

# SEE-IN Direction Paper

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# 1 Background

**1.1** The South East of England Intelligence Network (SEE-iN) came into being in 2001 when the three founding partners, SEEDA, the Regional Assembly and GOSE, came together to form a regional intelligence network. Subsequently, the Environment Agency, South East Public Health Observatory (SEPHO) and Skills Insight also joined the network.

**1.2** The vision at the time was that SEE-iN would provide access to the intelligence needed to support evidence based policy development in the South East and would help to monitor progress against the region's policy objectives. The primary objectives would be to inform the development of public policy, primarily at the regional level, to form links between local, regional and national intelligence and to connect and integrate relevant sources of information and intelligence. The key audience for SEE-iN was seen as being policy makers and opinion formers in the region.

**1.3** To achieve this it was decided that a *Virtual Intelligence Network Model* should be adopted rather than a centralised data observatory. SEE-iN would develop the central hub, providing access to a wide range of independent functional observatories e.g. SEPHO. This would be supported by a web based data portal, signposting the major data sources likely to be of use or interest to policy makers.

**1.4** There have been a number of developments since the vision for SEE-iN was first established. While functional observatories in the region have failed to develop as expected, a number of sub-regional generalist observatories are either in existence or planned. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) are now also committed to a regional presence in all the English regions, consisting of a statistician at Grade 7 level, with support at Senior Executive Officer level. The Treasury Review of the Government Offices requires the GOs both to enhance their own analytical capacity and to work with partners to raise that of the region as a whole. These developments make this a good time to review the current progress and future development of SEE-iN.

## 2 Future Opportunities

**2.1** As SEE-iN moves into a new period we must consider the opportunities now facing SEE-iN. These fall into two categories - Strategic and Operational.

### Strategic

#### ONS Presence

**2.2** The Office for National Statistics are in the process of establishing a regional presence consisting of two members of staff. In the South East, the key partners have agreed that SEE-iN will host the regional presence. While the ONS presence will still be centrally led, up to a third of the work plan is specifically targeted at regional objectives. SEE-iN, through the Steering Group, will take a guiding role in the programme of work. Doing so will help strengthen the strategic linkages between partners and assist in raising the profile of SEE-iN around the region. The additional focus should begin with the development of a joined up research programme. Planning for this should begin during 06/07, with partners working to identify common research objectives for the 07/08 work plan.

**2.3** In addition, SEE-iN and ONS will be looking to regional stakeholders to input into the development of the work and also ensure their staff fully engage with regional research networks. Also in the first year, ONS wish regional stakeholders to contribute to the evaluation of the regional presence programme.

#### Strengthening Analytical Capacity

**2.4** Strengthening the analytical capacity of the region will require management within the region. While it would be possible for an individual organisation to take this task on, a network approach would both lighten the burden on any given body, and would overcome any fears of external imposition of systems or work which could act as constraints to achieving the required outcomes. Again, SEE-iN and the Steering Group are very well placed to take on a lead role in this activity. Doing so will also help strengthen the network itself. Taking forward such a role requires SEE-iN to strengthen its relationship with the target audience - policy officers - and work to develop key messages with regards to the analysis and use of data in evidence based policy making.

### Operational

#### Merging with other Functional Observatories

**2.5** As noted at the start of this document, the initial vision of SEE-iN was as a Virtual Intelligence Network. This depended on the further development of functional observatories. In practice, while the South East Cultural Observatory (SECO) has been developed, this is the only new functional observatory to arise in the region since SEE-iN was established, and there are no signs of further ones in the immediate future.

**2.6** It is proposed that SECO becomes aligned with SEE-iN, forming the cultural sector of the Regional Observatory. This would give both organisations a stronger presence and align the research agendas. Both SECO and SEE-iN would benefit from the broader expertise and capacity available within the wider observatory set up

### **Sub-Regional Observatories**

**2.7** There are a growing number of Sub-Regional and Local Observatories either in existence or on the cards. To date, around £900,000 has been spent by local authorities in setting up local observatories. None of this activity has been coordinated at a regional level and as a result there is a vast amount of duplication in data analysis. There is also a vast amount of money being spent on running these observatories. A more coordinated approach could both reduce the duplication and the financial resource required in the region.

**2.8** As the Regional Observatory, SEE-iN should have a key role to play in this coordination. During this next period, SEE-iN will work with local and regional partners to establish the most appropriate and effective approach to the wider research needs.

### **Research**

**2.9** With regards to the changing nature of SEE-iN's role in providing data and intelligence, SEE-iN will look to build upon its early successes in collaborating with regional partners in the production of research. The SEE-iN partners should actively seek out ways to develop their relationship with SEE-iN with regards to research, engaging SEE-iN at an early stage in their research planning. Particular attention should be given to opportunities for collaborative research and the role of SEE-iN as both an independent research voice and a dissemination tool.

In addition to this, SEE-iN should actively engage with research managers from local authorities and other bodies across the region, developing a shared approach to addressing the research needs within the region. SEE-iN should look too at options for a joint approach to monitoring, possibly following the *State of the Region* model used in other regions.