



SOUTH WEST **OBSERVATORY**

ANNUAL REPORT **2011/12**

Tenth Anniversary

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Throughout this report you will see web links to publications available online. The links which start bit.ly are shortened web links. Click on these in the online version of the report or type these into your browser from the printed copy to access related resources.

foreword



I am particularly delighted to introduce the **2011/12 Annual Report of the South West Observatory** in this, our tenth year of operation. The over-arching aim of the Observatory, remains, as ever, the delivery of relevant and timely evidence to inform the development and delivery of policy by multiple stakeholders across the region and beyond.

We report here on the wide range of activities that the Observatory and all our partners have been involved with over the last year in support of this aim. The Thematic Modules, Local Intelligence Networks and the Core Unit have again worked together to provide an invaluable resource for the region.

As cuts in public spending bite deeper and economic recovery

remains elusive, the whole architecture of governance and policy has been radically reshaped. Regional bodies and regional tiers in particular have been swept away in the name of the new localism. As resources are squeezed, familiar structures disappear and the threat of fragmentation grows it is more important than ever that policy and decision making is based on sound and consistent information and analysis.

The Observatory and its partners have worked hard over the past year to ensure that this continues to be the case, despite the challenges. The future of the Observatory going forwards remains, like much else across the region, uncertain. You will see from the pages that follow, however, that the Observatory and its partners will continue to develop and to innovate. There is a very full programme of workshops and events in the pipeline - including a particular focus on the 2011 Census results as these come on-stream.

Having established what we firmly believe to be a very efficient and effective information infrastructure, we will also be working to develop a business model for the Observatory which is sustainable in the longer term - and we look forward to the opportunities that the next ten years will bring.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed so much, directly and indirectly, to the success of the Observatory over the last twelve months, ensuring that policy and decision-making have been fully informed by the best available evidence. Looking ahead, it is this collective effort, the pooling of information, the intelligent application of ideas and resources which will yield maximum mutual benefit to all, in what will undoubtedly continue to be very challenging times ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Boddy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Professor Martin Boddy
Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of the
West of England, Bristol
and Chair of the SWO Advisory Board

director's report



Vinita Nawathe
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This reporting period began as the doors closed on the Government Offices (GOs), and encompassed the final closure of the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). With the Regional Assemblies already gone, 2012 marked the end of a particular chapter in the history of the English regions (see Wikipedia for the potted version dating back to 500AD).

For the South West Observatory it was a busy year; making sense of the new sub-regional arrangements, co-ordinating network responses to six national consultations, running a full programme of events and training courses, pulling together network analyses of the latest data and policy situation for the *Changing State of the South West* publication and disseminating a huge amount of information, reports and analysis through our website, quarterly newsletters and weekly updates.

SWO continues to work in partnership to provide a network of thematic modules and local intelligence. The changing sub-national structure and the squeeze on public finances affecting all partner organisations means that relationships and ways of working continue to evolve. SWO has been able to offer different kinds of services to partners; for example supporting the Partnership

Intelligence Unit at Somerset County Council through consultancy services and research management cover. While this reporting period also saw the official launch of the Housing and Planning Module, provided in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The HCA provides expert help, advice and written content for the module.

The Economy module was provided by SWRDA until December 2011. SWO hosted one of SWRDA's legacy events in September 2011 and has subsequently made many of SWRDA's tools, research reports, and its approach to evaluating economic development projects, available through the SWO Economy module web-pages, thus preserving some of the body of knowledge built up by our former funders. The Economy Module and Skills and Learning Module published complementary reports on the *Prospects for Private Sector Jobs Growth* which they presented at an event in November 2011. SWO has since taken the Economy Module in-house and engaged an Associate Economist initially to re-organise the site, update content and support the help desk.

SWO has continued to facilitate peer to peer networking through its co-ordination of the Regional Intelligence Group (RIG), the

Strategic Information Providers (SIP) group and an economic evidence users' group. While the two latter groups are theme specific, RIG is open to all those working, or interested, in public policy research in the South West. SWO has continued to theme quarterly RIG meetings according to suggestions from group members, and the last reporting period saw a wide range of presentations from practitioners in local, regional and national bodies which are now available on the SWO website.

SWO is developing its business model going forward. At the end of March 2012, a smaller SWO Core Unit relocated to Dennett House in Taunton. We are grateful to the South West Councils Leaders and Chief Executives for providing SWO with part-funding and accommodation over the next three years. We have a growing list of associates providing a flexible bank of skills to respond to demand for analytical capacity - from profiling and data analysis, to bid development and project evaluation. As a social enterprise, income from project commissions, training and events will help us continue providing a signposting and helpdesk service.

The lack of contiguous boundaries and the ad hoc arrangements

for local outposts of central government perhaps marks a return to conditions that led John Major to set up Government Offices for administrative expediency and efficiency, as different government departments now refer to their various sub-national 'areas', 'patches' or 'coverage'. Meanwhile, for statistical purposes and for some EU funding purposes, the old government region remains the NUTS1 spatial standard with a wealth of historical data available for trend analysis. In responding to the recent DCLG consultation about their proposal to stop producing regional statistics, our network of Local Authority researchers, NGO and other users of data came back with an emphatic NO! The reasons they gave were that: a number of organisations still use regional level data; analysis at a local authority level sometimes includes a regional comparison; and finally, that although the 39 LEP networks nationally are establishing, they are not yet fully understood nor their boundaries identified with.

For our part, SWO has decided not to worry about using the word 'region'. We understand the geography, politics and statistics. However, we are not bound by 'region'; if resources allow us to do something of use nationally, for our neighbours or for our neighbourhoods, we will.

More importantly, with budgets cut, new policies bedding down, and ever increasing amounts of data to wade through, there is now, more than ever, a need for good analysis skills and efficiencies in the way we share resources and best practice. The rationale that led to the start up of SWO still exists.



Vinita Nawathe
Managing Director

south west observatory

The South West Observatory (SWO) networks expertise in order to share resources, create efficiencies and work towards a common vision that policy and decision making in and about the region and its parts is based on sound evidence. SWO is the first stop shop for South West intelligence.

SWO was set up ten years ago to avoid duplication in research and intelligence work in the South West. Its hub and spoke model, with a core unit facilitating and coordinating a network of thematic expertise and local intelligence, continues to enable joint working and best practice sharing. This model also set SWO apart from other Regional Observatories, which were often entirely RDA staffed. The establishment of the SWO Core Unit as a social enterprise in 2006, has ensured its independence and its seamless continuance post RDA.

The SWO model has proved efficient, effective, adaptable and resilient - particularly in view of significant changes to the political and economic landscape. SWO provides and signposts data, analysis, research and reports, ensuring evidence is at the forefront of people's thinking across a range of policy issues.



Image courtesy of Room 7 Design

It organises regular themed events to promote the use of evidence and stimulate debate; and provides training to improve analytical skills and broaden subject knowledge.

SWO responds to enquiries for intelligence about the South West through a network helpdesk. It also provides consolidated network responses to national consultations and disseminates information, reports and requests for help to - and from - its network members.

The SWO website is the main platform through which we disseminate our work and events.

Through the website, we link to, or host, sites for Modules and local intelligence within the SWO network.

SWO is also the co-ordinator for LARIA South West, the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association.

Regional Intelligence Group

The Regional Intelligence Group (RIG) is open to individuals and organisations working in data, research and analysis, who are keen to improve their effectiveness by working together and networking ideas. A quarterly themed meeting provides an opportunity to see presentations on new and ongoing work and to share news and ideas with RIG members through an information exchange, which is written up and disseminated via the SWO website. RIG is open to all and information about forthcoming meetings can be found on the website and via SWO updates.

As well as SWO modules and LINS, attendees in 2011/12 have included representatives from the Education Funding Agency, the Big Lottery Fund, Connect South West, BIS Local, and academic institutions. Topics discussed over the past 12 months have included changes to sub-national intelligence, including presentations on the role of the new Cabinet Office Regional Researchers, the Office of the Civil Society's Local Intelligence Team and BIS Local, and their respective geographic coverage. Sessions have also looked at measuring national wellbeing, upcoming ONS Census outputs as well as emerging LEP priorities.

For further details, see www.swo.org.uk/rig

Operations and Research Group

The Operations and Research Group (ORG) of the Observatory brings together lead practitioners from the 'close' SWO family of modules and Local Intelligence teams and helps set the Observatory's work programme and events. It also focuses on any technical issues affecting the intelligence community that require peer support.

Among other issues discussed, at this year's ORG meetings attendees have looked at the requirements around the publication of open data, the release of the latest IMD (deprivation) 2010 data, sources of information on actual and reported job losses and forward planning for SWO activities, future RIG meetings and the release of Census data.

For all information about ORG meetings please see www.swo.org.uk/org

SWO Associates

SWO wants to improve its flexibility to respond to calls for analytical expertise and research commissions. As such we have established a bank of SWO Associates, with specialisms in different areas and collectively with a wealth of experience gained from working in different organisations. SWO will put forward Associates for opportunities they are suited to.

SWO Associates are also encouraged to identify areas of work, or calls to tender, where there is advantage in collaborating under a SWO banner. The network of skilled individuals is not limited to the South West and SWO aims to develop a national Knowledge and Intelligence Network.

If you are interested in finding out more see www.swo.org.uk/associates

events

Through 2011-12, SWO has continued to organise a range of events and training sessions to help disseminate some of our network's work and findings, to push forward debate on key issues, and to support our members through professional development and the sharing of best practice.

Annual Conference 2011

Against a backdrop of spending cuts and widespread reform of public services, SWO organised its eighth Annual Conference in May 2011 to look at the role of evidence in policy and decision making at a time of austerity. With expert speakers from a variety of policy disciplines, the event challenged whether evidence is a luxury or a necessity.

Delegates, convening at Somerset County Cricket Club in Taunton, heard from Janice Morphet (Visiting Professor, Bartlett School of Planning, UCL; Planning Committee London 2012 and former Local Authority Chief Executive) who spoke on evidence in planning and delivery; Dr Annette Boaz (Kings College), on the barriers to improving the use of evidence in policy-making; Paul Davidson (Local e-Government Standards Body), who explored open and linked data possibilities; and Phil Norrey (Chief Executive, Devon County Council), who spoke of the importance of research skills and collaboration between Local Authorities at the current time. For all

speakers and presentations see www.swo.org.uk/conference2011

Prospects for Private Sector Jobs Growth

The Coalition Government is keen to increase private sector jobs growth, rebalance the economy and decentralise power to local communities. But faced with much reduced public spending, together with significant changes to the infrastructure that previously supported economic development and business growth, how feasible is this aim? That was the question behind a major piece of analysis published by the Observatory in autumn 2011. The Prospects for Private Sector Jobs Growth reports,

compiled by the Economy Module and the Skills and Learning Module, were presented in early November at an event held in Taunton attended by LEP representatives, Local Authority Economic Development Officers and the business community. Analysis, which pointed towards an 'uphill battle' to rebalance the local economy and only 'modest prospects' that jobs for the region's unemployed will come from the private sector, was widely reported in the local and regional media.

For presentations from the day, and to download the reports see www.swo.org.uk/events/prospects-for-private-sector-growth



Photo courtesy of Andrew Dunne (Prospects event)



Housing and Planning Launch

With development continuing throughout the year (see p12), a formal launch event for the new SWO Housing and Planning Module took place in late November to explore the current context for housing and planning policy in view of widespread changes. Speakers included Professor Steve Wilcox (University of York), who looked at changes to housing finance and benefits; Tim Watton (Spatial Planning and Environmental Service Manager from Gloucester City Council), who looked at planning for housing at the local level; and Alan Fox (Cornwall Community Land Trust), on how national policy changes are impacting at a local level.

For presentations from the event see www.swo.org.uk/events/housing-planning-module-launch

Analysis and the Use of Evidence

Building on previous events, including the Conference and in particular Annette Boaz's presentation on the need to develop and nurture skills in the workplace to use and present evidence effectively, SWO organised a one-day masterclass in February to focus on the use of analysis and evidence in policy-making. Delivered by Dr Phil Davies, Director at Oxford Evidentia (a research company specialising in making evidence accessible) and former Deputy Director of the Government's Social Research Unit, the course looked at how individuals might use different types of evidence in their work, what constitutes high quality evidence and what are the best ways promote its use in policy. This included actively engaging with policy, communicating research and ensuring evidence is of high quality. For highlights from the day see www.swo.org.uk/events/analysis-and-the-use-of-evidence

Economics and the Economy 2012

In March, SWO ran a course led by Nigel Jump (Strategic Economics Ltd; University of Bath; and former Chief Economist at the South West Regional Development Agency) exploring economics and the economy in 2012. This took delegates through some of the principles of economics for development and also how to use these to interpret current economic trends and policies. It also looked at the prospects for and needs of local economies in the medium term.

Research Methods and Statistics

In partnership with Plymouth University, SWO organised a number of research and statistics workshops over 2011-12. Courses offered range from Introductory Statistics, covering descriptive statistics, data types and displays, and techniques such as inferential statistics and confidence intervals; Intermediate Statistics, which introduces causality, hypothesis testing and correlation; Introductions to Qualitative and Quantitative Research and Design; plus Detailed Survey Design. None of these courses have pre-requisites and are open to all. For more on future courses, see p22.

SWO is always grateful to receive feedback about events and we are open to requests for future training events. See www.swo.org.uk/events or e-mail feedback@swo.org.uk

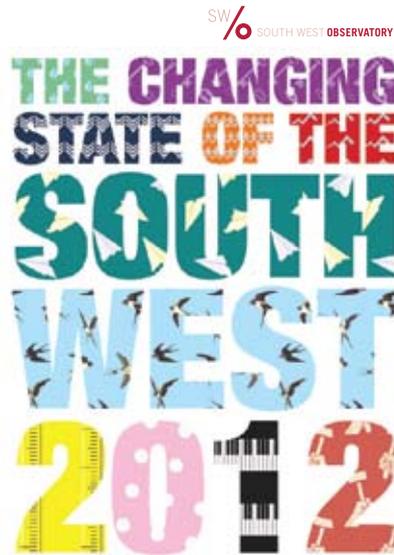
publications

Changing State of the South West 2012

At the end of 2011-12, SWO launched the latest edition of its State of the South West series, providing up-to-date analysis on issues across key policy themes. Since 2004 SWO has drawn together expertise from across its network to produce the report and the publication helps build a shared evidence base for the region. Chapters include population and migration, the economy and labour market, skills and learning, transport, housing and planning, the environment and natural resources, public health, crime, social and welfare and culture.

The most recent report, set within the context of widespread and unprecedented reform of public policy, governance and delivery structures, sets out to make sense of the current situation and to contemplate what might lie ahead. In addition to highlighting major themes and key regional datasets, contributors to the publication were asked to comment on the current policy context for their sector and the possible implications of changes.

This year's report again highlights that the South West has a greater proportion of people of pensionable age than any other region - almost 20% of the population; something that is set to rise further, to over a quarter, by 2030. With the latest GDP figures (time of writing) marking the UK's return to recession, and the threat of the eurozone crisis ever-present, uncertainty in the economy



is a central theme that has an impact on all policy areas. The economy and labour market chapters point towards the multiple economic challenges faced - in particular in the rebalancing of the economy towards the private sector. Against this, the skills and learning chapter highlights challenges in relation to young people not in employment, education and training (NEET), funding changes for higher education and future jobs prospects. The potential role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) is a common theme throughout in helping to define priorities and in administering key funding.

Localism and decentralisation is another important theme addressed within the report. From the transfer of health and social care functions to

Local Authorities, to neighbourhood planning initiatives, right through to proposals for elected Mayors and Police Commissioners, the government's vision will have an impact across policy areas. Such plans will bring with them both opportunities and uncertainties. In the absence of the RSS, for example, for local planning authorities a challenge will be to attend to specific local needs without being constrained by administrative boundaries and not working to the detriment of neighbours. With high levels of civic participation, volunteering and an active 'third sector', the South West looks well placed to capitalise on Big Society ideals, but with economic uncertainty comes new challenges over support and funding. To access the online edition, see www.swo.org.uk/sotsw2012

Briefings

In addition to a regular series of data alerts produced by Modules in the SWO network, a range of briefing papers were compiled over 2011-12 covering a variety of policy issues. Topics included changes to *Housing and Planning legislation* (April 2011), an update on the *Open Data initiative* (August 2011), *Enterprise Zones in the UK since 1980* (August 2011), an update on *LEPs* (October 2011), *Public Sector Reform* (November 2011) and the *Environment White Paper* (December 2011). These popular, concise briefings can be downloaded via the website www.swo.org.uk/resources/briefing-notes

activities

Local Profiles and IMD Profiles

SWO has continued to develop and improve its local profile series, which provide specific in-depth context about all upper tier areas in the South West. Over the past year, SWO developed online profiles for 15 upper tier Local Authorities with information provided on demographics and governance of an area, the local economy and skills, society and welfare issues plus infrastructure and the environment. Each profile is made available with downloadable charts and maps for use in presentations or reports and links to useful online resources for finding out more. Click through to the relevant local area(s) using the interactive map www.swo.org.uk/local-profiles

In addition, using Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 data, at the beginning of 2011-12, SWO produced IMD profiles for upper tier local areas. The IMD is based on the concept that distinct dimensions of deprivation, such as income, employment, education and health, can be identified and measured separately. These dimensions, referred to as 'domains' within the Indices, are then aggregated to provide an overall measure of multiple deprivation and each individual area is allocated a deprivation rank and score. To view IMD 2010 profiles for South West upper tier areas, and South West Local Investment Plan (LIP) areas (compiled in conjunction with the HCA), see www.swo.org.uk/local-profiles/indices-of-multiple-deprivation

In summer 2011, SWO worked with the Environment Agency to compile a detailed series of Local Environment Profiles for each upper tier and district authority in the South West (even including former districts in Cornwall and Wiltshire). These cover issues around climate change, including CO2 levels, energy consumption, transport and commuting; to the quality of air, water and land; population, housing and planning, flooding and infrastructure implications; plus managing local resources and waste disposal. For more on the Local Environment Profiles see www.swenvo.org.uk/local-profiles

Consultations

SWO compiles consolidated network responses to national consultations where they impact on the work of our members. Over 2011-12, SWO has lead on consultation responses for the ONS on the Assessment of Regional Account Statistics, which stressed the continued reliance in particular on regional economic data; the web data dissemination strategy, including changes to the delivery of the NOMIS system which is heavily used by the network; the proposed domains and headline indicators for measuring national wellbeing; and Beyond 2011, which considered data options if last year's Census 2011 ends up being the last ever.

SWO has also compiled responses for the Department for Communities and Local Government on its Statistics Plan

and subsequent revised changes; and on the high-profile National Planning Policy Framework. In response to the Cabinet Office's 'Making Public Data Real' consultation, SWO responded supportive of the principles behind open data and opening up public access to data, but raised concerns about the time and money and resources required to do this. To download SWO consultation responses from 2011-12 see www.swo.org.uk/resources/consultations

Communications

On the basis of feedback SWO increased its communications this year, producing regular and timely weekly updates. The 'Friday Update', which is emailed to a large mailing list of individuals in Local Authorities, LEPs, business and academia among others, provides an overview of some of the important data, research and policy announcements from the week as well as updates from SWO. It also includes information on upcoming events and highlights external jobs of interest to those working in research. Once a quarter, SWO produces a newsletter which goes into more detail about some of the work network partners are involved in and features write-ups of recent events. In addition, SWO continues to use social media, in particular Twitter, to connect with individuals interested in our work and to share network news with a wide audience. Find SWO on Twitter through [@swobservatory](https://twitter.com/swobservatory). To sign up to receive regular updates see www.swo.org.uk/sign-up

economy

With the closure of Regional Development Agencies by March 2012 and the scaling back of their staff throughout the year, 2011-12 was a transitional period in the development of the SWO Economy Module. The Module continued to be provided by the RDAs Economic and Evidence team until December 2011. In January 2012, SWO's Core Unit brought the Economy Module in-house.

The Module has consistently provided a series of regular economic data alerts, providing popular timely and concise analyses of recently-released economic data. These have historically included data alerts on a range of economic indicators and topics, including business populations, foreign ownership of business, and some key

macro variables, such as inflation and labour. This series has been continued by SWO, with additional data alerts added on GDP estimates, consumer spending in a recession, business investment and profitability.

Working alongside the Skills & Learning Module, the Module produced a detailed report on *Prospects for Private Sector Jobs Growth* in the region at a time of significant jobs cuts in particular in the public sector. Using the latest economic projections and growth scenarios, the Economy report suggested that the private sector seems unlikely to be able to take up the slack left by unemployment from the public sector - at least in the short to medium term. The South West has been heavily dependent on the public sector and since the recession

has seen the largest declines in public sector employment in the UK (owing, in part, to the large growth in the previous decade). Other publications made available via the RDA until December 2011 included the quarterly economic review of international, national and regional economic trends and 2 important legacy documents - the *Economics Story* of key learning from the RDAs work on economic development and the *Economic Development Guide*. The legacy work is available via <http://economy.swo.org.uk/legacy> The Module also contributed the economic and labour market chapters for *Changing State of the South West 2012*.

Bringing the Module in-house, with content and advice provided by Shane Vallance (former RDA economist), has enabled us to maintain continuity, whilst at the same time use new flexibility to offer more dynamic content. In view of the changing landscape, the Module now offers a section specifically devoted to LEPs, with headline economic data on GVA, output, annual earnings, claimant count and unemployment and business births and deaths provided for the 6 local areas. In addition, important economic data is highlighted using a new data section underpinned by downloadable datasets, plus a brief explanation about what each measures and how. There is also a new economic sectors section of the site. SWO will continue to gauge feedback and work to make the website a useful and informative resource for those working in the region.

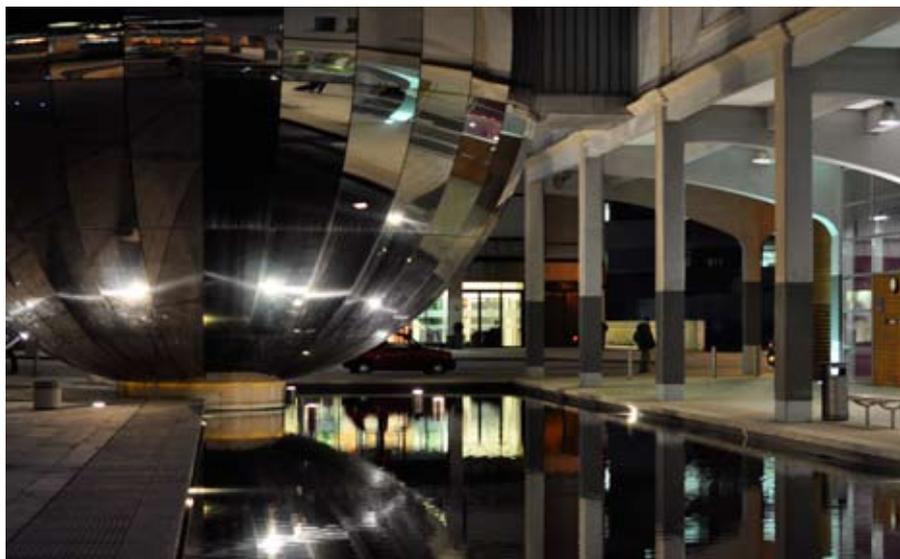


Photo courtesy of Michael Court (Millennium Square)

environment

Photo courtesy of Dorset County Council



The Environment Module has been provided in partnership with the Environment Agency to help bring together environmental and energy data and research for South West England.

Working with the SWO Core Unit, the Environment Module finalised detailed Local Environmental Profiles for all South West areas which were launched in late summer 2011. These bring together data about a host of environmental topics from climate change to farming, water quality to waste management and are available as web pages and as downloadable PDFs. Responding to feedback, 50 profiles were produced both at upper-tier County and district level; even down to former district areas in

Cornwall and Wiltshire. In addition, all charts and maps used within the reports were made available to users download to use in presentations or reports.

The South West Earth Chattering application, which uses Google Maps to capture user-generated environmental initiatives and projects for the South West, continues to be popular and was extended this year to encompass extra areas in Somerset, Dorset, Poole and Dorset (previously it covered just Devon and Cornwall).

Through the Earth Chattering section of the site users can also download useful Water Quality briefings made

available by the Environment Agency covering South West areas.

Also this year the Environmental themes section of the site was further updated, with additional information on CO2 emissions, local air quality, pollution levels and waste complementing existing theme information ranging from biodiversity data to flooding and green infrastructure.

In December, SWO published a short briefing paper outlining what issues those working in research and policy-making should be aware of in relation to the Natural Environment White Paper. The White Paper, *Natural Choice: securing the value of nature*, is the first of its kind to be published in over 20 years and strongly links the natural environment in delivering economic growth, setting out the government's policy towards sustainability and sustainable growth. There are some key issues, not least the new or enhanced links between different government and non-government organisations, as well as the requirement for additional research, which we will take forward as the Environment Module develops over 2012-13.

The Environment Agency contributed the Environment and Natural Resources chapter for the *Changing State of the South West 2012*.

housing and planning

In late 2010-11, we began working closely with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to create a new-look Housing and Planning Module website. Since then, we have continued to add content and improve functionality in order to make the website a useful resource for practitioners in the region.

Regular updates have been added to the site covering key housing data, including house prices and affordability. In addition, we have added new sections including specific information on existing housing stock, land and regeneration and rural housing. Drawing information from the Live Work Network, we added a briefing page on home working and those running businesses from home. This is an important issue for a region which has the highest proportion of people running a business from home. On the Planning side, we created interactive planning maps linking to upper tier unitary and district authorities from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly through to Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hampshire. In addition, the Localism Act has implications across housing and planning and we have made available information about this and neighbourhood planning via the website.

When the HCA was launched in December 2008, its business model was designed to achieve more efficient investment in local areas in line with locally determined priorities. This process has now been initiated with

every local authority in England through the development and implementing of Local Investment Plans which have been led by the local authorities with HCA support. Via the Housing and Planning Module we have made public information about South West LIP areas and produced LIP area Indices of Multiple Deprivation profiles (using IMD 2010 data), and we made available resources from an HCA / National Housing Federation event in November 2011 on learning lessons and planning future work around LIPs.

In late November 2011, a formal launch event for the Module took place in Bristol. Over and above introducing the web resource to an audience of housing,



Photo courtesy of the HCA (Redruth)

planning and LEP officers, delegates heard from a range of speakers covering infrastructure issues, funding through LEPs and social housing provision. For more see p7.

Over the past 12 months, SWO and the HCA have also continued to work with the Strategic Information Providers (SIP) group of planners to inform content of the module website. At the time of writing, we are inviting Local Authority officers to form a new Housing and Planning user group. This will incorporate SIP members, but will have a broader membership base, to include those working in policy provision as well as in data. The intention is for officers to come together on a biannual basis, to share information and expertise in the provision of housing and planning evidence, and to help drive and shape the future of the Housing and Planning module to ensure it can become an invaluable evidence resource for practitioners.

Through the course of 2011-12, the HCA also provided the Housing and Planning sections of the *Changing State of the South West 2012* report. This highlighted the significant changes to housing and planning policy under the Coalition government, as well as challenges in relation to housing targets following the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and future opportunities, linked to the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus.

public health

The Health and Social Care Bill received Royal Assent on 27 March 2012. This has paved the way for the implementation of many of the changes outlined in the government's 2010 NHS and Public Health White Papers. This includes the abolition of Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), the transition of local public health from the NHS to local authorities, and the creation of a new national public health service, Public Health England. Over the last year, the South West Public Health Observatory (SWPHO) has been closely engaged in the transition process. Along with other health intelligence organisations, such as the Health Protection Agency, cancer registries, the National Cancer Intelligence Network and National Drug Treatment Monitoring System, SWPHO will become part of Public Health England on 1 April 2013.

While there has been an increase in transition work and delivery of national products, a number of important regional outputs have been produced including a new report on suicide and hospital admissions due to self-harm in the South West and accompanying LA level reports. These showed that there was a 24% increase in suicides between 2007-2009 and a 73% increase in hospital admissions due to self-harm between 2002/03 and 2008/09. The main report recommends that agencies work together to develop strategic plans for suicide and self-harm prevention at a local level. The report is available from <http://bit.ly/KT7LyP>



Photo courtesy of Andrew Dunne

Another series of reports for each local authority in the South West raised awareness of the growing rates of hospital admissions due to alcohol. They highlighted big variations between Local Authority areas, and a clear link between deprivation and higher rates of admission. The reports received widespread media coverage and have been used by local partners to target and prioritise interventions. See <http://bit.ly/LeYhmj>

Nationally, SWPHO launched a new online tool presenting over 40 injury related indicators by Local Authority in England. The Injury Profiles (see <http://bit.ly/I3wQa9>) highlight the variation in injury burden across the country. They also provide valuable evidence for those working to improve injury prevention.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Accidents (RoSPA) supported the launch.

There has been a steady stream of SWPHO outputs for the National End of

Life Care Intelligence Network including a report on deprivation and death in England, which examined the interaction between deprivation, sex, age group, and place and cause of death, and a report on deaths from liver disease, which highlighted a 25% increase in liver disease deaths in England between 2001 and 2009 (see <http://bit.ly/zxddbr>).

As in previous years, Health Profiles for each local authority in England were published by the DoH and PHOs in England. 2012 Health Profiles have recently been released and include a sexual health indicator for the first time. For an overview of almost 200 online public health intelligence data tools, see <http://bit.ly/fBHHjD>

SWPHO also contributed the Public Health chapter to the *Changing State of the South West 2012*, highlighting in the report some of the policy challenges faced as well as some of the key data.

skills and learning

Photo courtesy of Andrew Dunne



During the year SLIM has focused on working with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) and the Employment and Skills Partnership (ESP). In partnership with the ESP, SLIM produced research for and supported the delivery of a series of major regional events, attracting between 60 and 110 partners each. Focused on regional policy development and improving practice, these events covered: *Delivering the skills to maximise the impact of Superfast Broadband* (for more see <http://bit.ly/K4a2YT>); *Supporting manufacturing in the Heart of the South West* (see more <http://bit.ly/KJg1zY>); *Manufacturing & STEM Skills in Gloucestershire* (see more <http://bit.ly/JW1bsa>); *Valuing Voluntary Action in the new learning and skills landscape* (see

more <http://bit.ly/IGsw3r>); and The Work Programme in South West England.

Supporting the effective delivery of the Coalition's flagship skills programme - *Apprenticeships* - has been a major focus during the year. In June 2011, SLIM published the Alliance Briefing: *Apprenticeships: Delivering the Coalition's Vision* (<http://bit.ly/KXypH9>) alongside a series of sub-regional Apprenticeships Data Reports, to enable local partners to identify and address local delivery issues (<http://bit.ly/JsUiNp>). This emphasis on localism and the disaggregation of data to the sub-regional level was also a feature of its report on *Higher Education in the South West* (<http://bit.ly/JSPm6E>).

SLIM is increasingly working with individual LEPs and ESBs, providing

research in response to their specific requests and requirements. Its report on *Apprenticeships: Provider Perspectives from the Heart of the South West*, produced in January 2012 and available via <http://bit.ly/zy3NVW>, is an example of this work. Another example is the report *New Skills for Green Jobs*, delivered in April 2012, to support work on low carbon growth for the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP plus Heart of the South West LEP. SLIM is pleased to have funded this project via an EU grant, demonstrating the added value that it brings to local partnership working, <http://bit.ly/K8xgPC>.

SLIM has also been able to improve the news section of the website, to extend the reach of its communications through social media and to expand the South West Skills Newsletter. The team continue to produce SLIM-Comment Briefings on topics such as: *The Autumn Forecast Statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer*; *New Challenges, New Chances - Further Education and Skills*; *the Government's response to the NEET issue*; and *the Budget 2012*. See <http://bit.ly/xtAkCf>

During the year SLIM produced a compendium of evidence on *The Value of Investing in Skills and Learning*. In collaboration with the Economy Module, SLIM also produced a report on *Private Sector Jobs Growth: Implications for Employment and Skills* (<http://bit.ly/J283F0>) and updated the Skills and Learning chapter of this year's *Changing State of the South West 2012*.

culture

During a challenging year for those working in the cultural sector, public and private, the Culture Module focused on providing a core research service in partnership with the SWO Core Unit. Working closely with the Cultural Agencies Network of representatives from Arts Council England, Creative England, English Heritage, Museums Libraries and Archives Council (now closed), Sport England, and South West Local Authorities Cultural Partnership, the Module's programme addressed the need for a robust evidence base. In particular, the Module co-operated with the Culture and Sport Evidence Board (CASE), led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (see <http://bit.ly/90g4j4>) to develop resources for a wide range of users.

A significant publication this year was the Culture chapter in *Changing State of the South West 2012*, which highlighted some of the challenges to the cultural sector in the South West, from public sector reform and financial instability, and also some of the key data around creative enterprises, participation in culture and sport, plus the tourist economy. Other publications included *Culture, Media and Sport Evidence: A Review of Research Tools for Non-specialists* (August 2011). This introduces a range of toolkits and guidelines developed for gathering and analysing evidence about culture, media and sport. The selection is targeted at non specialists, and particularly those working in local councils and cultural and sports organisations. It can be downloaded via <http://bit.ly/Lf3hXS>

Given the strong visitor economy in South West England and interest shown by Local Enterprise Partnerships and local authorities, the Culture Module also produced a briefing paper on Cultural Tourism in South West England (April 2012) to help make connections between tourism and cultural activities and infrastructure. The purpose of this paper is to provide the reader with an introduction to the concepts of 'cultural tourism' and 'cultural heritage' and present an overview of the state of cultural tourism in the South West and further afield. To download a copy, see <http://bit.ly/NPb6TZ>

The popular *Finding the Dots* e-bulletin, of cultural research reports and events, continued to be published regularly (issues 27-30). Downloads available from <http://culture.swo.org.uk/finding-the-dots>

As a mainly online service, the Module web pages were used to disseminate publications and miscellaneous content, as well as signpost visitors to information on regional and local research material. In autumn 2011 an online survey of Culture Module users was conducted to help improve and tailor services and products and a report produced by the Core Unit. The Module regularly responded to bespoke and in-depth enquiries via email and telephone.



Photo courtesy of James Hembrow, Captured Studios

local intelligence

Overview

The primary aim of Local Intelligence Networks (LINs) is to ensure that organisations developing and implementing local policy make best use of evidence. As such, all LINs work to maintain and develop relationships with local partners, generating a shared local understanding of evidence issues. Individual LINs have also maintained an active dialogue with the SWO Core Unit, Thematic Modules and with other LINs strengthening the SWO network and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

Cornwall

During 2011/12, Cornwall's Community Intelligence Team updated its Understanding Cornwall work. This highlighted some key messages including: the differences in characteristics of people and places within Cornwall and the impact

on people's lives and the way services are delivered; population growth, demographic change and the future challenges which need to be proactively planned for; the impact of the economic climate, public sector cuts and changes to benefits and the levels of support required; and issues around income and jobs, activities for children and young people and affordable housing - all of which have consistently been highlighted by people in Cornwall.

Over this time, the team has also developed new products including Cornwall's Economy at a Glance; a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment; Child Poverty Needs Assessment; and have further developed neighbourhood profiles with a joined up approach that considers the individual in the context of their family and community and the risk associated with transition between services.

Devon

At SWO's 2011 conference, Paul Davidson from the local e-government standards board gave a presentation on 'linked data' (a way of joining up data on the internet that adds more value as more links are made). He was approached by inDevon to help report on the state of local communities which has led to the production of new web pages about Devon's towns www.indevon.org.uk/communities. Whilst this may look like a conventional website, it automatically retrieves all the data from their original sources, such as Neighbourhood Statistics and Nomis as soon as they appear and are always current. The pages also use Twitter/RSS feeds from news centres to help turn the simple presentation of facts into a local conversation about priorities.

This work is being extended to help inform communities about public sector services in their areas, and in particular how well they are performing and the cost. The prototype is being developed with DCLG and the Cabinet Office to manage information in the Ilfracombe Neighbourhood Community Budget National Pilot, in which resources from 3 tiers of local government and health are grouped together in a 'virtual bank'. Linked data will help the people of Ilfracombe make comparisons with other Devon communities, and indeed elsewhere, and so help in making informed choices about resources and priorities.

Photo courtesy of Andrew Dunne (Mullion Cove, Cornwall)



Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole

Whilst there is no formal LIN covering the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole area, staff continue to play an active part within the SWO network, sharing evidence and best practice with partners. The new Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) (comprising Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole) is currently considering six local projects for major investment and regeneration following a cash injection of almost £6.5million from the Government's nationwide £500million Growing Places Fund. Dorset's County Council's Research and Information group has been restructured as Consultation and Research, with a wider remit, now incorporating the consultation and engagement function together with research and GIS.

The Bournemouth and Poole Information and Intelligence Group, chaired by Bournemouth and Poole NHS Trust, brings together public sector research and commissioning colleagues to provide information and intelligence to inform service and policy planning in the conurbation. The recent focus of activity for this group has been the production of JSNAs for both Boroughs. Also, the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Strategic Housing Market Assessment has been updated, as has the evidence base for the Workspace Strategy. Three times a year, the Low Down - a joint economic and labour market bulletin - is produced.



Photo courtesy of Gloucestershire County Council

Gloucestershire

The County Council has undergone a major restructure that has involved a change from the traditional directorate based structure, to a Council consisting of central commissioning function, support services and delivery units.

Within the commissioning structure, Inform Gloucestershire is now identified as the Strategic Needs Analysis Team and sits within the Performance and Need team within the Strategy and Challenge function. The role of the team is to advise the Council and partners on the current and future needs of local people and communities and to enable commissioners to understand the impact and implications of changing needs. Supporting partnership working will continue to be an important part of this team's role, in particular, links

with the Public Health Information Unit (which will be soon be co-located with the team) and the development of the MAIDeN partnership. A focus for the needs analysis team has been supporting services in response to budget cuts. Specifically libraries and bus services have been redesigned for which the team has provided information to help target reductions to services with least impact on the public.

At present the team is involved in producing an update of the 'Gloucestershire Story', which is based on an Outcomes Framework that sets out the Council's intent and aspiration for local people. The team is also looking forward to working with new colleagues from the Information Unit of the NHS Public Health Team under a new joint manager soon.

local intelligence

Plymouth

The focus in Plymouth this year has been on developing its Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The Plymouth Analysts Network (PAN) is using the JSNA as the sole evidence base for the City, not just for health and social care. Plymouth Informed, an online mapping tool which was overhauled and improved in July 2011, holds data and needs assessments. PAN has also undertaken a number of pieces of work to support the JSNA including: alcohol, child poverty, population studies, which sit alongside more regular reports on the economy and crime. It is also using the three health outcome frameworks to assess how Plymouth performs. This will feed into work on a summary document, the Plymouth Report.

In addition Plymouth is working with Schools and Children's Centre's to define catchment areas using, amongst other things, Mosaic data.

Somerset

In April 2011, an online data hub called INFORM Somerset was launched to complement the SINE website. A maintenance plan was agreed with partners to keep INFORM refreshed with new and updated datasets throughout the year.

Producing a full JSNA was a major partnership project, co-led by the Partnership Intelligence Unit (PIU) at



Photo courtesy of Somerset Tourism/Somerset County Council (Wookey Hole)

Somerset County Council and the NHS Somerset public health team. For the first time this used INFORM and the SINE websites not only to make the supporting data easily accessible, but also to bring together the wealth of profiles, needs assessments and other reports which provide reference material for the JSNA. Rather than remain static, the supporting documents section will be updated constantly when new evidence related to health and wellbeing is published. On behalf of the Council, the PIU also managed a major piece of work to improve understanding of

customers of all kinds. This involved a semi-bespoke segmentation of Somerset households, combining Experian's MOSAIC with a range of the Council's own service user data, and qualitative research in which different customer groups, incorporating residents, businesses, schools and elected representatives, were asked about their service needs, attitudes towards and relationships with the Council. The learnings from this work will not only inform decisions on future service delivery and communications with customers, but also benefit other public service bodies in Somerset, too.

The PIU is also providing insight and mapping resources for the *Shared Community Assets for Somerset* programme, in which partners from a variety of public sector organisations are reviewing assets that are collectively owned to see if, by working together, they can improve customer service delivery and reduce the costs involved with land and property ownership and maintenance.

Intelligence relating to Somerset continues to be disseminated by the monthly e-newsletter *SINePost*, which is attracting a broad readership.

Swindon

This has been an important year for the further development of evidence-based decision making at Swindon Borough Council and across the One Swindon Partnership. The consistent and effective use of qualitative and quantitative evidence has underpinned the Council's change programme and has been reflected in a fundamental reorganisation. A strategy and innovation function has been created with responsibility for developing and maintaining 'one rich picture' of Swindon's people and places and positioning that picture as a cornerstone of the Council's decision-making. Furthermore, the Council has created a

single resource pool which integrates all data collection and analysis resources into 'data factory', which is responsible for developing and maintaining the 'one master data set' underpinning the 'one rich picture' of Swindon's people and places. The 'data factory' will draw from a number of quantitative and qualitative sources, including the Council's approach to locality working, which is providing a rich source of insight into Swindon at a local level.

The Council and its One Swindon partners have continued to develop the Swindon Intelligence Network, which has firmly established a powerful performance management framework for the realisation of the One Swindon outcomes. This framework is underpinned by a robust shared data set and takes a narrative based interpretive approach to performance management that has been well received by a number of audiences and results in such products as the One Swindon Annual Report.

The Swindon Intelligence Network has also pooled funding from across partners to jointly commission Ipsos MORI to undertake a detailed Swindon Residents Survey. As well as enabling comparison with previous surveys, the Swindon Residents Survey has been undertaken on a scale that enables robust results at a locality as well as a Borough level, and takes account of the recent boundary changes.



Photo courtesy of Swindon Borough Council

local intelligence

Torbay

The last seven months have seen some significant restructures across Torbay Council and, as such, the research's team work has been limited to the production of a new JSNA which will go to the Health and Wellbeing Board to help develop strategy.

In addition, colleagues from across the Torbay partnership have been working together on the Troubled Families initiatives, drawing together intelligence to support the project. Future work will include identifying and analysing the impact of forthcoming welfare reforms for residents of Torbay.

West of England

The West of England office continues to provide a research and information function and undertake partnership working on behalf of the four Unitary Authorities, as well as to support the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

In November 2011, the second West of England LEP conference was held at the Assembly Rooms in Bath. Around 180 delegates attended this successful event, from across 102 different organisations with the keynote speech given by Greg Clark MP, Minister for Cities and Minister for Decentralisation and Planning.

In December 2011 the West of England Local Economic Assessment was published, this assessment builds upon the four unitary authorities assessments and provides a strategic overview of some of the key challenges and opportunities being faced by the LEP area.

2011 also saw the West of England awarded several funding streams: £39.8 million was obtained for a Revolving Infrastructure Fund through the second round of the Regional Growth Fund (RGF). This is being combined with £11.5 million from the Growing Places Fund to produce a larger Revolving Infrastructure Fund for the area. A further £1.2million was secured through the second round of the RGF for the scheme Green Jobs: Construction and Retrofitting for a Low Carbon Future in the West of England.

The Government has also awarded the West of England £25,000 to work towards becoming a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) in 2012. The money does not guarantee LNP status but will help bring together a diverse range of individuals and organisations. This in turn will lead to the development of a shared vision and a business plan that will be important in ensuring the new partnership is successful.



Photo courtesy of Michael Court (Bristol)

Wiltshire

Following on from the success of Wiltshire's first Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) in 2010, the main programme of work for Wiltshire's LIN in 2011 has been the production of JSAs for each of Wiltshire's 20 community areas. These included contributions from each of the county's Thematic Delivery Partnerships, including housing, economy, health, children and young people and the environment. The assessments were presented at local forums in each community area and have been well received as a valuable tool in the community planning process.

In a further development of partnership working, in April 2011 members of Wiltshire's Public Services Board signed up to a unique agreement to share information between them so that they can work together for the benefit of the public. This is a top level commitment, providing a steer to all staff in public sector organisations in the county to work together in a spirit of cooperation and support.

In December 2011 Wiltshire carried out a major '*What matters to you*' survey, inviting residents to comment on a range of topics that affect life where they live. A total of 7,741 people responded, providing a valuable set of findings that will be used by the council and partners including NHS Wiltshire, Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service and Wiltshire Police.



Photo courtesy of Wiltshire Council

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are led by local authorities and businesses across natural economic areas. They are intended to provide the vision, knowledge and strategic leadership needed to drive sustainable private sector growth and job creation in local area. The Local Growth White Paper (<http://bit.ly/NcPMa7>) sets out the diverse roles LEPs can play, depending on local priorities.

In the South West there are six LEPs: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; the Heart of the South West; Dorset,

Bournemouth and Poole; Swindon and Wiltshire; the West of England; and Gfirst - the Gloucestershire LEP.

SWO maintains regular contact with local authority officers supporting LEPs, and held a workshop on '*Understanding LEP evidence needs*' in February 2012. Other parts of the Observatory network, for example SLIM, have undertaken analysis for individual LEPs. SWO is happy to explore how it can further support LEPs, collectively or individually, going forward. For economic profiles for each South West LEP see <http://economy.swo.org.uk/leps>

diary dates 2012/13

Get out and about with SWO

SWO is organising a busy programme of events for 2012/13. These events, open to all, are designed to appeal to a broad range of delegates working in data, policy development and decision making.

Over this time, SWO will run six policy seminars to coincide with the release of Census 2011 data, exploring how it, together with other sources of information, might help inform specific policy areas. These seminars will feed into a SWO Conference, planned provisionally for March 2013.

Further details and on-line booking will be available in the events section of the SWO website in due course

www.swo.org.uk/events



Photo courtesy of James Hembrow, Captured Studios

Forthcoming events are:

Census Outputs and Analysis Planning 21 September 2012 Bristol

Getting Pupil Numbers Right October 2012 Bristol

Welfare Reform November 2012 Taunton

Health and Wellbeing 29 November 2012 Wiltshire

Transport and Infrastructure January 2013 Exeter

Housing, Planning and the Economy February 2013 Bristol

9th Annual Conference March 2013 Taunton

Training Courses

SWO will continue to run training courses in association with Plymouth University throughout 2012-13. We currently offer four one-day training courses, covering Introductory Statistics, Intermediate Statistics, Quantitative Research and Design Methods, Qualitative Research and Design Methods, and Detailed Survey Design. To find out more about what's included in these courses and to register your interest in training this year see www.swo.org.uk/events/research-statistics-workshop

We can also arrange bespoke training to meet specific evidence needs. If you are interested in finding out more about this, please call or email enquiries@swo.org.uk

the year ahead

SWO looks optimistically towards 2012/13. This Annual Report once again highlights the breadth of intelligence resources and expertise available through our network. As budget and headcount squeezes make 'working smarter' an imperative; doing once for all, sharing best practice and resources, joint working and commissioning - all the things SWO was set up to do - continue to make sense.

SWO will continue to maintain an intelligence network: signposting data, analysis and reports through its website, quarterly newsletters and increasingly popular Friday updates. We will continue enabling peer to peer networking through the Regional Intelligence Group (RIG) and Operations & Research Group (ORG) meetings. We will also encourage and highlight the development of specific networks aligned to module themes. SWO will continue to take a sector-representational role; consolidating responses from practitioners in our network to national consultations on data, research and analysis related issues; and being the regional lead for LARIA.

SWO will continue to provide training courses and workshops - maintaining, for example, its partnership with Plymouth University to deliver training in the use of statistics.

The 2011 Census results will be released from July onwards, giving a robust picture of how and where people live in the country. SWO will continue to engage with ONS, bringing their representatives to RIG and other events to keep abreast of planned data and tool releases. SWO is also planning a series of events relating Census and other data to public policy issues that affect local delivery.

SWO core activity in 2012/13 will largely be funded by £79,000 grant awarded by South West Council leaders and Chief Executives, and reserves built up from commissions and events in preceding years. Throughout the coming year, SWO will develop its flexible skills bank of associates to be able to respond to requests for analytical capacity - from profiling to evaluation. We will also raise income from events and training, and will work in partnership with other organisations to keep costs to a minimum and charges affordable.

As a social enterprise, revenue raised through projects, commissions and events will be used to continue providing a help desk function, peer networking opportunities and web resource. At the time of writing, the social enterprise is a going concern. The coming year will need to consolidate and prove the business model to ensure future stability.

By October 2012, we will be half way through the current comprehensive spending review period, the current government will have been in place for nearly two and a half years, the London Olympics will have come and gone (hopefully leaving in its wake healthy growth figures for Quarter 2) and mid-year reviews - planning for 2013/14 budgets - should be underway. This period will be a good opportunity for us all to determine how important evidence-based policy really is.

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Thematic Modules

Culture
Economy
Environment
Housing and Planning
Public Health
Skills and Learning

www.swo.org.uk/culture
www.swo.org.uk/economy
www.swenvo.org.uk
www.swo.org.uk/housing-planning
www.swpho.nhs.uk
www.swslim.org.uk

Local Intelligence

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Bournemouth
Bristol
Cornwall
Devon
Dorset
Gloucestershire
Isles of Scilly
North Somerset
Plymouth
Poole
Somerset
South Gloucestershire
Swindon
Torbay
Wiltshire
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Partners

The South West Observatory has strong links to people and organisations involved in research and intelligence across the South West and further afield. For information about our network please see www.swo.org.uk/network

Acknowledgments

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What is the SouthWest Observatory?

The South West Observatory networks expertise to gain efficiencies through sharing best practice and resources to support evidence-based policy and decision making. SWO works with a number of local, regional and national partners to be the first stop shop for South West Intelligence

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