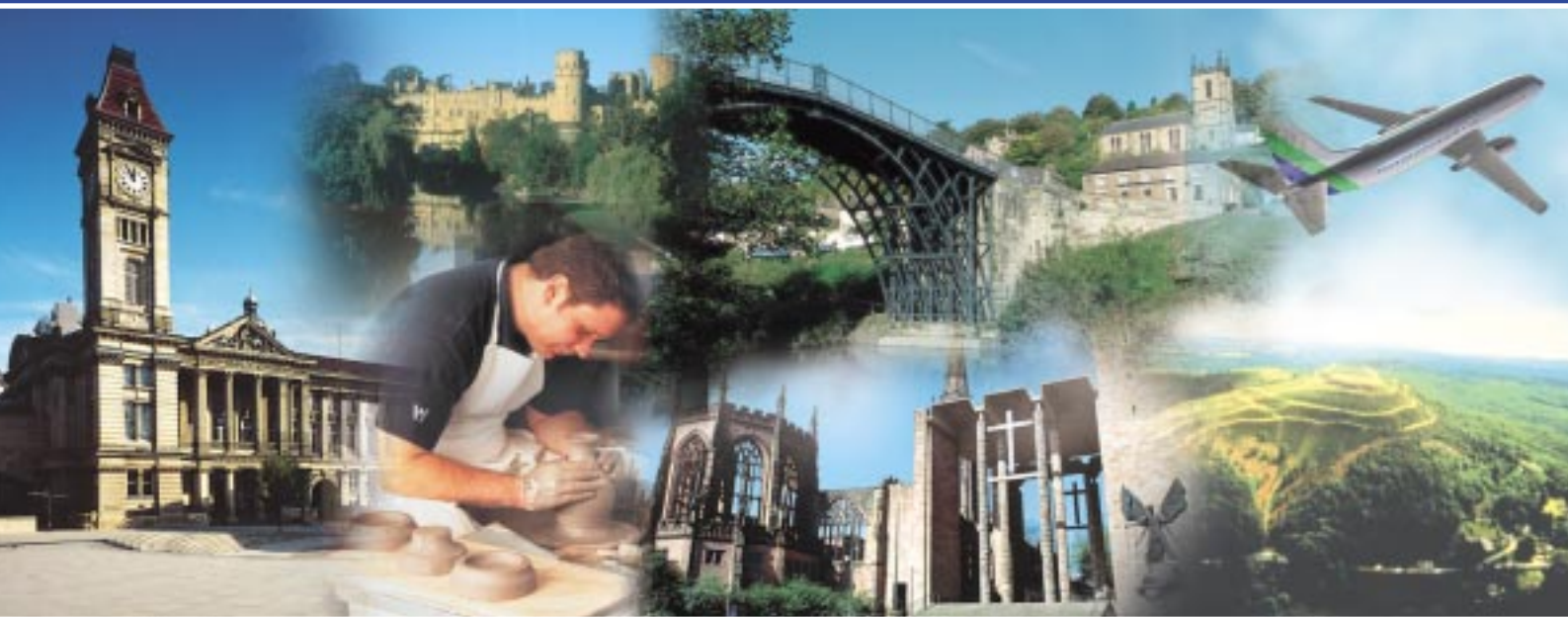




GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS



Annual Report 2001/2002

Foreword by Graham Garbutt



Graham Garbutt, Regional Director.

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2001-2, my first year as Regional Director. We have been looking carefully at our role, our organisation and our priorities.

Our role is both expanding and changing. As "Central Government in the Region" we now work on behalf of nine Government departments and over the past year we have welcomed many new colleagues. At the same time some of our work has transferred elsewhere. Increasingly our job is to improve co-ordination of different strands of government policy and to work with partners in the region on improving implementation. We are also putting more effort into influencing national policy and procedures to improve their effectiveness in the West Midlands.

Our organisation at GOWM needs to do more than replicate Whitehall Departments: we need to be more than the sum of the parts. So over the past year we have developed and implemented a different structure. It seeks to balance our work at local, regional and national scales. We now have three, multi-skilled geographical divisions, another dealing with regional policy and Europe, and a national division working to improve engagement with Whitehall. Finally we have strengthened our corporate services division to enhance capacity in areas such as communications, organisational development and diversity. I am very lucky to be supported by some very able civil service colleagues at GOWM, and these strengths have been complemented in recent months by a number of appointments from other sectors. We will look for further opportunities for secondment and exchanges with partner organisations.

So we now have a new organisation, but this needs to be translated into clear work plans. I am encouraging everyone at GOWM to think carefully about how and where their time is best used. To be fully effective we need to be selective, focussing on issues and places that need us most and where we can make a real contribution. Our divisions and teams have been working on this and we will be consulting partners in the region later this year.

On behalf of all of us at the Government Office, I would like to thank our numerous partners and colleagues for their support and friendship, and for working with us jointly to secure the best future for people in the West Midlands.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Garbutt'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Graham Garbutt

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Warwick Castle, Warwickshire is the most visited stately home in the country with around 800,000 visitors a year.

Social Inclusion & Regeneration



Barbara Roche, Minister of State Cabinet Office, being interviewed by Vale FM at Castle Vale.

New Deal for Communities

Six NDC Partnerships operate in the region. These are: Kings Norton, Greets Green, WEHN (Wood End, Henley Green, Manor Farm), Aston, Blakenall and Bloxwich, All Saints and Blakenhall.

Each Partnership has been awarded £50m to undertake a programme of regeneration over ten years.

GOWM staff have worked very closely with them, drawing on additional specialist support from Neighbourhood Renewal Advisers in a number of areas. In particular, advisers are being used to support the development and capacity of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Greets Green and Coventry, supporting the development of partnership structures in Wolverhampton and assisting Kings Norton to review and refine its Education Programme.



Young members of the Aston Youth Orchestra on stage at the Doctor Carnival event at Symphony Hall, Birmingham on November 25th 2001.

Photograph courtesy of Armenta Hinton, Education and Community Department of Aston Christian Centre, Birmingham.

Neighbourhood Renewal Fund

GOWM has established a Neighbourhood Renewal Team to take forward the National Action Plan Strategy: supported the establishment of seven Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in those areas in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds; carried out an assessment of LSPs leading to the accreditation of six of them; supported the development of two Neighbourhood Management Initiative Pathfinder Programmes.

Decent Homes

Achievement of the national Public Service Agreement target of reducing the level of non-decent homes in the public sector by a third by 2004 and eliminating non-decent homes by 2010 has been a key feature of the work of GOWM during 2001/02. Early work has included working with housing authorities to establish the levels of non-decent stock, and to agree action planning to reduce the levels within the target dates.

Castle Vale HAT

The Government Office has continued to be sponsor to the Castle Vale HAT. It is working with residents and others to achieve physical and economic regeneration, spending £31.5m in 2001/02 of which £27m was government grant.

Outputs achieved this year, contributing to the lifetime targets, have included 167 jobs created, in excess of 250 training places, 80 new houses built, and 233 refurbished.

Crime Reduction Priorities

- Crime Reduction Programme
- Partnership Development Fund
- Communities Against Drugs
- Safer Communities Initiative
- Voluntary/community sector work
- Managing the ACU's time-limited development and Community Champions Fund
- Promoting Race Equality
- Cross-cutting initiatives
- Community Cohesion
- Youth Community Safety

Social Inclusion

Over 80 Community Safety Partnership proposals have been supported through the Partnership Development Fund.

Promotion of improved Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership work focused on young people.

Effective oversight of seven Neighbourhood Warden schemes and support for the development of seventeen Street Warden schemes in the region.

The establishment of seven Community Networks linked to the Local Strategic Partnerships in the seven Neighbourhood Renewal funded authorities in the region.

Working in partnership with six voluntary/community partners - Scarman Trust, Heart of England, BRN, Disability West Midlands and Community First - over 300 individuals and small community-based groups have been supported to take action in response to local community needs.

The completion of the first phase of the evaluation of West Midlands Police's neighbourhood crime fighting teams.

Co-ordination and support for Community Cohesion work, initially focused on Stoke-on-Trent, Birmingham and Telford and Wrekin.

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)

Government Office continued to support housing authorities pursuing Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of their housing stock. Shrewsbury and Atcham achieved transfer during 2001/02, while a further 7 authorities (Bromsgrove, Cannock Chase, Herefordshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Solihull, Walsall and Worcester) either hold a place on the transfer programme or have a place held open for them.

Housing Investment Programme (HIP)

GO carried out assessments of Housing Strategies and Housing Revenue Account Business Plans for authorities with council stock. Assessment outcomes were fed into the Single Capital Pot overall assessment to determine the discretionary allocations for 2002/03.

The indicative allocation for the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) in the West Midlands was £164m, while the regional allocation for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was £9.2m.



Birmingham has the largest public library in Europe.

Competitiveness and Skills

Regional Selective Assistance

During the year, 16 applications for RSA were received and 17 offers accepted to the total value of £12.635 million. These projects were associated with £110.535 million capital investment, and were forecast to create 1019 jobs and safeguard 1874 jobs, at an average cost per job of £4,365.

Enterprise Grants

During the year, 94 applications for Enterprise Grant were received and 82 offers accepted to the total value of £2.796 million. These projects were associated with £21.367 million capital investment, and were forecast to create 417 jobs and safeguard 263 jobs, at an average cost per job of £4,111.

Inward Investment

GOWM has worked with regional partners to attract new overseas investment and retain existing foreign-owned businesses. 2001-02 was a successful year for foreign direct investment projects in the West Midlands. A total of 96 companies committed to invest in the region with a recorded capital expenditure totalling in excess of £1.4 billion, creating 4,011 jobs and safeguarding a further 10,714.

Significant investments include:

- the announcement by McCain Foods (Canada) of a £66m investment in Rugeley, Staffordshire to build a new facility to manufacture frozen chips - the project is expected to create 450 jobs over the next three years;



Picture courtesy of McCain Foods Limited.

Skills Overview

Focus during the year has been on ensuring effective links between Education and Community Regeneration, working closely with the DfES Education Advisers, LEAs and others to help raise attainment levels - especially in more deprived areas.

Work has continued with colleagues in both Further Education and Higher Education on understanding the policy implications for their sectors, and fostering and maintaining good relations with the six local Learning and Skills Councils. The budget for Learning Partnerships in 2001-02 was in excess of £1.17m.

A regional "Skills for Life" group has been set up which takes a regional overview of the basic skills in the West Midlands, working with the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit.

Connexions

The West Midlands is the first region in the Country to have full coverage of Connexions. The Black County, Coventry & Warwickshire, & Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin all started their services in April 2001, Staffordshire and Herefordshire & Worcestershire start their services in April 2002, Birmingham & Solihull in September 2002.

GOWM has managed the 23 Millennium Volunteer projects in the region. These offer all young people the opportunity of voluntary work for the benefit of the community.

Sure Start

Sure Start grants are made to local programmes, the maximum grant is £750,000 annually for revenue, and £750,000 for capital available over the first three years.

Notable achievements include the opening of a play area for the children of travelling families in the Telford region, the first of its kind in Europe, and the selection of Birmingham City to act as a pilot area for the process of mainstreaming Sure Start services.

The Children's Fund

The Children's Fund was introduced in response to the Social Exclusions Unit's Policy Action Team on Young People and encourages and supports the wider use of preventive services for children and young people at risk of social exclusion. Targeting the needs of young people aged 5 - 13 the Fund is rolling out in three waves across the country.

In the West Midlands, Birmingham and Sandwell are in Wave 1, with Birmingham being by far the largest Children's Fund in the country with an income over three years of £18m. In addition a further six programmes; Coventry, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Solihull, Telford and Wrekin and Stoke-on-Trent are in the second wave receiving funds at the beginning of 2002.



HRH The Princess Royal meets Kevin Griffiths, ICT Team Leader, and Carol Williams (right) of GOWM at SENSE opening.

UK online

During 2001/2002 GOWM successfully completed the third and final round of contracting leading to the approval of 125 contracts and 300 ICT UK online centres in the most deprived wards within the West Midlands. The centres have been funded via a combination of DfES capital funding totalling £15.8 million capital and NOF (New Opportunities Fund) revenue funding totalling £6.3 million.

The 300 centres provide a wide variety of ICT support to communities, including the mobile and laptop provision to media

facilities and specialist centres. Each project has been developed by, or in strong partnership with, the local communities it serves and, where appropriate, in liaison with wider local neighbourhood renewal.

SENSE UK online centre in Birmingham was opened early in 2002 by HRH The Princess Royal. This centre is specially designed to meet the needs of people with sensory impairments and multiple disabilities and has suitably adapted ICT facilities, which will be used to develop basic ICT skills for people with multiple disabilities.



The largest banqueting service ever produced, a 47,000 piece fine bone china service, was made by Wedgwood of Stoke on Trent for the Kremlin.

Picture courtesy of Chris Rushton, photographer.

Sustainability

Energy Efficiency

Government Office continued its support of the meetings of the West Midlands Regional Homes Energy Conservation Act Forum in its role in progressing the work of Energy Efficiency and tackling fuel poverty in the Region.

Regional Planning Guidance

Public Examination will start on 11 June 2002. GOWM has been assisting the RPG process by participating in the preparation of two research projects: "A Baseline Monitoring Framework Report", and "An Implementation Framework for Regional Planning Guidance", both of which will be published before the Public Examination. GOWM has also been involved in promoting a project taking forward the work on Polycentricity undertaken in connection with RPG. The new project, "Polymap", will be led by the West Midlands and will involve partners in other European regions.

Transport

The recommendations from two major multi-modal studies were published during the year. The studies, covering the M6 corridor between Birmingham and Manchester (MidMan) and the Birmingham/Black Country/Solihull conurbation (WMAMMS), produced a broad range of recommendations. The WMAMMS included a significant increase in spending on walking/cycling and encouraging behavioural change over the next 30 years. Improved rail and road infrastructure, benefiting public and private transport, was also recommended.

The MidMan included widening of the M6 to four lanes and improvements to the rail services between Birmingham and Manchester. It was also recommended that tolling should be considered beyond 2021. These are now being considered by the Regional Planning Body.

The annual Local Transport Plan settlement in December 2001 resulted in authorities receiving allocations totalling £169m. An additional major scheme was provisionally approved, the Selly Oak Relief Road in Birmingham (£40m), which will assist in regenerating the area and provide improved access to the new hospital.

Land Use Planning

During the year, the Planning teams handled a variety of planning casework and scrutiny of local development plans. A total of 462 planning cases were decided, including 23 planning applications which were called in for the Secretary of State's own determination, and 11 planning appeals were recovered from the Planning Inspectorate because of their relative size or complexity.

GOWM scrutinised and responded to 11 deposited local development plans and a further three at other stages, all within the statutory time targets.

Sustainability

The Carbon Trust developed its thinking on provision of good energy practice services to business. Advisory visits were made to 88 sites in the year and GOWM had contact with over 1,500 firms through seminars/workshops, work in support of industry-led supply chain activity and the free-phone helpline.

Work continued with the Environment Agency and West Midlands Local Government Association to complete the reshaping of the Round Table into Sustainability West Midlands.

A study into Renewable Electricity prospects was produced in September and staff toured the region to brief local authority colleagues on its implications.

GOWM took a major part, as co-editors with English Nature, in the completion and publication of the Regional Biodiversity Audit in August 2001.

Involvement continued with a number of ongoing programmes: the Severn Trent/MEBC Climate Change Impact study; BitC's Index of Environmental Engagement; EA's "Estate Action" programme; the Education for Sustainable Development Network; and a number of Local Agenda 21 actions across the region. On the Waste Management front, GOWM were involved in a number of local recycling initiatives and staged a seminar for local authorities to consider the opportunities of a new DEFRA support fund.



Walsall is home to the award winning New Art Gallery, opened by HM The Queen in 2000. The gallery houses the celebrated Garman Ryan Collection, a virtual A to Z of modern European art, and the most representative collection in the world of the sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein.

Rural Affairs and Partnership

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

The DCMS Representative within the Government Office is one of a team of representatives, in each region, set up in 1999 to represent DCMS policy and support the Regional Cultural Consortia.

DCMS policy areas have had a high profile in the region during 2001/2002. In the early part of the year the region's tourism industry was hit particularly hard by the knock on effects of foot and mouth disease. Government Office worked closely with its regional partners particularly Advantage West Midlands, Heart of England Tourist Board, The Countryside Agency and COI to put in place campaigns to encourage visitors to return to the countryside, publicise where was "still open for business" and longer term initiatives. The region's tourism industry was dealt a further blow in the autumn, following September 11th with the postponement of the Ryder Cup at The Belfry. The event was rescheduled for September 2002 and GOWM are now working with regional partners to make the event a success.

Birmingham declared its intention to bid for European City of Culture status and submitted a regionally focused bid in March. A list of short listed cities is expected later in the year.

GOWM worked closely with Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull councils during their bid to be the venue for the National Stadium.

The Regional Cultural Consortium (RCC) has been active in championing the actions within the Regional Cultural Strategy published in January 2001. Priorities where work is already underway include tourism access (led by Advantage West Midlands), promotion of good design (led by MADE/West Midlands Arts), education (English Heritage) and ICT (Libraries Partnership).



Signatories to the Regional Concordat, L-R Graham Garbutt, Cllr Phil Davis, Chair of Regional Chamber, Cllr Reg Place, Chair of WMLGA and Alex Stephenson, Chair of AWM.

Photograph courtesy of Advantage West Midlands.

Sponsorship of Advantage West Midlands (AWM)

The Unit has assisted DTI and AWM in the preparations for the introduction of much greater flexibility given to AWM for April 2002 via the 'Single Pot' of resources and the associated targets that AWM will be required to deliver in exchange. The Unit has worked closely with AWM in the development of its Corporate Plan and the Tier 2 and 3 targets.

The team handled the appointment of 4 new AWM Board members and has started the process of recruiting a new Chair, as Alex Stephenson's appointment expires at the end of 2002.

The Unit has set up a Rover Approvals Group to consider and approve projects put forward to implement the recommendations of the Rover Task Force. Most of the diversification and modernisation projects have now been approved and the regeneration projects are now being developed.

2001/02 has seen the signing of a Regional Concordat between GOWM, AWM, the Regional Assembly (formerly Chamber) and the West Midlands Local Government Association.

The Unit has also worked closely with the Regional Assembly Secretariat in the production of a work plan, resulting in an allocation of £1,200,000 for 2002/03 and 2003/04.



Rural Affairs

Ex-MAFF staff joined GOWM in June 2001. Activities of the Team early on in the year were governed by the FMD outbreak and its impact on the Region. The Team worked with partners, (AWM, NFU), to develop a series of recovery measures for the rural economy in the wake of the disease. They organised the Regional visit of the Curry Commission to engage rural stakeholders in the process. GOWM also signed up to the Rural Accord, agreeing to work co-operatively with Regional Partners to respond to the needs and concerns of rural areas.

The Regional Rural Affairs Forum was established in the Region to fulfil the commitment in the Rural White Paper to set up regional rural sounding boards. The inaugural meeting took place in March 2002, with representation from a diverse range of sectoral interests. The Forum agreed on its method of working and selected a Chair and a representative to attend the Rural Affairs Forum for England.



At Ironbridge in Shropshire, birthplace of the industrial revolution, you will find the oldest iron bridge in the world. It was erected by Abraham Darby III in 1779. The bridge is still standing and in daily use.

European Work

GOWM's European Secretariat has responsibility for managing over £800m of European Structural Funds over the next 6 years.

EC Community Initiatives

The closure of previous programmes under Objective 2 - RECHAR, KONVER, LEADER, RETEX and URBAN - has now been completed, with reports on their performance being produced for the European Commission. One application under the new LEADER+ programme will run in Herefordshire. The Commission has now approved 2 programmes under the INTERREG III programme.

Objective 2

£500m of Objective 2 funds is available to eligible parts of the region to:

- help both urban and rural communities diversify their economies
- support business
- target investment in employment growth areas and stimulate innovation

GOWM and Advantage West Midlands have encouraged the setting-up of local and thematic partnerships to help provide a strategic focus for applications for funds under Objective 2. Round 1 of the bidding process saw five phases in the year resulting in nearly 500 bids requesting grants of well over £500m. Grant of nearly £160m was approved.

Objective 3

£280m of Objective 3 funds is available across the region to:

- support active labour market policies
- promote equal opportunities
- address social inclusion and regeneration of communities issues
- support lifelong learning
- encourage entrepreneurship
- improve the participation of women in the labour market

As with Objective 2, these priorities align with those of AWM's Regional Economic Strategy.

Case Study



Eastside Development, Birmingham.

Eastside Phase 1 - Birmingham City Council

Total Project Cost - £26.9m

ERDF Grant - £6.4m

This key project will ensure that the Eastside strategic regeneration package goes ahead, by removing the so-called 'concrete collar' formed by the elevated section of the ring road which is the most significant barrier to further regeneration south-east of the city centre core.

The redevelopment of Masshouse Circus will open up a large area for investment, encouraging the growth of new activities around this

area, together with commercial, retail and residential development and the revitalising of the historic Digbeth area, canals and waterfront.

At a strategic level the Eastside project will create conditions for the City Centre to expand through the development of a new Quarter based around the themes of Learning, Technology and Heritage.

Case Study



Teme Valley Resource Centre, Ludlow.

Teme Valley Youth Project Resource Centre - Ludlow District Council

Total Project Cost - £674,028

ERDF Grant - £180,000

Set up under the 1997-99 Objective 2 Programme, this project developed a resource centre that formed part of a “Foyer” style integrated facility incorporating training and community facility, housing and managed workspace, primarily but not exclusively for people in the 16-25 age range.

The centre incorporates a training kitchen and laundrette that are run as community businesses and provide practical hands-on training for young people in business pre-vocational and vocational skills. As a result this project successfully developed a rural community into a viable self-sustaining place to live and work and encouraged the development and creation of a source of employment that was not reliant upon agriculture. The centre

itself created 15 new jobs over a 5-year period.

The outputs for this project are:

- number of day visitors is 119 per annum rather than original target of 20 per annum
- 1 community centre improved/constructed
- 1 business/training resource centre developed
- 1 joint venture initiative assisted
- 15 direct permanent jobs created
- 5 direct temporary jobs created
- 28 SMEs assisted
- 50 trainees trained
- £28,000 private sector leverage triggered - £390,000 private sector direct contributions



The first train to travel through the Channel Tunnel was supplied by Metro Cammell of Birmingham.

Corporate Management

Key Achievements

During 2001/02 there were 159 Ministerial visits to the West Midlands Region. One of the highlights of the year was the attendance of Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for the Department of Trade and Industry at the Midlands Excellence Awards Dinner, held at the ICC, Birmingham in the autumn. Olympic gold medal winner, rower Matthew Pinsent, was the after-dinner speaker.

A leading role was in organising the 'Manufacturing and the Regions' event held at the ICC Birmingham on 5 December 2001. This one-day event was chaired by Patricia Hewitt, and brought together representatives from government, industry and unions at both national and regional levels, to share ideas and look at the challenges facing manufacturing.

There has been close working with key regional partners to develop and promulgate the concept of a Regional Observatory for the West Midlands.

Support has been provided to the Regional Board and its sub-groups. New initiatives in the fields of the resettlement of ex-offenders and the promotion of healthy eating have grown out of this work and are currently being developed by GOWM and its partners

Service First

GOWM has continued to meet the requirements of the Service First Standards.

During the year to 31 March 2002, the reception team dealt with a total of

- 41,563 telephone enquiries
- 228 faxes, emails and correspondence

of which

- 98% were dealt with within the 15 working day target
- 379 ministerial cases

of these

- 94% were dealt with within the 15 working day target
- A total of 10,575 non-ministerial cases were dealt with
- 92% within the 15 working day target

GOWM Customer Survey

In 2001/02 we commissioned our third in-depth customer survey. Fifty people from a range of partner organisations across the region were asked for their views and perceptions of the GO and its working methods. The findings of the survey will help us to identify priorities for organisational development and improving service delivery.

GOWM Website

In 2001, a new website for the Government Office for the West Midlands was created to comply with the targets set by the Modernising Government agenda of delivering the majority of business online by 2004.

The new site was designed and developed in-house, and was formally "launched" in the beginning of October. Since that time the website has developed and now contains information on all programmes and policy areas, providing GOWM with a platform to develop online business.



Secretary of State DTI, Patricia Hewitt chairing the 'Manufacturing and the Regions' conference held at the ICC, Birmingham on 5th December 2001.

2001/2002 Budget Figures

BUSINESS & LEARNING DIVISION

	£
Careers/Connexions Service	52.0m
UK Online	15.8m
NOF	6.3m
Learning Partnerships	1.1m
Children's Fund	18.0m
Sure Start	12.0m

Industry Grants

Regional Selective Assistance	12.6m
Enterprise Grant	2.7m
Smart	4.7m

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIVISION

Housing Investment Programme	108.0m
Indicative Major Repair Allowance	180.0m
Housing Action Trust	27.0m
Transport Allocations	209.0m
New Deal for Communities	7.8m

CRIME REDUCTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Community Champions	0.3m
Community Chest	1.1m
Community Empowerment	1.1m
Community Cohesion	0.1m
Crime Reduction Unit	17.6m

CORPORATE AFFAIRS & EUROPE DIVISION

European Funds (2000 - 2006)

Objective 2 ERDF	430.2m
Objective 2 ESF	87.5m
Objective 3 ESF	240.0m

GOWM Running Costs

Pay	7.3m
Accommodation	1.7m
Other non pay	1.2m



Shrewsbury's statue of General Lord Hill, renowned for his action at the battle of Waterloo, sits on top of the highest Grecian doric column ever erected in the world. It stands at 133ft 6in tall.

Photograph courtesy of Netley Hall Holidays, Dorrington.

Regional Overview



West Midlands Region.

- The West Midlands region is situated in the heart of England spanning an area from Stoke-on-Trent in the north down to Hereford and Evesham in the south, from Shrewsbury in the west to Rugby and Burton-on-Trent in the East. The big cities and towns, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry and Walsall, occupy a central position within the region.
- The region accounts for a 9% share of the UK's population. More than half of the region's population (3 million) live in large conurbation areas.
- The city of Birmingham accounts for just over 1 million of the region's population at the heart of a conurbation of 2.5 million people also covering the Black Country, Solihull and Coventry. The other main population centre

is in the north of the region, Stoke-on-Trent, with a population of 250,000.

- Over 2 million people reside in the region's rural counties (Shropshire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire). Of these Herefordshire and Shropshire are the least densely populated.
- The age structure of the West Midlands mirrors the national picture. However, this masks wide variations within the region. Birmingham and Telford and Wrekin have above average percentage levels of under 16 year olds in their populations, 23.3% and 22.5% respectively (regional average 21%). At 16.7%, Birmingham's percentage of pension-aged population is one of the lowest in the region, with only Telford and Wrekin,

Worcester and Redditch both in the county of Worcestershire lower (regional average 18%). Tamworth, in the county of Staffordshire, has the highest percentage of its population who are of working age with 65% (regional average 61%).

Economy

- In 1999, the region contributed £63.5 billion to the UK's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 8.2% of the total. This share changed little through the 1990s. This contribution was sourced from a wide and varied regional economy.
- The largest sector continues to be the Manufacturing sector with 28.9% of the region's GDP. This is the largest share of any region in the UK. The Financial and Business Services sector is the next largest at 17.9%, while the Wholesale and Retail sector continues to grow and now represents 11.9%. The Agricultural sector contributes 1.5% to the West Midlands economy.
- The rate of economic growth in the West Midlands was broadly in line with the national average during the three years up to 1999. Across the region as a whole, GDP per head stands at £11,900, 92% of the UK average. This, however, masks wide variations between different parts of the region with only Warwickshire (106% of the UK average) of the shire counties above the UK average. Of the constituents of the West Midlands Metropolitan county, one is above the UK average, Coventry (105% of the UK average), two are close to the average, Birmingham and Solihull, while two are significantly below the UK average - Sandwell

and Dudley (84% of the UK average) and Wolverhampton and Walsall (82% of the UK average).

- The county of Shropshire recorded the lowest GDP per head, 78% of the UK average, while Telford & Wrekin recorded the highest level at 134% of the UK average.
- The West Midlands is a major exporting region, accounting for just over 9% of the UK total by value in 2001 (HM Customs & Excise figures). The region has also proved successful in attracting foreign direct investment - in total, the region has attracted nearly 2000 overseas companies to set up facilities here, with the main centres being Birmingham, Coventry and Telford.
- Average gross weekly wages in the region are below the UK's; the New Earnings Survey 2001 reported an average wage of £436.49 (£460.10 UK) per week for males and £253.02 (£270.90 UK) per week for females. Within the region, average earnings are highest in Warwickshire (in the south-east of the region) and lowest in Herefordshire (in the south-west of the region).

Employment

- The number of people employed in the West Midlands currently stands at 2.45 million, a small increase on the previous twelve months. The manufacturing sector accounts for 21.6% of total employment, the second highest in the UK, with the service sector accounting for 72.7%.
- In recent times, manufacturing's share of regional employment has fallen from 27% in 1995 to the

just under 22%. In the same period, the service sector's percentage share has increased, from 67% to virtually 73% using the latest available information. The total employed in the sector is now over the 1.5 million mark.

Unemployment

- Regional unemployment (as measured by International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards) at May 2002 stood at 5.7 per cent, a year-on-year fall of 0.3 percentage points. For the same period the national rate is 5.1%, a reduction of 0.1 percentage points over the preceding twelve months. Within the region, the ILO defined unemployment rates range from 11.7% in Sandwell to 3.4% in Staffordshire.
- The region's unemployed claimant count figure has fallen by 7.5% in the twelve months to May 2002. The number of people unemployed and claiming benefit stands at 93,610, a rate of 3.5% (UK 3.2%). However, there are significant differences across the region, with relatively high levels of unemployment in much of the main conurbation, in particular Birmingham (5.4%), Sandwell (5.3%) and Wolverhampton (5.2%), and lower rates found in the shire counties typically around 2%.

Education

- The region has eight universities, four other Higher Education establishments and fifty Further Education colleges.

For more information about educational attainments, please refer to the Government Office for the West Midlands Website at www.go-wm.gov.uk.



Since production started at Land Rover Solihull in 1948, over 60% of all their vehicles are estimated to still be in use around the world.

Forward Look

In 2002/03 our new geographical structure will enable us to tackle cross-cutting work, and the increasingly important regional agenda, more effectively to deliver real improvements on the ground. We look forward to Public Health colleagues joining the GOWM and the opportunities this will bring to strengthen the links between related programmes and initiatives.

We shall continue to work on a wide range of policies and programmes over the coming year, taking forward the Government's agenda. In our work we shall aim to deliver a strong contribution to:

- Improving the economic performance of the region and promoting a sustainable approach to economic development;
- Improving the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce in the region and providing opportunities for people to develop their potential;
- Improving quality of life through supporting the development of partnerships and providing support to communities;
- Providing good quality intelligence to central Government departments and communicating Government policies effectively in the region.

In pursuing these objectives we shall continue to work closely with our partners in the region and with our colleagues in central government departments, particularly the newly created Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of which we now form a part. Working at the heart of Government and Whitehall, the ODPM will bring together key cross cutting issues such as social exclusion, housing and regeneration with regional and local delivery.

The Forward statue (1991) by Birmingham-born Raymond Mason. Forward represents the forward march of the people of Birmingham,

Acronyms

ACU	Active Community Unit
AWM	Advantage West Midlands
BitC	Business in the Community
BRN	Black Regeneration Network
COI	Central Office of Information (now Government News Network)
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EA	Environment Agency
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GOWM	Government Office for the West Midlands
HAT	Housing Action Trust
ICC	International Convention Centre, Birmingham
ICT	Information & Communications Technologies
INTERREG III	Inter-regional Grants Scheme
KONVER	Community Initiative Funded by European Community
LEA	Local Education Authorities
LEADER	Community Initiative Funded by European Community
MADE	Midlands Arts Design Environment
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now DEFRA)
MEBC	The Midlands Environmental Business Club Ltd
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
RECHAR	Community Initiative Funded by European Community
RETEX	Community Initiative Funded by European Community
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
URBAN	Community Initiative Funded by European Community
WMAMMS	West Midlands Area Multi-Modal Studies



The Mappa Mundi from 1289, the oldest existing world map and one of Britain's most important historical treasures, is kept in Hereford Cathedral.



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