

JULY 2007

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL COMPACT

ANNUAL
REVIEW
2006

The South West Regional Compact, “a framework for strong and effective relationships between the voluntary and community and public sector in the South West” was launched in September 2004.

The Compact was developed by a working group consisting of two voluntary and community sector networks, Black South West Network and South West Forum and the regional public sector organisations; Countryside Agency (South West), Government Office for the South West, South West Local Government Association, South West of England Regional Development Agency and South West Regional Assembly.

Since the launch of the Compact the Regional Compact Group consisting of representatives of the partner organisations has met on 12 occasions. Meetings took place in October and November 2004, January, February, March, April, June and September 2005, February, March, September and November 2006.

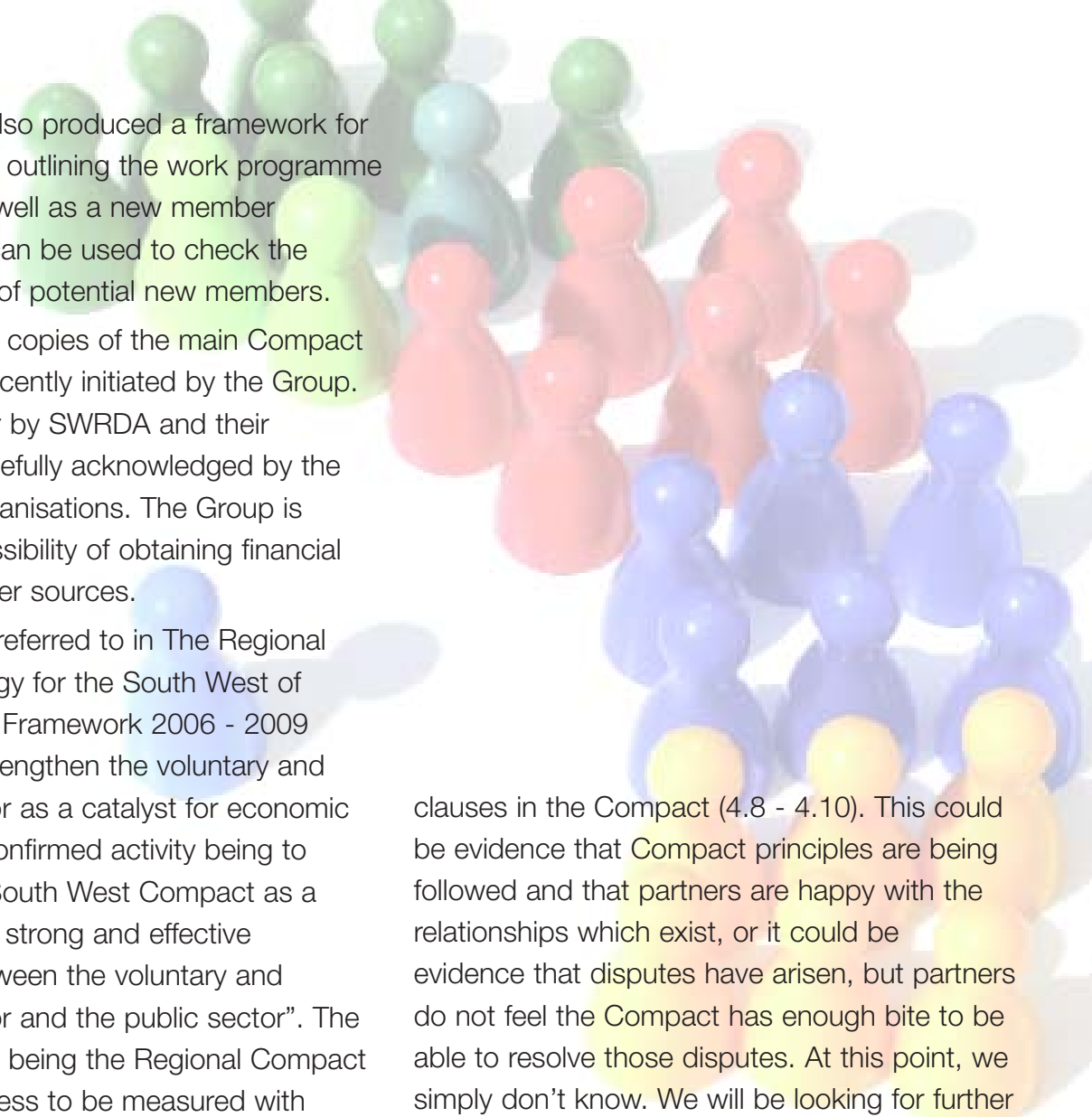
The Compact Group has tried to sign up further relevant organisations as partners. Citizens Advice SW, Creating Excellence and Equality South West have joined and approaches are currently being made to a number of other organisations.

During the period since the launch, the Compact Group has undertaken a number of tasks aimed at promoting the Compact:

- A commentary on the national Compact codes of good practice has been developed which is a south west perspective on these codes.
- Two executive summaries of the Compact one in formal language the other more colloquial have been written.
- A resources for implementation directory is in the course of production which will as its name suggests be useful for the promotion and implementation of the Compact.

All of these are being produced in pdf format with appropriate compact style artwork for display on partner organisations' websites.





The Group has also produced a framework for action document outlining the work programme of the Group as well as a new member checklist which can be used to check the appropriateness of potential new members.

A reprint of 1500 copies of the main Compact document has recently initiated by the Group. This was paid for by SWRDA and their generosity is gratefully acknowledged by the other partner organisations. The Group is exploring the possibility of obtaining financial support from other sources.

The Compact is referred to in The Regional Economic Strategy for the South West of England Delivery Framework 2006 - 2009 section 2A.3 "Strengthen the voluntary and community sector as a catalyst for economic inclusion". The confirmed activity being to "implement the South West Compact as a means to ensure strong and effective relationships between the voluntary and community sector and the public sector". The lead organisation being the Regional Compact Group and progress to be measured with reference to the annual report of the Group.

It is difficult to accurately assess the impact the Compact has had on relationships between the regional public sector and the regional VCS so far, other than the document itself having been the focal point to draw together regionally focused organisations four times during the year, with a view to improving their collective relationship. There is also certainly anecdotal evidence of regional organisations drawing each others attention to the terms of the Compact as a means of resolving disagreements between themselves. One voluntary sector chief officer is on record as having "waved the Compact at" (an unspecified regional public body), to what effect it is not clear!

No disputes have been referred to the Group under the terms of the dispute resolution

clauses in the Compact (4.8 - 4.10). This could be evidence that Compact principles are being followed and that partners are happy with the relationships which exist, or it could be evidence that disputes have arisen, but partners do not feel the Compact has enough bite to be able to resolve those disputes. At this point, we simply don't know. We will be looking for further evidence in the future to clarify.

SUCCESS

The annual meeting between Compact partners at a national level took place in November 2006. At this event a number of commendation awards were agreed. The South West Regional Compact working group were lucky enough to be presented with a commendation award in the category of Compact Promotion, Championing, Proof and Use, in recognition of the joint working which took place when the Regional Economic Strategy was reviewed in late 2005 / early 2006.

The group feel this is testament to the hard work of all partners in the development and adherence to the Compact, and to the continued collaborative working we strive for. We will be pressing ahead and trying to win a gold award in 2007.

HOW THE COMPACT HAS INFLUENCED PARTNER ORGANISATIONS WORK

Black South West Network

www.bswn.org.uk

As an original signatory to the South West Regional Compact we have developed our work in accordance with Compact principles and to be Compact compliant. We have found the Compact particularly valuable in relation to issues around policy development where we have worked toward best practice in consulting with our members using the process to design, policy input, business plans and events. By making information available to everyone, communication being a two way process, ensuring fair representation for disadvantaged individuals and groups, producing clear consultation documents using clear accessible language, giving feedback to the people who have been consulted, identifying shared issues and interests and working towards joint actions. The Compact promises much as a support tool for responsive, joined up action planning in the region.

Government Office for the South West

www.gosw.gov.uk

GOSW has worked to implement the SW Regional Compact by promoting the Compact at various meetings and workshops with partners, as a tool for continuously improving partnership working. This has included collating summary information for Local Compact's in the phase 3 LAA areas, with the intention of extending this

work to other areas as soon as possible. This has provided a useful baseline and enabled GOSW to recognise which areas require support. GOSW is uncertain about how much impact the SW Regional Compact has had as it is in its early stages of implementation.

GOSW intends to embed the Compact within its organisation by ensuring new starters learn about Compact in their Induction and Promoting Compact to GOSW colleagues during Compact Week.

South West Forum

www.southwestforum.org.uk

SWF is very keen to set a good example in terms of best practice and Compact compliance. In particular they have tried to consult widely and transparently when attempting to formulate strategies and policy positions. Examples of this are the consultations over the VCS submission to the RES review, the SWF Strategic Plan and the VCS Manifesto "Investing for inclusion".

SWF take partnership working very seriously and organised an event on working regionally in March 2006 which was aimed at facilitating partnership working between organisations with a regional brief.

SWF has embedded the Compact principles on working within equality and diversity guidelines into its mainstream work. Staff job descriptions now contain detailed guidance as to how this is done.

In relation to funding and resources SWF has produced the VCS manifesto "Investing for Inclusion" which raises some of the issues "red lined" in the original drafting exercise for the Compact and hopefully points to the future.

The main work of the organisation as VCS voice and champion is primarily aimed at building capacity within the sector to enable social and economic inclusion in line with Compact principles.

South West Regional Development Agency

www.southwestrda.org.uk

The major success of the Compact in 2006, in relation to the work of SW RDA, was the involvement of and consultation with, a wide range of partners, including the voluntary and community sector, in the review of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). While this work began in late 2005, the finishing touches (including the development of a delivery strategy, in which the Compact is named as a tool to develop partnership working) were completed in early 2006. This success is of particular note, because, when the strategy was in the early stages of review, the team within SW RDA taking the review forward enquired as to how to adhere to Compact principles, and from there on in, did so. Subsequent to the review, a number of Compact partners also signed up to the delivery strategy of the RES, objectives of which, are being delivered against and reviewed in collaboration with SW RDA.

SW RDA also showed commitment to working in partnership with regional organisations in the development of the Infrastructure Strategy South West 2006. Whilst SW RDA have not provided any financial assistance to this process, we remain a committed partner in working to ensure the region's infrastructure to support the frontline Voluntary and Community Sector is strong, stable and fit for purpose.

Additionally, in 2006 the Compact was promoted within SW RDA whenever there was the capacity to do so. For example, during the latter part of the year, the compact was utilised in developing a presentation for SW RDA's Chief Executive when they spoke at the South West Forum / Funding South West joint annual conference; the Compact was referred to during a presentation regarding the Third Sector

at an Operations and Development Directorate (one of four directorates) away-day; the two executive summaries for the main Compact document were posted on the Agency's intranet; however, on a less positive note we were unable to progress any co-ordinated promotional activity during national compact week. We will strive to ensure this does not occur in 2007.

South West Regional Assembly

www.southwest-ra.gov.uk

The South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) recognises the value that the Regional Compact brings in substantiating and developing healthy working relationships between the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and public sector bodies.

Within SWRA's work, the relevance and application of the Compact's principles is most clearly visible in the central role afforded to the Social, Environmental and Economic Partners (SEEPs). SEEPs constitute 30% of Assembly Membership and are drawn from a large range of regional organisations that represent the social, economic and environmental interests of the South West, including four Members from the South West Forum. A thorough review of SEEP membership is currently underway, with the aim of ensuring that SWRA remains fully representative of the region. The review is inclusive and open, with opinion being sought from current SEEP Members, their nominating bodies, regional stakeholders and Local Authorities.

SWRA is committed to ensuring that the SEEPs, and through them the VCS, are appropriately represented on the Assembly's strategic, policy development and advisory groups. South West Forum is represented on the Regional Spatial Planning and Transport Group, which has steered the development of



the RSS on behalf of SWRA. The Scrutiny Panel, which is responsible for reviewing the South West RDA's implementation of the Regional Economic Strategy, also includes Members from South West Forum.

In addition, SWRA strives to follow its own best practice principles on consultation, which are reflected in the Compact's guidelines on policy development. For example, a wide range of organisations and interest groups were involved in the development of the draft Regional Spatial Strategy through an inclusive and transparent process that aimed to ensure that the RSS reflects the needs and views of the region.

SWRA is fully committed to promoting equality and diversity in the South West; developing equal opportunities within the region is a key consideration of all Assembly policies and strategies. In addition, with a senior officer on the Board of Equality South West, SWRA is actively participating in developing the equality agenda in the South West. Internally, SWRA encourages diversity amongst its Members and has undertaken a monitoring exercise.

Although the Secretariat that supports SWRA is not governed by the local government Equality Standard, it works within the spirit of the Standard, which includes monitoring the diversity of its staff.

THE FUTURE – 2007

The aim for 2007 is to build on the good work that has been done to date. The Regional Compact document itself has been produced, as have two executive summaries, and a regional commentary on the national codes. This took up the majority of partners' time in 2006, and while it is clearly important to have robust documents in place, it is felt that we now need to agree some actions to take forward collaboratively. This will be the overarching goal for 2007, and will be reflected in the framework for action.

If you are a regional organisation which believes it could sign up to the principles of the Regional Compact, or you would like further information, please get in touch with:

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