

creating:excellence

Business plan 2003-2006

Executive summary



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Introduction

We are developing the South West Regeneration Centre to promote learning and improve skills in regeneration and renewal by creating new links between professionals and communities. The centre aims to make sure that economic, social and environmental solutions work for, rather than against, each other.

The centre will work with a wide range of people to provide services for: local community groups and voluntary and community organisations,

enterprises and development trusts;

regeneration professionals;

planners;

builders;

local authority officers and members;

parish councils;

public service providers such as hospitals, schools and the police;

housing associations;

environmental groups;

arts groups;

sports groups; and

equality groups.

For the purpose of **creating:excellence**, we have adopted a wide definition of regeneration and renewal, which includes:

economic development;

sustainability;

social enterprise; and

community development.

Background

In April 2002, the South West Region held a conference to discuss how 'creating excellence in regeneration' could be developed and put into practice in the South West. **creating:excellence** would be one of nine centres of excellence in the English regions, initially funded by the Regional Development Agencies. So far, 70 people have volunteered to help develop the initiative. Early decisions were to:

- be inclusive – involve regeneration practitioners at all levels of the process and across all disciplines;
- cover both rural and urban regeneration, recognising the nature of the region and the link between the two;
- tackle issues at the top of the agenda – design in the built environment, regeneration and renewal in communities, using funding effectively and working with partners; and
- create development modules around these issues with a budget to make 'early wins' (opportunities for success early in a project's life).

The commitment and enthusiasm of people and their organisations has resulted in a number of outputs.

- The launch of the Regeneration South West Network.
- A 'Review of Learning in Regeneration and Renewal' by University of West of England and Cornwall Business School.
- The appointment of a development manager and communications consultants to manage a process of widespread regional consultation about the purpose and design of **creating:excellence**.
- A strategy to promote design and an action plan so that good design has greater importance in the region.
- Developing the relationship between funders, funding advice workers and development workers in the voluntary, community and statutory sectors.

Principles

The next stage of **creating:excellence** is underway. This business plan moves the initiative into a new phase, under which institutions are developed and a joint programme is carried through. At the same time, we will encourage more and more people to get involved in **creating:excellence**. The plan is based on the principles of a small group of staff serving all those involved in regeneration

and renewal. This networking will not all be done through the centre, but **creating:excellence** will be at the heart of the process.

Joining the **creating:excellence** Regeneration South West Network will show a commitment to ideals of lifelong learning, doing your best and benefiting those in need. The purpose of **creating:excellence** will be to raise standards in delivery and practice of regeneration through:

- learning (co-ordination, promotion and supply);
- knowledge (best practice and research);
- raising awareness (networking, events and advocacy); and
- acting as a go-between (building trust, sharing agendas and co-funding).

The values supporting **creating:excellence** are set out in the plan. They include the following.

- Not repeating existing activity – it must add value
- Based on evidence
- Open, honest and independent
- Focused on practice not policy
- Challenging and influencing, not a campaigning organisation
- Inclusive and accessible
- Self-regulating and evaluating
- Excellent in what it does, or not doing it until it can do so excellently

Services

creating:excellence will supply a service to those dealing with the practical issues of regeneration. It will supply the following.

- Information links and advice – so comprehensive and relevant that it will become the first contact point for everyone involved in regeneration in the region.
- A contact agency that identifies members and their expertise, identifies existing networks for topics and the need for new ones, and brings people together to their personal and professional advantage and to improve practice as a whole.
- Opportunities for learning – what you didn't know you needed to know, especially through peer-to-peer exchange, plus helping to identify and deliver skills for regeneration.

- Routes to improving standards and raising quality by recognising and approving good practice and achievement, learning from the past, benchmarking (measuring progress against standards) nationally and internationally, and working together.
- Funding information and co-ordination, and improvements in funding practice, supported by a new network, Funding South West.
- A design strategy leading to a deeper understanding of the principles of good design in the built environment, a design review panel to comment on major projects at an early stage and show in practice how improvements can be made, and networking between those responsible for the quality of our built environment. This will be supported by a new initiative, Design South West.

Networking

The main aim of **creating:excellence** will be to create networks. Most of the 300 people we have consulted about the design of **creating:excellence** have emphasised peer-to-peer learning and the possibility of cutting across geographical areas, communities of interest and professional boundaries as priorities for the networks. At the heart of **creating:excellence** will be the Regeneration South West Network and its database of people who are involved. The centre will record where they are based, their professional or other interests, their role, what they are looking for, and what they can offer. This will allow **creating:excellence** to make sure that services target people's needs, provide links to others with common concerns, and identify possible resources for other people.

Many people will already be part of networks of interest and may, at times, act as a group, rather than as individuals. All will have the opportunity to use **creating:excellence** services and use the full regeneration resources of the region and beyond. Members will register using the Regeneration South West Network website at **www.regenerationsouthwest.net**

The website

Web-based services are an essential part of any modern delivery service. Although many people still don't have access to, or the skills to access, the internet, we will tackle this using a variety of initiatives designed to promote e-commerce and e-government and improve basic skills. It is a very powerful tool for gaining information (for example, case studies of regeneration practice) and for making connections with new, useful contacts.

The creating:excellence website (www.creatingexcellence.org.uk) will offer an information resource and a brokering and contact resource.

As well as subcategories, it will have links to other relevant sites. It will be supported by newsletters, giving people information on where to get advice, which events are happening where, which courses are available, and what the

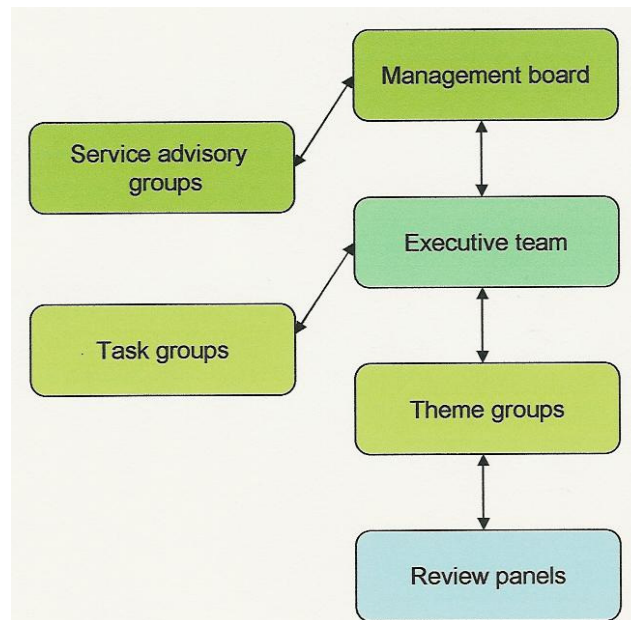
effect of changes in regional regeneration policy, funding and so on are likely to be.

This will support the national level weekly 'Regeneration and Renewal' Magazine, and the website will support and link to (signpost) national sites such as **www.regen.net** and **www.renewal.net**

Organisation

Everybody in regeneration has to be involved to deliver **creating:excellence**. There are no exceptions, from the least to the most experienced and imaginative. But how do you help so many people to work together effectively? The business plan proposes a new organisation – a small, paid executive and a network of partners, stakeholders and users.

creating:excellence organisation structure



Hub and spoke

One of the main features of **creating:excellence** responds to the road shows we used to consult people. We found that people want local access to whatever **creating:excellence** has to offer. This will mean sub-regional and local involvement. Following the principles of building on existing activity and institutions, sub-regional outlets or spokes of **creating:excellence** will be hosted by suitable organisations.

Hosting will involve:

- supplying space for a phone and computer link to **creating:excellence** information and advice resources;
- being prepared to welcome new people onto the premises and help them reach the services they want; and
- acting as a focus for local learning and networking events.

Hosts are likely to already be in the business of developing, sharing or teaching best practice and skills in regeneration. Hosts may receive some payment for staff or investment from **creating:excellence** under a franchise system. There will be at least one spoke for each sub-region, but there may be more to make sure that the region is covered in an effective and practical way, depending on travel times around them.

The hub

The hub is the heart of the organisation. An executive director and a small team of staff (eight, rising to 11 over the period of the plan) will be at the centre of **creating:excellence**. They will need to be located in the same offices and work closely together and to make sure that the services we provide are co-ordinated. They will receive, filter, shape and distribute a broad range of specialist and general information.

The executive director and staff will depend on the involvement and goodwill of all those who work in regeneration. They will need to be energetic, sociable, good communicators, well organised and able to understand the wide range of regeneration issues. They will report to a management board, who will be responsible for the strategic direction of the initiative and answer to those who fund **creating:excellence**, those who deliver it and those who it's meant to benefit.

Management board

The staff will be led by an executive director who will be responsible to a management board. The members of the board will mainly be taken from those involved in the steering group and module groups. Others providing funding or delivering services may be asked to join to bring extra support and influence to the executive. The board will approve major spending decisions, monitor quality and accreditation issues and monitor performance. Accreditation and quality standards have been controversial so the board needs to consider them further. The board will meet each month until **creating:excellence** is fully operational, and will then meet every three months.

Working groups

Working groups have developed the services that are now being put into practice. Some of these need continuous expertise or networking of an interest group. In some cases, the work started before **creating:excellence** was set up or has been created independently of **creating:excellence** (for example, Sustainability South West, Constructing Excellence). **creating:excellence** is keen to make sure that everyone who has been involved so far continues to be so. There is no limit on the number of groups that may be set up around an aspect of **creating:excellence**, and there is no direct control by **creating:excellence**.

The new structure will support some specific **service advisory groups** (two to begin with — learning, and information and advice). There will also be support for certain themes or network projects (Design South West, Funding South West). Paid staff will serve the groups and co-ordinate input to them and output from them. These network projects will also set up **review panels**. In the case of Design South West, the panel will review the design of major public-funded projects and the public funding by Funding South West.

There will also be **task groups**, created when needed, responsible for specific actions. Task groups have already been set up to develop the website and to develop a bid to the EU programme 'Interreg'.

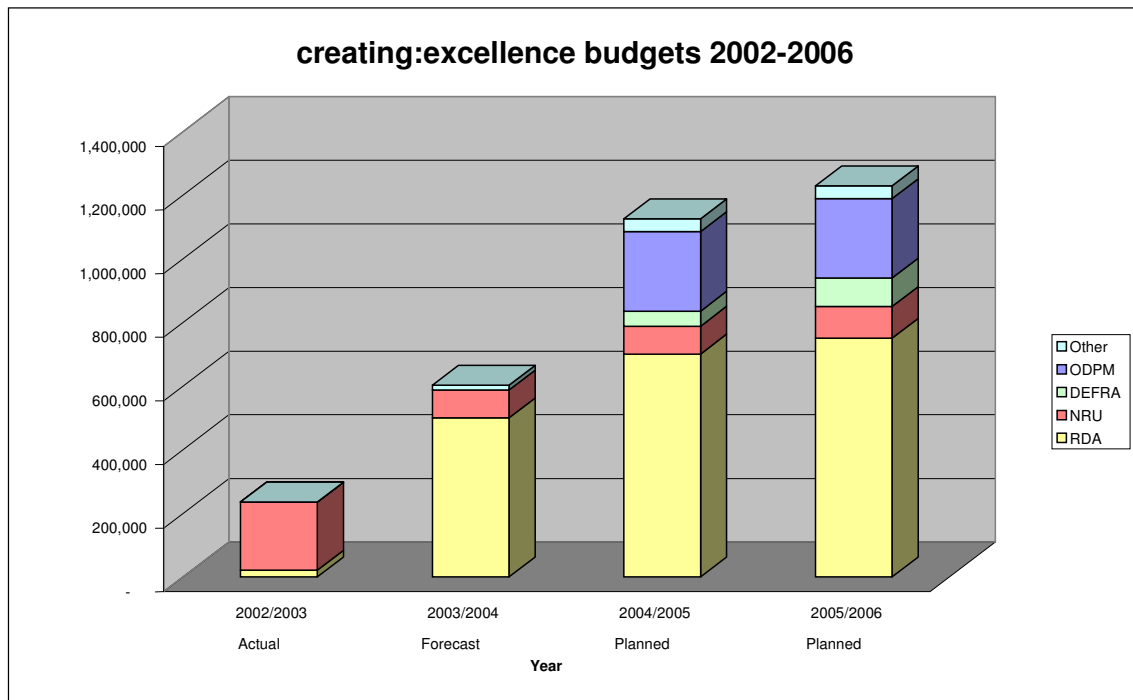
All these groups and the Regeneration South West Network are part of the big picture for creating excellence. Membership is voluntary, and people are unpaid unless the activity is part of their work for which they are employed by an organisation other than **creating:excellence**.

Legal structure

The business plan looks at the options for the legal structure of an independent delivery organisation. The plan has decided that none of the current legal options offers an ideal solution. The business plan recognises that much of **creating:excellence** has been developed without an agreed plan, with the aim of involving as many people as possible, and decides that an unincorporated association offers the most flexible and functional structure. We have asked for legal advice on the practical implications and arrangements. If an unincorporated association is not practical, we could adopt a company limited by guarantee or an industrial and provident society. Under an unincorporated association, the few paid staff would be employed and paid using an existing host organisation through service-level agreements. This is the arrangement for the South West Observatory and the South West Regional Assembly.

Budget

The budget covers the cost of the key staff, services delivered through other agencies (such as the design review panel), and the costs of IT equipment, premises, overhead, website, newsletters, events, publicity and so on. The sources of funds and how they are used are set out in the business plan and shown in the graph. The budget in 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 will be more than £1 million, with nearly three quarters provided by us.



Milestones

Here are some of the main milestones for the next three years.

Year 1 (2003-2004 development)

- Launch the Regeneration Southwest Network and website (achieved 15 May).
- Start recruiting the key staff for **creating:excellence**.
- Create a regeneration library.
- Hold networking and social events on relevant issues.
- Open at least one sub-regional **creating:excellence** outlet.
- Hold the first meeting of the design review panel.
- Complete the regeneration and renewal learning study.

Year 2 (2004-2005 operational)

- Formally launch **creating:excellence** and promote the Regeneration South West Network as the 'Learning Exchange Network'.
- Add the library and best links to the websites.
- Publish a series of guides, giving paper versions of signposting.
- Open at least three further satellites.
- Launch at least five further **creating:excellence** 'outlets' in the sub-regions.
- Hold at least seven 'regeneration café' events – social evenings and debates.
- Sponsor regeneration seminar events and exchange visits.

Year 3 (2005-2006)

- Assess what is working and what is not working.
- Develop new activities or remove ones that are not effective.

Monitoring and evaluation

The milestones shown above have targets associated with them. To measure outcomes, we need to set a baseline (a minimum standard) for all the **creating:excellence** activities against which we can measure progress. We are already carrying this out in some cases – for example, the architecture, planning and the built environment module have ordered work which will result in a clear view of gaps in the processes that result in good design. Design South West will then set about filling those gaps.

Similarly, the Regional Scoping Study of Learning for Regeneration and Renewal has reviewed the supply and range of learning resources and made recommendations for improving them. In the case of regeneration events and access to information, some of the development work by the modules and consultation during 2003 also creates a baseline.

creating:excellence staff will develop further baseline measures and record activity rates and achievements. In year 3, we should arrange for an independent evaluation of progress against targets and in relation to the baselines measured.

creating:excellence will encourage the people involved to evaluate regeneration activity. Involving all stakeholders, but particularly end users, allows those running regeneration schemes to learn as they go and change their practice to make it more effective and long-lasting.