



South West Policy Newsletter – April 2007

Welcome to the SW FSB's first electronic Policy Newsletter. We hope you find it of interest. Please let us know what you likeas well as what you don't like. We are always looking to improve, and your feedback really helps.

Topics covered in the Newsletter are:-

Policy in the South West – what it's all about!
EU, Environment and you– a BIG THANK YOU!
Success!!!! LSC adopts FSB policies
Retail Regeneration
Economic growth within environmental limits – 1st Big SW Debate.

New Policy Publications – FSB Local Election manifesto
- Crime against Business; the forgotten Fifth

Policy in the South West – what it's all about!

FSB branches mirror local council boundaries and the SW Policy Unit reflects the Government Regions. We work to influence the Regional Development Agency, the Regional Assembly and other Government bodies with a decision making function at that level.

More important perhaps is the work developing SW FSB Policy so issues that matter particularly to us get the attention they need, as well as alerting Policy nationally. Energy, Waste, Public Procurement and Housing were all first considered here in the South West. Once developed, these policies inform the FSB nationally of what SW members are thinking as well as providing useful support for members lobbying more locally.

All SW FSB Regions are represented on SW Policy. SW Policy decides what work takes priority and manages the staff member – Vivienne Rayner.

FSB members get involved through surveys, through discussion groups in their own branches or regions and through the SW e-mail Groups. If you are interested in finding out more or would like to get involved, please contact Vivienne Rayner at swpu.policy@fsb.org.uk .Being involved can take as little or as much time as you choose.

And it is all about educating 'the powers that be' on the issues and problems facing small businesses and getting things changed.

EU, Environment and you – a BIG THANK YOU!

A few weeks ago, Vivienne Rayner e-mailed members asking about energy saving and biofuels. Thank you very much all of you who responded

In mid April, members of SW Policy will be visiting Brussels. They are going to help educate and inform EU elected members as well as the European civil servants about small businesses. From members' responses to various surveys, we know that many small business owners want to reduce the amount of energy they use and many are doing so.

But often, as with waste, it is a case of knowing what to do and how. With half FSB members in the SW spending 50 hours a week or more working on their businesses, energy saving and waste reducing information needs to be readily at hand.

Energy and Waste are going to be on going issues, so your thoughts and comments will always be of interest.

Success!!!! LSC adopts FSB policies

The SW learning and Skills Council is definitely paying attention to the FSB. It has just published its Plan for the next financial year – 2007/08. Many of the policies are clearly the result of the work the SW FSB has been putting in over the last few years.

Examples are working through Education/Business Partnerships to improve employability skills, making sure the growing need for craft level skills is met, making sure that remote and rural areas get the range of choice, increasing provision of apprentice ships and changing providers where quality is poor.

But as we all know, there can be a big difference between what is planned and actually happens on the ground – so please keep your bouquets and brickbats coming. Let Vivienne Rayner know at swpu.policy@fsb.org.uk

And why do we put so much effort into training and education? We know from Barriers that members have problems recruiting the right staff. To up skill existing staff, many small businesses depend on public provision as they simply do not have the funds to buy in the training they want. Government is pushing hard on skills to maintain and improve our ability to compete. We have to make sure that skills provision is small business friendly else the money will be wasted and we will not have the skills to compete in future world markets.

Retail regeneration

What is happening to your local High St?
Is it slowly dying or has something given it new life?
Can you tell us what is making the difference?

These questions are at the heart of the latest SW FSB discussion. The health of local High Streets is an issue that affects many members and their businesses. The SW Policy

unit has agreed a series of questions intended to get members thinking and talking about the issue, and hopefully, coming up with a solution.

Members can get involved by responding to the questions on an individual basis or by using the questions to generate a discussion within Branches or in Regions. In some parts of the SW, there is now a formal 'policy' structure to feed back ideas and thoughts – this is very much welcomed.

The Retail Regeneration discussion document which contains the questions is on the SW page of the FSB website or can be obtained from Vivienne Rayner at swpu.policy@fsb.org.uk

Economic growth within environmental limits – 1st Big SW Debate.

The FSB discussion document is now available on this issue. Please do get involved. This debate will form the background against which SW Regional Economic Development will be considered in future years. If we don't get involved and things get silly, we will just have ourselves to blame.

The website www.swdebates.info contains information on the research that is planned and has been completed as well as forthcoming events. There is also an online discussion facility. I will also be very happy to receive any comments you may have so they can help shape the FSB's response.

New Policy Publications – FSB Local Election manifesto

The Small Business Manifesto 2007 has eight key areas with the following recommendations:

- **Finance** - Greater promotion of small business rate relief and hardship relief, Local Authority Business Growth Initiative awards used to benefit business, the impact on small businesses of Local Authority trading and charges assessed
- **Procurement** - Commitment to the Small Business Friendly Concordat, less aggregation of public procurement contracts, more accountability on E-procurement
- **Regulation** - End to over-zealous enforcement, support for Enforcement Concordat
- **Transport** - Affordable town centre parking, reduced impact of road works, sufficient funding for the road network
- **Business waste** - Measures to prevent illegal waste dumping, a suitable waste infrastructure, clarification of WEEE rules
- **Crime and Community Safety** - Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) must make tackling crime a priority, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships must address business crime, planning regulations must not penalise crime prevention measures
- **Planning** - Development Plans reflecting small business needs, faster planning application process, clearer planning guidance
- **Consulting business** - Genuine budget consultation in the business community, improved involvement opportunities, LSPs engaged with business

Find it at <http://www.fsb.org.uk/documentstore/filedetails.asp?id=371>

Crime against Business; the forgotten Fifth

The FSB's ten point action plan in its "Forgotten Fifth" report on business crime contains the following recommendations:

1. Police forces should adopt a national definition of crimes against business.
2. Police forces should group existing categories of crime that target businesses under a 'business crime' heading.
3. The Home Office should carry out a survey into business crime every two years.
4. Clear proposals should be set out to improve regional policing.
5. The Government must give more support to regional Business Crime & Fraud Forums emerging across the country.
6. Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships should include reducing business crime as a priority.
7. All Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships should include tackling business crime in their strategies.
8. Neighbourhood Policing Teams should ensure they include businesses in their consultations.
9. Police procedures should be better audited to include stakeholder views.
10. Crimes against business should be effectively punished, acting as a deterrent and being firm, fair and enforced.

The full document can be found here -

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/documentstore/filedetails.asp?id=374>

Vivienne Rayner
3rd April 2007