is successfully launched at the Royal Armouries. The keynote address is by

Hilary Benn MP and Minister for State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Overall the report shows that the region is continuing to make progress on many fronts, but also faces key challenges. To coincide with Progress in the Region, four local reports are produced for York and North Yorkshire, and the City regions of Leeds, Sheffield and Hull and Humber Ports.

The Regional Climate Change Adaptation Study is published; the study examines how our region's climate will change between now and 2050 and what we need to do to adapt to these changes.

April

The first of the reports by the Finance Focus Citizen's Panel on personal finances is published. This series of surveys looks at people's perceptions of

the economy including their views on job stability, savings and spending and access to credit.

Rosy O'Sullivan joins Yorkshire Futures as Team Coordination and Communications Executive.

May

Maria Ala-Kaupilla is appointed as City Regional Intelligence Manager and Chris Pilkington joins the team as Policy Officer.

June

Two new reports on the strategic importance of the M62 and M1 intersection area are launched by Rt Hon. Ed Balls MP at Morley Town Hall. The reports explore the significance of the motorway network to businesses, the benefits that have arisen, the undesirable aspects and opportunities in waiting.

July

The report on the 'Top Ten Interventions to Cut Regional Carbon Emissions' is published. The recommendations if implemented could reduce the region's carbon emissions by up to 23% by 2020.

August

The report on 'Transport and Housing in Yorkshire and Humber' is published. This Citizen's Panel survey showed that most people like the area they live in. Most people would prefer to buy rather than rent and most people would prefer to walk, cycle or use public transport if conditions were right.

September

The report on the 'Economic Impact Assessment of Faith Communities in Yorkshire and Humber' commissioned by Yorkshire Futures and the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum is launched in Leeds. The report identifies that the contribution of faith communities to the regional economy totals almost £300m.

October



We re-launch our website with a vibrant new look, new content and new features. The site is designed to be easy to use as well as informative. Visitors to the site can find out about how the region is performing on the economy, environment and society; read the latest published research and statistics; view and download images from around the region; and find out about conferences and events.

The report into 'Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Yorkshire and Humber' is formally launched at an event at the Metropole Hotel in Leeds.

Catherine Brooks joins the team as Senior Research and Futures Executive.

November

Our new Director Clare Johnson takes up her position on November 2nd.

December onwards

In the forthcoming months we will be involved in the development of the integrated Regional Strategy, in particular assisting with the evidence base and also informing the work of the new Sustainable Development board.

There will be significant activity around our commissioned research into the ageing population, flood free and resilient development, the regional citizen's panel and the next Progress in the Region report scheduled for March 2010.

Climate change in the East Midlands – PhD progress...

Warren Pearce of IEM, having (very) successfully completed his MA in Research Methods, has now begun his PhD at Nottingham University. The project examines the delivery of climate change mitigation policy within the East Midlands and is co-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Regeneration East Midlands (parent body of IEM). It will run for three years and the first meeting of the advisory group will be on 19th November with the aim of involving reps of as many of the interested parties in the region as early on in the process as possible. We've also got a rep from outside the East Midlands alongside regional bodies such as EMRA, emda, EM IEP etc. The methodology for the research is yet to be fully determined but will involve interviews with key stakeholders from local and regional bodies, participant observation and will be disseminated through several routes, including a blog.

Introduction to Quantitative Methods Course: 2010 dates

NERIP is organising further dates for a one day introductory course on quantitative methods training, run by the Industrial Statistics Research Unit at Newcastle University. This course is targeted at those who regularly use statistics in their work but who do not have a background in statistical analysis, as well as those who have such a background but would like to refresh their skills. The aim is to build confidence in using data in everyday work and the day's training will consist of an equal balance of theory, examples and practical application. The 2009 courses are now full, but you can put your name down for dates in 2010: 13 January, 3 March, 5 May, 21 July. If you are interested, please email for a course outline and booking form (catherine.lincoln@nerip.com), indicating which date you would prefer.

The state of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in the South West region

The Skills and Learning Unit of the South West Observatory (SLIM) have just completed an important piece of research work examining the state of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in the region. Working in collaboration with the South West Regional Employment and Skills Partnership (SWRESP) and the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) this research (conducted between April 2008 and January 2009) produced a substantial body of evidence. The complete findings of the research project are presented in a Key Findings Report and a series of four detailed Evidence Reports:

- Report 1: Policy Context
- Report 2: Employer Demand for STEM Skills
- Report 3: Supply of STEM Skills in the South West
- Report 4: Stakeholder Views.

A Summary Report presents, in brief, the key findings and recommendations of the research project. These reports can be downloaded now from the: STEM South West website: <http://bit.ly/1viqRd>.

STEM skills are of critical importance to the South West region, and are identified as a priority in the South West Regional Skills, Enterprise and Employment Analysis 2007. This led to the proposal, developed by the RESP, and funded by the SW RDA, to establish **STEM South West**.

The research itself has developed an understanding of the more important regional trends in STEM subject take-up and achievement from Key Stage 2 right through to higher level degrees and first graduate occupations.

It also looked at 'key leakages' from the education system - whereby young people, either through choice or low levels of achievement in STEM subjects, who study or achieve well at a given stage of their education, do not go on to study STEM subjects at subsequent stages of their education. This is often referred to in the literature as the 'leaky pipe'.

To gain a holistic understanding of the importance of STEM skills to the economy the research also looked at the current and future demand for STEM skills by employers in the South West and examined evidence for skills gaps and unmet demand - particularly as expressed by Sector Skills Councils.

The research also explored the barriers faced by those in schools, Further Education and Higher Education Institutions in delivering STEM qualifications.

Finally the project examines practical measures that could be taken to improve take-up and achievement in STEM subjects in the future, drawing on the views of key stakeholders.



STEM:

Demand and Supply of Skills in the South West

Commissioned and funded by the SW Regional Development Agency

Produced by SLIM

May 2009

Why does economic policy need to take the environment into account?

Looking at the impact of environmental concerns on economic policy, this event at Newcastle's Centre for Life, provided an overview of the challenges of sustainability, climate change and economic growth for the Regional Strategy. Paul Mooney, Chief Economist at One North East, described progress with the evidence base behind the forthcoming Regional Strategy, and Professor Paul Ekins, Professor of Energy and Environment Policy, at University College London, discussed the challenges of sustainability and climate change.

The programme also highlighted two recently-developed analytical tools available to regional analysts and policy colleagues. David Mell discussed the AEA model which looks at greenhouse gas emissions against economic growth scenarios, forward to 2020 and 2050. Dr John Barrett presented on the work undertaken by the Stockholm Environment Institute and Experian looking at the future environmental impacts of consumer spending as a function of economic growth.

The event concluded with workshops, exploring what the key actions are that the region should pursue to achieve sustainable growth, from both a technological and behavioural point of view. The presentations are available from this page <http://www.nerip.com/events/view.aspx?ID=1034>.

"Coming out of the recession"

NERIP 2009 Annual Conference Thursday 3 December, Centre for Life, Newcastle

This conference will cover:

- the opportunities and threats for the region as it starts to come out of the recession
- a number of research projects that are relevant to the Regional Strategy and local economic assessments
- NERIP's online State of the Region product, a statistical resource for the region

The speakers include Alan Welby, Director of Strategy at One North East, and Vera Baird QC MP, Deputy Regional Minister. The programme provides a regional overview for each of the following areas - Business, People, Place and the Environment - and then presentations on relevant research projects from:

- Rebecca Hulbert, Evidence Specialist Advisor, NERIP
- Dr Allan Little, Economic Advisor, One North East
- Mark Wright, Regional Manager, Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Professor Rob MacDonald and Dr Tracey Shildrick, Social Futures Institute, Teesside University
- Dr John Mooney, GIS Specialist Advisor, NERIP
- Alice Owen, Associate Director, Arup
- Jon Carling, Head of NERIP

The seminar is aimed primarily at a policy audience, but will also be relevant to researchers. It will be of interest to those working for regional organisations, local authorities, city regions, local strategic partnerships, other public sector bodies and all those playing a part in delivering the Regional Strategy and local economic assessments. You can register online at <http://www.nerip.com/events/view.aspx?ID=1048>, where you can download a copy of the programme.

CLG's Spatial Analysis Unit launches newsletter



The Spatial Analysis Unit (SpAU) in Communities and Local Government has published the first edition of its newsletter.

SpAU is a focal point for analyses of place, and is a multi-disciplinary unit of geographers, statisticians and social researchers. The newsletter provides readers with updates on spatial analysis across government.

The first newsletter includes contributions from many ARO member organisations, recognising that regional observatories are leading the way in this area. Contributions to the second newsletter are welcomed, and can be sent to spatial.analysis@communities.gsi.gov.uk. The newsletter is circulated to a wide community of analysts, especially in central government, and represents a welcome opportunity to publicise the place-based analysis being done regionally.

You can download the newsletter from the IGGI website: http://www.iggi.gov.uk/news.php#n_241

Departing...

ARO Coordinator Nicola Underdown is leaving after three years with the Association. Thanks to all those across the regional observatories who have been such good colleagues for the last few years.

