

Zone Implementation Plan 2007-2010

Malvern Hills, Worcestershire,
West Midlands Region



ruralregenerationzone
improving the quality of life around here

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Chairman's Introduction

Earlier this year I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet a great many of the rural sub-region's partners and stakeholders at the first-ever Rural Regeneration Zone Conference. That occasion also provided the opportunity to launch the Zone's first Annual Report which highlighted some of our significant achievements and looked forward to the challenges that still lie ahead.

The Zone's Implementation Plan for 2007-10 is essentially forward looking, and over the next three years the Zone team will continue to strive to improve the economic prospects and quality of life for those that live in the rural west of the West Midlands region.

The Zone's approach continues to be unique in that it involves the collaboration of a broad cross-section of society and organisations from business, from the public sector and from voluntary organisations across the sub-region.

Our vision remains that *'by 2020, the Rural Regeneration Zone will be a connected rural area with a strong economy, a healthy environment and rich quality of life for all'* and this remains our guiding principle.

Over the coming three years, we will focus the majority of our investment on projects aligned to the following strategic frameworks endorsed by the Rural Regeneration Zone Board:

- land and property
- environmental economy
- multi-use facilities
- enterprise centre network.

We have also identified a number of key areas that we know need to be addressed to ensure a 'joined-up' approach to policy development and the delivery of projects across the Zone. These range from the development of significant tourism projects to investment in encouraging the usage of broadband services in businesses and local communities. We will also identify the links and benefits for the Zone arising from the introduction of the new Rural Development Plan for England.

In order to monitor and measure meaningful progress, we will focus on a number of key indicators of change including:

- increases in levels of employment in technology and knowledge intensive industries,
- improved access to services, and
- increases in the consumption of locally sourced food and drink.

I hope this brief introduction has provided you with at least a flavour of the activity in the Rural Regeneration Zone over the plan period.

With the expertise, influence and leadership of our Board members and with your continuing involvement and enthusiasm as our partners and stakeholders, I am confident that we will achieve these ambitious challenges.

The economic prosperity and day-to-day life of people who live and work in the Zone can only get better as a result.

Peter Pawsey
Executive Chair, Rural Regeneration Zone Board

October 2006

1. Strategic Framework

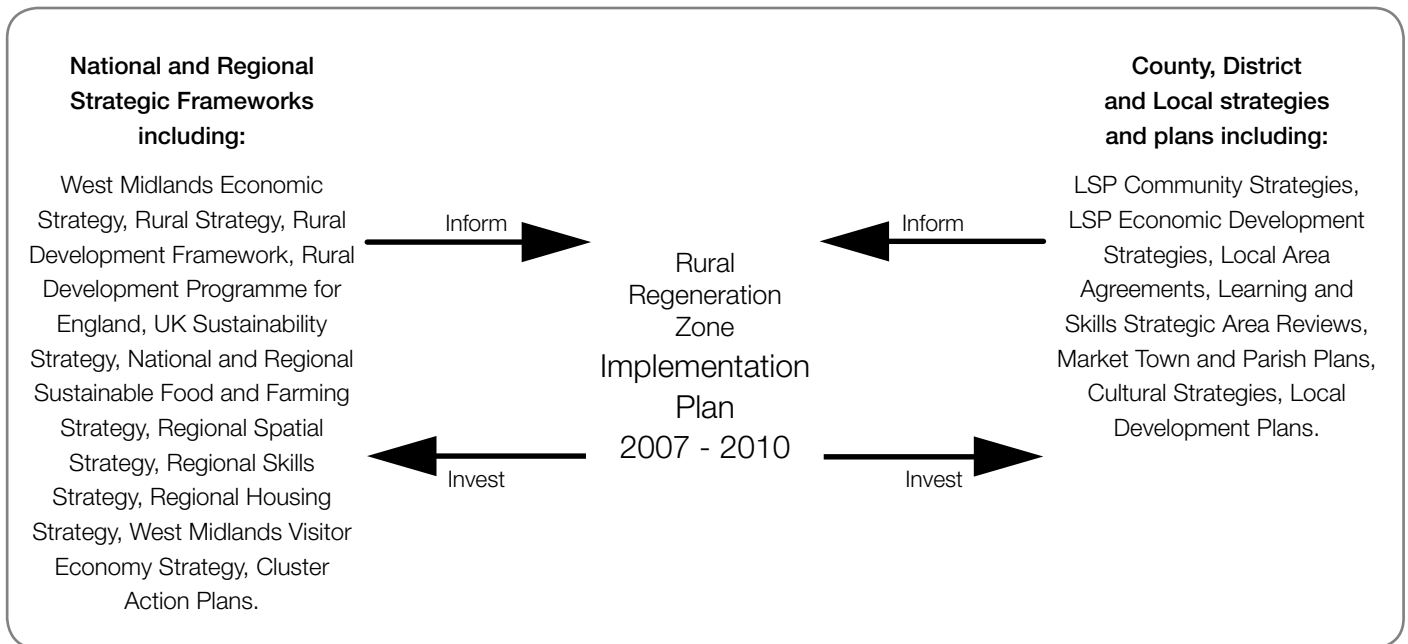
Vision

- 1.1. The Vision for the 2007 – 2010 Rural Regeneration Zone (RRZ) Implementation Plan is unchanged from last years Plan ie that:

By 2020, the Rural Regeneration Zone will be a connected rural area with a strong economy, a healthy environment and a rich quality of life for all”.

Strategic Context

- 1.2. The Rural Regeneration Zone does not operate within a strategic vacuum. There are many existing and developing strategies that impact on the daily lives of those who live and work in the rural west of the Region. The most significant of these are shown below:



- 1.3. The role for the Rural Regeneration Zone is to add value to these strategies and plans by being the catalyst for change within the designated area. In other words, it is not for the Board of the Rural Regeneration Zone to develop and impose a further strategy in an already crowded environment.
- 1.4. The value added by the Rural Regeneration Zone is the ability to invest in a series of interventions that contribute to the achievement of a number of these strategies and by doing so, help achieve our Vision. As with the 2006 – 2009 Plan, the RRZ Board see the 2007 – 2010 Zone Implementation Plan as an Enabling Plan.

Strategic Objectives

- 1.5. The Strategic Objectives for the plan period are again, unchanged from the 2006 – 2009 ZIP and are:
- To develop a strong, diverse and sustainable rural economy
 - To develop a thriving economy through environmental excellence
 - To raise the skill levels of the workforce and those entering employment;
 - To reduce poverty, value diversity and promote social inclusion and community cohesion by allowing full access to services and opportunities

Rural Regeneration Zone Boundaries

- 1.6. The RRZ Board recognised in the 2006 – 2009 ZIP that as the RRZ boundary was not a statutory one in terms of investment, sufficient flexibility existed when wishing to consider proposals outside of the RRZ that make an impact for those living and working within it.
- 1.7. The principle of ‘outside but serving’ remains central to this Plan.

2. Priority Activity

- 2.1 Our focus over the Plan period will not only be to ensure the successful and timely delivery of all existing contracted activity but also the continued development and implementation of a robust programme of projects all of which will contribute to the achievement of our Vision and Strategic Objectives.
- 2.2 During 2005/2006, the RRZ Board adopted the principle that where sufficient strategic context existed at a sub regional level to support specific project activity, there was no desire to replicate or subvert this by introducing further Zone strategies.
- 2.3 However, where such context did not exist, the RRZ Board commissioned the development of Strategic Investment Frameworks to shape RRZ investment over a 3 – 4 year period.
- 2.4 During 2005/2006, the following Investment Frameworks were approved by the RRZ Board:

Investment Framework	2006 - 2009 RRZ Budget
Multi Use Facilities	£5,000,000
Environmental Economy	£6,000,000
Land and Property	£15,000,000
Enterprise Centre Network	£6,000,000
Total RRZ Investment	£32,000,000

- 2.5 Clearly, as was always intended, the majority of RRZ investment is to be focused on project activity that contributes to the delivery of these frameworks. However, during the 2007 – 2010 plan period, the RRZ will also be investing in a number of additional activities that will contribute to the attainment of our Strategic Objectives as follows.

Strategic Objective 1: To develop a strong, diverse and sustainable rural economy

- 2.6 Whilst there are variations across the Zone, the economy can still be typified as a low wage, low skill one, heavily reliant upon the traditional employment sectors, where under employment rather than unemployment is a key factor.
- 2.7 The challenge for the Zone during this plan period continues to be investing in activity that supports the diversification of the economy towards higher waged, knowledge intensive employment whilst continuing to develop the more robust aspects of the existing economies of Food and Farming, Tourism and the Creative Industries.
- 2.8 Our specific aim is to help create the conditions where existing businesses can develop in an environment where the identification and employment of skilled labour is not a barrier to growth, where new businesses are attracted to accommodation that is the equal of anywhere in the UK and where the existing culture of enterprise is encouraged to flourish.
- 2.9 During 2006/2007, the Rural Regeneration Zone invested in a number of interventions that contributed towards the achievement of this objective. These include:
- Acquisition of Three Elms Trading Estate in Hereford to support the relocation of businesses from within the Edgar Street Grid;
 - Acquisition of a strategically significant site in Rotherwas in advance of the construction of the new access road allowing improved access to an expanding industrial estate;
 - Significant investment in the redevelopment of the Sandy Lane Industrial Estate in Stourport to improve access and site infrastructure;
 - The development of a Supplementary Planning Document for the former Dairy Crest Creamery in Ellesmere to unlock the development potential of a derelict site;
 - A grant to the Ludlow Food Centre at Bromfield to support the development of a ground breaking production, retail and training facility for locally sourced food.
- 2.10 Specific actions in 2007/2008 include:
- Implementation of the Zone-wide Enterprise Centre Network in partnership with Evans Easy Space Ltd. with hubs at Rotherwas and Shrewsbury and spokes at Ross, Leominster, Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Oswestry and Market Drayton;
 - Continuing to work with local authorities, private developers and land owners to implement a comprehensive programme of activity to increase the supply and development of employment land and grow on space to address sub regional demand;
 - Increasing the capacity within the sub region to achieve to deliver such a programme of land and property investment and attract inward investment;
 - Increasing the usage of Broadband by the business and community sectors by building on the lessons learnt and succession strategies of schemes such as Switch on Shropshire and Herefordshire in Touch;
 - Implementing the regions first support network specifically targeted at businesses operating from home;
 - Working with developers and local authorities on live-work developments across the Zone building on the increasing trend of home enterprise within the rural economy;

- In partnership with local authorities, housing associations, developers and other sub regional partners, promoting the development of Live – Work units where the demand can be evidenced;
 - Extending the Redundant Building Grants programme for a further 3 years building on the success of the current programme;
 - Learning lessons from the Learning and Skills Council led research into the economic impact of migrant workers across the region and responding, where appropriate, with specific interventions;
 - Supporting the implementation of the new West Midlands Business Link and, where appropriate, develop RRZ specific activity that adds value to that service;
 - Increasing the take up of Selective Finance for Investment (SFI) and Grants for Research and Development (GRD) within the Zone;
 - Investing in discrete project activity within the Edgar Street Grid that adds value to and complements the land and property activity being promoted by the Edgar Street Grid Company Ltd in partnership with Advantage West Midlands;
 - Contributing to the achievement of the Regional Food and Farming Action Plan through capital intervention in key projects;
 - Working with partners to implement the findings of the DCA research into workspace requirements for the creative industries within the Zone;
 - Supporting a small number of sub regionally significant Tourism projects across the Zone that have been identified as priorities by the Destination Management Partnerships;
- 2.11 The Zone will also work with and promote social economy where this is an appropriate model for addressing an identified need.
- 2.12 The overall success, or otherwise, of the Rural Regeneration Zone in achieving this Objective will be assessed using the following Indicators of Change
- An increase in average earnings (by residence and by workplace);
 - An increase in employment in Technology and Knowledge Intensive Industries;
 - An increase in supply of employment land;
 - Increase in consumption of locally sourced food and drink.

Strategic Objective 2: To raise the skill levels of the workforce and those entering employment

- 2.13 To support the achievement of Strategic Objective 1, our specific aim is to raise the level of knowledge and skills of those looking to enter work and those already in employment where the needs of the employers are paramount.
- 2.14 During 2006/2007, the Rural Regeneration Zone invested in the redevelopment of Folly Lane Campus of Hereford College of Technology to develop a Learning Village capable of meeting the needs of the business community.

- 2.15 Specific actions during 2007/2008 include:
- The development of a learning hub at the campus of Shrewsbury College of Art and Technology in line with the recommendations of the HE in the Marches study;
 - In the context of the Enterprise Centre Network, developing further the model established by Industrial Estate Learning Zones with business learning facilities placed at the heart of the business community;
 - Introducing a Zone wide programme aimed at improving Leadership and Management Skills within businesses with high growth potential;
 - Working with the Central Technology Belt High Technology Corridor to address the barriers that exist to the employment of graduates by Zone and Corridor businesses.
- 2.16 The overall success, or otherwise, of the Rural Regeneration Zone in achieving this Objective will be assessed using the following Indicators of Change:
- Increase in working age population with higher level skills (NVQ3 and above);
 - Increase in learners accessing FE/HE provision within the Zone

Strategic Objective 3: To develop a thriving economy through environmental excellence

- 2.17 In November 2005, the RRZ Board approved a Strategic Investment Framework for the Environmental Economy which identified the following themes as being central to the environmental economy of the sub region both in terms of carbon reduction and business opportunities;
- Investment in Wind Technologies
 - Bio-Park Development(s)
 - Low Carbon Communities
 - Combined Heat & Power
 - Eco Cluster Activity
- 2.18 In 2006/2007, the Rural Regeneration Zone invested in the development of an Environmental Technology Centre in Shrewsbury showcasing renewables technology and providing incubator space for environmental businesses
- 2.19 During 2007/2008, investment will be focused on the following activity:
- A Renewable Energy Capital Grant Scheme aimed at encouraging businesses to invest in the use of renewable energy sources including Combined Heat and Power, wind, ground source heat pumps and solar energy;
 - The development of an integrated green energy project at Tenbury Business Park combining the production of pelletised bio-mass with the installation of bio-mass boilers across the Zone;
 - A low carbon communities programme focusing on carbon reduction in businesses in four discrete towns within Shropshire; Bishops Castle, Ellesmere, Oswestry and Cleobury Mortimer;
 - The re-commissioning of a derelict rail head for local business use and provision of a bio-mass steam plant at the Bulmers site in Hereford;
 - Supporting the Shropshire Environmental Technologies Network.

- 2.20 The overall success of the Rural Regeneration Zone in achieving this Objective will be assessed using the following Indicator of Change
- Reduction in carbon usage and resultant economic benefit to the public, private and residential sectors

Strategic Objective 4: To reduce poverty, value diversity and promote social inclusion and community cohesion by allowing full access to services and opportunities

- 2.21 Improving access to services and opportunities was a key feature of the 2006 – 2009 Zone Implementation Plan and remains so in this investment programme.
- 2.22 The RRZ is keen to ensure that those who reside within the Zone, have the skills necessary to access the economic benefits that will accrue from the investment identified in the previous Objectives.
- 2.23 Working with our partners we will, for example, work with the South Wye Regeneration Partnership to maximize the opportunities for residents to access the jobs that will be created in the redevelopment of the Rotherwas Industrial Estate.
- 2.24 In addition, the RRZ Board has approved a £5m, three year investment programme to develop a number of facilities across the Zone that will provide the level and quality of service required by our rural communities. Known as Multi Use Facilities, six priority locations have already been identified at Bewdley and Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire; Kington and Peterchurch in Herefordshire and Brosely and Dorrington in Shropshire. The last of these at Dorrington has already had funding approved in the sum of £160,000 with the remainder currently in development. Further locations will be identified in due course.
- 2.25 However, the RRZ Board recognises that the quality of a service is largely irrelevant if users cannot access them. Therefore, the Zone will continue to work with the rural Access to Services Partnerships to ensure that transport is not a barrier to accessing core service provision such as training, health and community safety.
- 2.26 The lack of affordable housing continues to be a major issue for the Zone as it is throughout the UK. This shortage has contributed to the migration of young people and skilled workers to perhaps more affordable urban settings. This has the combined effect of reducing the number of entrepreneurs in the rural west of the region and removing a layer of skilled individuals that could make commercial investment in the area a more attractive proposition.
- 2.27 Whilst the RRZ cannot invest directly in the provision of affordable housing, we will continue to work with local authorities, housing associations and developers to increase the levels of affordable housing within the mixed use developments in which we are engaged. A successful example of this approach in action is the Load Street development at Bewdley.
- 2.28 We recognise the need for an effective voluntary and community sector as key deliverers of user-focused services and supporters of communities. The sector encourages people to continue to be involved in community activity and in particular raises the capacity of the most dependant groups. We will continue to work with partners to secure resources to support the sector.

- 2.29 Investment in this objective during the 2007 – 2010 plan period will be focused on:
- Continuing to develop and Implement a programme of Multi Use Facilities;
 - Working with local authorities, developers, land owners and Registered Social Landlords to develop a number of mixed use developments that increase the stock of affordable housing throughout the Zone;
 - Delivering the Nexus programme in partnership with Community First, the Rural Community Council for Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Grants of up to £5,000 will help communities gain access to key services such as health, training and employment;
- 2.30 The overall success, or otherwise, of the Rural Regeneration Zone in achieving this Objective will be assessed using the following Indicators of Change:
- Improved access to services;
 - Increase in levels of affordable housing within mixed use developments;

Indicators of Change

- 2.31 All activity promoted by the Rural Regeneration Zone will contribute to the achievement of measurable, positive change in economic, social and environmental conditions.
- 2.32 To be able to measure that change, we have identified a number of indicators that will be monitored and assessed on a regular basis.
- 2.33 The indicators chosen are:
- Increase in average earnings (by residence and workplace);
 - Increase in Employment in Technology and Knowledge Intensive Industries;
 - Increase in consumption of locally sourced food and drink;
 - Increase in the working age population with higher level skills (NVQ3 and above);
 - Increase in learners accessing FE/HE provision within the Zone;
 - Improved access to services.
 - Increase in supply of employment land;
 - Reduction in carbon usage and resultant economic benefit to the public, private and residential sectors
 - Increase in levels of affordable housing within mixed use developments;
- 2.34 The indicators shown in italics above will be baselined and monitored by the West Midlands Regional Observatory on behalf of the Rural Regeneration Zone. The first report identifying the baseline condition is expected in December 2006. The remaining indicators will be monitored by the RRZ.
- 2.35 We will require all projects being considered for funding to clearly evidence how they will positively impact upon these indicators of change and hence, to transforming the conditions for those who live and work in the Zone.
- 2.36 Statements on the movement of these indicators will be published in future Annual Reports.

3. Management Arrangements

4.1 The operating principles of the Rural Regeneration Zone remain unaltered from the 2006 – 2009 ZIP and are included as Appendix 1.

4. Risk Management

5.1 The Risk Register for the implementation of the 2007 – 2010 Zone Implementation Plan is included as Appendix 3.



Appendix 1 - Operating principles for the Rural Regeneration Zone as endorsed by the Rural Regeneration Zone board on 10th June 2005

1. The **Rural Regeneration Zone Board** will:
 - (a) Develop and approve the Zone Vision and Strategic Objectives to promote and improve the economic prosperity of the Zone area, building on the activity and priorities of the constituent Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)
 - (b) Approve a Zone Implementation Plan for a 3 year rolling period to be submitted annually to the Agency identifying key themes and projects to deliver the Zone Strategy. This will include specific targets for Zone outputs and outcomes.
 - (c) Be accountable to Advantage West Midlands for the delivery of the Zone Implementation Plan
 - (d) Ensure that strategic interventions connect in and add value to the ongoing work of the LSPs; helping to coordinate and align economic, social and environmental regeneration activity in the Zone area.
 - (e) Review and report on the effectiveness of the strategic interventions approved and endorsed to Local Strategic Partnerships
 - (f) Receive regular periodic reports from the support team on progress made in developing and implementing specific project activity. Steer and shape that activity as appropriate including commissioning research or analysis.
 - (g) Help marshal financial and other resources from partners to deliver the Zone Implementation Plan encouraging joined up delivery and shared focus of funding streams wherever possible.
 - (h) Be expected to commission and endorse general project themes and activities to deliver the Plan.
2. The **Rural Regeneration Zone Board** will not be required or expected to appraise or approve details of these projects, which will be done by Advantage West Midlands and other funding partners as appropriate.
3. The Executive Chair of the **Rural Regeneration Zone Board** will appoint a Deputy Chair for a period of three years, reviewed annually.
4. A quorum of the **Rural Regeneration Zone Board** will exist when at least one member from two of the three Local Strategic Partnerships is present along with the Chair and/or Deputy Chair.
5. From 1st April 2005, **Membership of the Board of the Rural Regeneration Zone** will comprise:
 - (a) An Executive Chair from the private sector and appointed by Advantage West Midlands;
 - (b) Two members from each of the Local Strategic Partnerships in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. One nomination from each LSP will be a local authority representative;
 - (c) One member from the Private Sector;
 - (d) An Advantage West Midlands Board member

6. Each LSP representative is permitted a **Named Alternative**. In the case of the Local authority representative, it should be someone of an appropriate level within the organization. The non Local Authority Named Alternative should be a member of the relevant LSP Board or equivalent

7. The **Executive Chair** will be appointed on a three year contract and will be accountable to and paid for by Advantage West Midlands. The role of the **Executive Chair** will include:
 - (a) Chairing regular meetings of the RRZ Board (4/5 times annually);
 - (b) Providing leadership in the setting of a strategic vision for the Zone establishing targets and objectives for outputs and performance necessary to achieve full delivery of the Rural Regeneration Zone Implementation Plan;
 - (c) Championing the Rural Regeneration Zone at local, regional and national levels through interaction with appropriate networks and partner organisations. To include representation of the Zone at events, and PR opportunities etc;
 - (d) Advising and contributing to the overall strategic direction of rural regeneration in the West Midlands.

8. **Advantage West Midlands** will:
 - (a) Provide guidance to the Zone on the documentation required to secure Advantage West Midlands resources.
 - (b) Identify a forward budget for the Zone (for the 3 years of the Agency Corporate Plan).
 - (c) Endorse an annually submitted Zone Implementation Plan and confirm the budget against it, including the capital/revenue balance.
 - (d) Appraise, approve, contract and manage specific projects submitted by the Zone to deliver the Zone budget.
 - (e) Provide a **Support Team** to support the work of the Board by
 1. Developing programmes and projects, working with key partners, to address the Zone Implementation Plan objectives working to the Board direction.
 2. Providing accurate and timely programme management information to inform the Board of progress, recommending corrective action where appropriate
 3. Encourage the involvement of and support by other partners in the delivery of the Zone in terms of time, expertise and resources.
 4. Connecting into and helping communication of non – Zone funded activity by the Agency and other partners in the sub region.
 5. Working closely with LSP contacts to ensure clear communication channels for priority themes, actions and prioritise processes to minimise duplication of activity and maximise added value to the Zone
 6. Disseminating good practice, using website links and other media as appropriate
 7. Evaluating project performance and outcomes, and sharing lessons learned from such activity.

Appendix 2 - Rural Regeneration Zone Board Members

Peter Pawsey	Executive Chair
Walter Delin	Chief Executive, Wyre Forest District Council representing Worcestershire Local Strategic Partnership
Carolyn Downs	Chief Executive, Shropshire County Council representing Shropshire Local Strategic Partnership
Sharon Gray	Area Director, West Mercia Learning and Skills Council representing Shropshire Local Strategic Partnership
Christine Jones	Chief Executive, West Mercia Business Link representing Herefordshire Local Strategic Partnership
Vacant	Private Sector
Michael Oakes	Board Member, Advantage West Midlands
Neil Pringle	Chief Executive, Herefordshire Council representing Herefordshire Local Strategic Partnership
Richard Quallington	Chief Executive, Community First representing Worcestershire Local Strategic Partnership

Appendix 3 - Risk Register

Risk Type	Area of Risk	Exposures Identified	Unmitigated Level of Risk			Risk mitigation procedure / controls in place	Post Mitigation Level of Risk		
			Likelihood	Impact	Risk		Likelihood	Impact	Risk
Corporate	Board members do not act in the interest of the Zone but for the own sectorial / geographical gain	Loss of agency funding and significant stakeholder criticism	M	H	M	Role of members established within the Operating Principles	L	H	L
Operational	Rural Regeneration Zone does not achieve full spend of its overall budget in 2007/8	Lack of full spend undermines confidence in the Zone approach locally regionally and within AWM.	H	M	H	RRZ Board has endorsed a number of Strategic Investment Frameworks including Land Property and Environmental Economy that shapes RRZ investment during the plan period. RRZ Chair and RRZ Team Leader meet regularly to discuss outputs and spend performance and agree corrective action if and when necessary. Regular Programme Management reports submitted to and considered by the RRZ Board	M	M	M
Operational	Short life task/finish groups fail to achieve objectives	Inability to identify and promote suitable projects	M	M	M	Tasks Groups refocused to delivery following the establishment of strategic Investment Frameworks. All led by RRZ support team and constituted by LSPs.	M	M	M
Operational	Insufficient well developed projects are brought forward by partners	Agency criticised for lack of investment if projects not developed Disengagement with key RRZ partners because of limited delivery	H	H	H	Each LSP has identified a single point of contact for communication purposes. Majority of projects developed alongside LSP reps within the context of RRZ Board endorsed Strategic Investment Frameworks.	M	M	M
Operational	Inability to assess impact of RRZ interventions	Lack of clear evaluation model	H	H	H	West Midlands Regional Observatory appointed in August 2006 to manage longitudinal assessment of RRZ specific performance indicators.	L	M	L
Operational	Lack of identity and status of Zone affecting performance and reputation	Lack of understanding amongst LSP of role of RRZ	M	M	M	Regular meetings with LSP lead contacts emphasised need for regular briefing and de-briefing of LSP Board members. RRZ Chair and Team Leader also attend LSPs periodically to brief on RRZ activity	L	M	L
		Lack of understanding of role and achievements of RRZ at a local, sub regional, regional and national level	M	L	M	RRZ team have taken the lead on PR/ communications and RRZ branding as demonstrated by quality of inaugural Annual Conference on 30th June 2006.	L	M	L



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