Revised paper for RICS Urban Regeneration Policy Panel: Public Sector Funding of Regeneration Projects in England

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Introduction
This report describes the policy framework through which urban regeneration is promoted and highlights the difficulties encountered in co-ordinating the current public funding initiatives to secure effective urban regeneration and maximise value for money.

The problem
For a detailed analysis of the urban condition one need look no further than the last comprehensive Government policy statement on urban areas, the 1977 White Paper ‘Policy for the Inner Cities’. As we eagerly await the publication of a new Urban White Paper it is rather depressing to note that there has been little change in the fortunes of Britain’s towns and cities over the last two decades1.

Many of our towns and cities continue to decay. The residue of the industrial age, together with more recent changes in economic history has left an urban landscape littered with under-utilised buildings and empty sites. As the city fragments, urban communities are severely weakened as people and activities are dispersed. (Urban Task Force, 1999)

Key Recommendations
- Ensure there is clarity and consistency in the application of criteria for assessing funding applications.
- Promote a standard information requirement to support applications for funding, which may entail greater detail at the outset, but would save time in the long run. Application forms and information requirements to be made more compatible with those of Europe.
- Provide a single point of contact within a region for partnerships wishing to secure public sector funding. RDA’s to provide a one-stop-shop.
- Continue move away from competitive bidding and towards assessment based on greatest need.
- Reduce monitoring of outputs to permit more time to be spent on regeneration rather than paperwork. If a project is approved on its merits then allow it to progress without it having to continue to justify itself.
- Move towards a more meaningful monitoring of outcomes rather than outputs generated.
- Take a more long term approach to regeneration (10+ years).
- Move away from annual bidding rounds. improve flexibility of spending profile and carry over from year to year.
- Continue transfer and control of associated funding regimes to RDA’s.
- Encourage joined up thinking and action at the implementation level.

Parameters
This report has been produced subject to the following parameters:

- England only; no consideration of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; we recommend the preparation of similar papers by policy panel members from these countries.
- Funding only e.g. grant funding of private sector development, public expenditure on infrastructure, public subsidy to occupiers and other financial assistance; no consideration of wider contribution to regeneration made by non fiscal regimes.
- Property-led regeneration only; no consideration of wider scope of regeneration in areas such as health, training and education, crime prevention, drug rehabilitation etc other than the provision of accommodation for such activity.
- Takes account of policy developments up to summer 1999; ignores changes to European funding for 2000 onwards and any Government announcements in response to the Urban Task Force’s report.
- Not just urban but also sub-urban, rural and sub-regional (e.g. coalfield).

1. Historical Background
1.1 Robson (1994) identified five crude policy phases between 1968 and 1994:

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Traditional Urban Programme – community based projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Enhanced Urban Programme – economic and infrastructure added</td>
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<tr>
<td>early 80’s</td>
<td>Economic and infrastructure capital spend - private sector property-led</td>
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<td>late 80’s</td>
<td>Action for Cities – Co-ordination and locally based agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>early 90’s</td>
<td>Targeting and simplification of policy; allocation by competition</td>
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1.2 The ‘alphabet soup’ of Government support programmes was described by the Audit Commission in 1989 as a patchwork quilt of complexity and idiosyncrasy that encouraged compartmentalised policy approaches rather than a coherent strategy. Robson (1994) believed the impacts of the urban policy of the 1980’s to have been at best modest and at worse ineffectual. By the early nineties many people were arguing that urban regeneration required a wider vision and broader package of programmes, the private sector, property-led approach having been widely discredited and trickle down exposed as a myth.

1.3 The Government responded by launching City Challenge, which proved to be one of the most effective and influential policy instruments for years. This was soon followed by measures to simplify the policy environment in the shape of the Single Regeneration Budget, Government Regional Offices and English Partnerships. However there was still a lack of strategic vision and policies continued to be output driven with attendant allegations of double counting and inaccuracy of output figures.
2. Policy Context
The paper has necessarily been compiled against the backdrop of the following recent policy developments:

- Increase in funding for regeneration. DETR figures reveal that expenditure on regeneration is planned to grow from £1.4bn this year, to just under £1.6bn next and £1.8bn the year after (see Appendix A).
- Move towards people-led (soft) regeneration and away from physical (hard) regeneration.
- Activity directed to the areas of greatest need.
- National and regional devolution.
- Promotion of sustainability, both environmental and in terms of longevity of outcomes generated.
- Government priority to tackle social exclusion resulting in New Deal for Communities, Health Action, Education Action and Employment Zones.
- Joined up thinking, recognising the contribution of health, education, and transport to regeneration and the need for strategic planning at the regional and sub-regional levels.
- Trend towards mixed use development, particularly the reintroduction of housing into town and city centres.
- Restrictive planning policy aimed at minimising expansion of urban areas and decentralisation of economic activity e.g. sequential testing.
- Creation of RDA’s that have inherited many commitments therefore little room for change in spending profiles in the short term.

2.1 The pattern of regeneration activity is shaped by the policy and legislative framework and the specific resources committed to such policies. These in turn are determined by the political agenda and ideas of Government and ultimately activity is delivered by agencies, be they public, quasi public, private or in partnership.

2.2 Over the last decade Central Government has introduced a range of initiatives to support area based regeneration, which were predominantly administered by Government Regional Offices, who monitored the allocation of funding and the outputs generated by projects. In most cases schemes were promoted by Local Authorities in partnership with other agencies and the private sector. Increasing attention has also been given to the recipients of regeneration activity be it a local community or end users.

2.3 Thus four generic agents of regeneration can be identified:

- Providers of funding - Central Government and European Union
- Promoters of projects – Local Authorities or QUANGO’s
- Deliverers of schemes – Private sector or partnerships
- Recipients of outputs – Local communities and end users

The key determinant is the quality and performance of the connections between the four agents which must operate from the bottom up as well as the top down.
3. Funding Regimes in England (see Appendix A)

3.1 Regional Development Agencies (RDA's) (See Appendix B)

The RDA's are now the main providers of regeneration funding in the English regions. They have been created by merging the property functions of English Partnerships’ regional offices with the Rural Development Commission and, where appropriate, regional economic development organisations, inheriting their staff, budgets and workload. They have also taken over responsibility for the Challenge Fund element of the SRB, round five of which has just been awarded (Greenhalgh, 1999). The RDA for London will be established in 2000/01.

3.2 English Partnerships

English Partnerships still operate centrally, having joined forces with the Commission for New Towns, and retain responsibility for inward investment, national regeneration initiatives such as the coalfields programme and private sector investment projects such as Priority Sites (Greenhalgh, 1999).

3.3 New Deal for Communities

New Deal for Communities has been promoted by the Social Exclusion Unit and provides £800m of ring-fenced money to be targeted at the most needy communities to tackle social exclusion. It has a ten year timescale with funding in place for the first three years, concentrating on residential areas of around 4000 dwelling houses on peripheral housing estates or in marginalised communities.

3.4 Government Regional Offices

Despite relinquishing responsibility for the Challenge Fund part of the SRB, Government Offices are still responsible for the residue, which covers expired initiatives such as Urban Programme, City Challenge, Capital Challenge and UDC’s. Government Offices still administer ERDF and ESF monies and are now responsible for New Deal for Communities.

3.5 European Funding

Merseyside, Cornwall, Yorkshire and Humberside have been granted Objective 1 status with Objective 2 areas to be announced shortly. The coverage of the programmes has been reduced to target resources more narrowly and consequently there is less funding available overall.

3.6 Department of Trade and Industry

The DTI administers both Regional Selective Assistance, worth £740m for 2000-02 and the new Enterprise Grant (£45m) both of which are available to the revised Assisted Areas (Development and Intermediate) to support business development.

3.7 Enterprise Zones

The two EZ’s in Sunderland and Ravenscraig will expire soon but EZ’s will continue to operate in three coalfields (E Durham, N.Notts and S. Yorks) and on Tyneside until 2006. The DETR administrates the zones centrally, with the zone (local) authorities responsible for activity on the ground and Government Regional Offices involved in monitoring the zones.
3.8 Housing Corporation
The Social Housing Grant, administered by the Housing Corporation and Local Authority budgets, funds residential development creating affordable housing. Government Regional Offices are still responsible for the residue of Estate Action and Housing Action Trust programmes.

3.9 English Heritage
English Heritage have recently addressed the need for support for historic buildings in regeneration areas by offering a new integrated approach to conservation led regeneration in partnership with the RDA’s, Government Regional Offices and Local Authorities. The Heritage Regeneration Scheme is the successor to the Conservation Area Partnership and will provide £15m over the next three years for area based regeneration.

3.10 Lottery Funding
Although not specifically targeted at regeneration, lottery funding can be used to contribute to regeneration through the various Lottery Boards including the Arts, Sport, Heritage, Charities, the Millennium Fund and the New Opportunities Fund. For example the Townscape Heritage Lottery Fund has been used to support regeneration to save historic facades and Millenium Funding has supported a number of flagship regeneration projects. The New Opportunities Fund promotes social regeneration and addresses social exclusion through projects such as the Healthy Living Centres.

3.11 Other Sources of Funding
Other contributions may come from:
- Department of Health and Health Authorities
- Department for Education and Employment
- DETR Highways budget
- Royal Society for the Arts
- land and labour contributions etc.
- local government capital receipts or a cross subsidy from the more profitable elements of a scheme.

3.12 Match Funding
Regeneration Initiatives which have been set up to rejuvenate our cities and regeneration areas are dependent upon securing match funding from a number of sources if they are to successfully deliver the critical mass of mixed-uses which create a sustainable community. As we have seen, this match funding can come from a variety of sources but the more sources of funding attracted to a project the more complicated it is to procure.

All of the above funding regimes offer partial finance for capital projects. Most require match funding from the private sector or a combination of public sector funds to achieve full project funding. Gearing ratios of public to private funding (e.g.1:3) are sometimes calculated although the Government has moved away from the rigid prescription of ratios that were required under previous grant regimes.
4. Problem areas
The list of funding providers demonstrates the fragmented nature of the different forms of funding which are on offer from the different providers. Each programme has its own set of guidelines and criteria on which projects are appraised and funding offered. The difficulties encountered in securing successful regeneration which require public subsidy are predominantly related to the inflexibility of the financial regimes within which the Initiatives have to work. This is a list (not exhaustive) of difficulties of the current regime of regeneration policies:

4.1 Strategic framework – determined by different bodies at different levels, requiring different evidence of additionality and imposing rigid regimes
4.11 Recent policy developments have promoted partnerships as a model to encourage common agendas and goals. Social, economic and physical agenda, to secure sustainable regeneration, are set at executive level but it is essential that such practice also operates at the implementation level.

4.12 The use of such a wide range of grant bodies for the distribution of public grants has created a web of complex problems in the identification and procurement of the grants as well as a myriad of bureaucratic systems for the management and monitoring of the funding.

4.13 Regeneration funding today is predominantly area based with targeted funding, through programmes such as SRB Challenge Fund, aimed at regenerating specific physical areas.

4.14 Some forms of funding cannot be matched against each other e.g. English Partnerships funding cannot be used on a scheme already subsidised by the Housing Corporation. In some instances where redevelopment costs are particularly high and one body cannot provide the necessary level of funding due to gearing constraints, this may deter regeneration as the viability gap cannot be covered by the funding which can be made available.

4.2 Bidding – competitive, time and money, losers get nothing
4.21 Many of the area initiatives are secured by competitive bidding for public resources. Each of these initiatives is awarded public sector funding based upon a competitive bidding process and an action plan which seeks to deliver the social, economic and physical regeneration of an area. Most of these initiatives are promoted by Local Authorities, as the administrative and monitoring body for programme, implementation and funding expenditure.

4.22 The original competition was City Challenge which focussed attention on the problems of an area and required a strategy for the delivery of the goals to be achieved. Subsequent programmes have followed this pattern including the SRB Challenge Fund and New Deal for Communities. Although successful in establishing a framework within which to work and target resources within a fixed timeframe, they fail to maximise value for money criteria of those authorities who are unsuccessful in securing funding.
4.23 Besides the local authorities bidding for area funding, there is another strata of applications for funding of individual, stand-alone projects. The volume of information which is required when making a grant application, prior to any commitment to public subsidy, can be extensive and this is a non-recoverable expense for the deliverer if funding is not secured.

4.24 Inexperience by the deliverer in preparing grant applications can lead to difficulties in obtaining funding and the costs of preparing grant applications are prohibitive to some organisations especially community or voluntary groups.

4.3 Project eligibility – satisfying criteria and surviving the bureaucracy

4.31 Many projects, vital to promoting the overall regeneration of an area, may fail to meet the rigid criteria or programme priorities laid down by the various grant bodies. Often the projects are not commercially attractive and will not be funded by the private sector and consequently they are difficult to implement due to lack of funding. The irony is that some of the most deserving schemes in the neediest areas are the least attractive and viable.

4.4 Monitoring – output driven, inaccuracies, paper chase, accounting exercise

4.41 Where more than one source of public sector funding is used, funding providers must each assess an individual project and cross reference with other grant providers to ensure that the project is being properly funded and that outputs are not being claimed by more than one party. This is an expensive, labour intensive and time-consuming procedure involving duplication of administration and effort.

4.42 Where several sources of public funding are to be used, it may be difficult to generate sufficient outputs within a scheme that will satisfy all of the different grant bodies without double counting any of the outputs.

4.43 Scheme promoters must prepare annual action plans and annual monitoring reports for the draw down of funding and account for outputs.

4.44 When claiming grants, deliverers must produce appropriate information, in the format required by the relevant body, within the timeframes required. This makes for a complex and time-consuming paper trail for both the developer and the accountable body when the project is audited.

4.5 Mixed (cocktail) funding – time and money, form filling, one falls all fall, capital or revenue, chicken and egg situation

4.51 Problems may be encountered when identifying a suitable cocktail of grants, which can be used as match funding against each other to bring forward non-conventional but important projects e.g. transport corridor in multiple ownership, community and voluntary projects etc. Often there are difficulties with projects requiring revenue funding, as most grants are for capital funding, which can result in a project being unable to proceed despite capital funding being available, because of a lack of revenue funding
4.52 The simplest form of public sector support is where a project only requires one type of grant and it meets the eligibility criteria of the funding body, the balance of the funding being provided by the private sector or the facilitating body. In this instance grant applications are submitted, determined and when successful, the project can be progressed with relative ease.

4.53 In many cases however, regeneration projects require more than one form of public subsidy to enable a project to go forwards. There may be a requirement for a combination of perhaps European Funding to finance infrastructure to bring a development site forward, which enhances the value of the site, but still leaves a deficit gap if the scheme is to be developed commercially. Therefore, a second grant from a further source may be sought to cover this gap, for instance English Partnerships / RDA Investment Funding. This generates issues relating to the timeframe required for submission and appraisal as well as the complexities of monitoring the project.

4.54 Projects can be further complicated when they begin to use a variety of funding sources to bring them forwards such as SRB, ERDF and English Partnerships / RDA, each of which have different criteria for approval of grant and all of which operate on different timeframes with different monitoring procedures. In the worst case scenario, where a project is valuable to the regeneration of an area but is dependent upon 100% public sector funding, it may be that up to five or six different forms of grant are called upon to put a financial cocktail together which will deliver the project.

4.6 Funding Timeframes – duration and frequency vary by regime

4.61 One of the fundamental difficulties with the various funding regimes is that they all operate on different timeframes. The life-span of each funding initiative varies according to the programme under which it has been set up:

- The Capital Challenge and SRB organisations have an annual budget linked to a finite budget over the lifetime of the initiative, which cannot under normal circumstances, be rolled over to the next year if it remains unspent.
- The European Programme generally runs for a period of three years and has a firm deadline for commitment and expenditure.
- English Partnerships and the RDA grant regimes are currently under review and have an annual budget and rolling programme and, once committed to a project, the money is available for expenditure within an agreed timeframe.
- Lottery funding is a mixture of rolling programmes with other projects being subject to specific dates for submission of grant applications.
- Funding from the Local Authority or Health Authority is generally annual.
- English Heritage Funding - a fixed three year budget. Once funding is offered it must be spent within two years of the offer.

4.62 This inevitably makes the planning of funding for regeneration projects very difficult, particularly where a project is complex and will be developed over a number of years. The problem is exacerbated when a project is
seeking to attract more than one type of public subsidy. The appraisal timeframe is out of the developers control and the failure by one grant body to determine an application may prejudice other forms of funding. In most cases it can take up to six month to determine a grant application.

5. Recommendations
5.1 The difficulties outlined above reflect some of the reasons why there are few private sector companies willing to invest in regeneration. If regeneration is to be more attractive to investors and developers, and not to remain the poor relation of the property market, it is essential that the grant system is simplified and the timeframe for approvals is sped up.

5.2 The main problems associated with grant funding regimes for regeneration projects is their lack of flexibility and the lack of co-ordination between the different types of funding, coupled with the complex monitoring and management procedures. Funding is piecemeal and targeted at specific projects rather than being available for the overall regeneration of an area. It operates within rigid guidelines which inhibit the regeneration of some projects as they do not meet the criteria or fail to produce the necessary outputs in a form which can be recognised by the accountable body.

5.3 A wider view of what constitutes regeneration is required which considers the importance of a project to the overall regeneration of an area and which is not prejudiced by a restrictive appraisal system.

5.4 A more flexible, co-ordinated and less bureaucratic funding system is required.

5.5 The main recommendations proposed to address the problems identified in the report are repeated below. We have tried to avoid duplicating the recommendations of the Urban Task Force and concentrate on those areas where practitioners in both the public and private sectors encounter the most difficulties.

- Ensure there is clarity and consistency in the application of criteria for assessing funding applications

  The rational for assessment should be explicit so that bidders can identify why they were unsuccessful and learn from their mistakes. Dissemination of best practice would reinforce this.

- Promote a standard information requirement to support applications for funding which may entail greater detail at the outset but should save time in the long run. Application forms and information requirements should be made more compatible with those of Europe.

  This would benefit not only the applicant in reducing paperwork but also the administrating body when liaising with other funders who have also been approached for funding. A project could be submitted to several funders with a single application detailing all of the outputs.
• Provide a single point of contact within a region for partnerships wishing to secure public sector funding. The RDA’s to perform the function of a one-stop-shop.

Ideally, it would be useful and sensible to have a single point of contact for the provision of grant aid where a project attracts several forms of funding. A single point of contact and administration would create a transparency of administration and funding for each project providing more clarity than currently exists and it would create a co-ordination between the various initiatives. This however, may not be practical, as it would generate a significant workload for the one organisation, creating delays to the appraisal system which is already protracted and cumbersome.

One way to address this may be for the providers of funding who have final approval for grants over a certain level, to have control of a wider variety of budgets which could be accessed by one application. This would ensure that funding is targetted at the most appropriate projects for the regeneration of local areas.

The Regional Development Agency may be an appropriate body to undertake this supervisory role as it already has responsibility for the English Partnerships’ budgets, the SRB Challenge Fund and the Rural Development Commission. It is in a position to set the targets and co-ordinate applications, which require funding from a variety of sources. This would minimise the administrative time required by both developers in preparing the multiple applications and the grant bodies in assessing and monitoring the numerous applications, as well as the preparation of the legal agreements.

This approach would also lead to reduced administrative costs for both the developer and the funding body. It would also provide a certainty that a project could proceed within a given timeframe rather than a project being frustrated by the time it takes to determine several independent applications.

• Continue to move away from competitive bidding, towards assessment based on greatest need

This should avoid wasting resources and ensure that money is directed to the most deprived areas, however it should be recognised that such areas have fewer commercially attractive opportunities to exploit and may consume more funds than other less deprived locations.

• Reduce monitoring of outputs to permit more time to be spent on regeneration rather than paperwork. If a project is approved on its merits then allow it to progress without it having to continue to justify itself

• Move towards a more meaningful monitoring of outcomes rather than outputs generated e.g. reduction of unemployment in an area rather than notional jobs created.
• Take a more long term approach to regeneration (10+ years).

It is now generally accepted that it can take anywhere between 10 and 20 years to regenerate an area successfully, ensuring sustainable outcomes. Certainty of funding is needed to support such long term vision.

• Move away from annual bidding rounds. improve flexibility of spending profile and carry over from year to year

• Continue transfer and control of associated funding regimes to RDA’s e.g. TEC training money, Business Link and Regional Selective Assistance business support.

• Encourage joined up thinking and action at the implementation level.

Joined up thinking is emerging at Government level but needs to extend through Government departments to promoters and deliverers of regeneration. At departmental level there are opportunities to reduce duplication and waste by rationalising programmes and adopting a common regeneration agenda and pooled resources. At the regional level there needs to be integration of RDA activity with Regional Chambers and regional planning guidance.

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## APPENDIX A: DETR REGENERATION EXPENDITURE

DETR ANNUAL REPORT 1999
THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPENDITURE PLANS 1999-2000 TO 2001-02: REGENERATION

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<td>1691.7</td>
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<td>1377.6</td>
<td>1415.3</td>
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<td>1406.4</td>
<td>1397.5</td>
<td>1582.1</td>
<td>1809.1</td>
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### APPENDIX B: RDA FUNDING PROFILE

Allocations for Regional Development Agencies 1999-2000 £m by Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NE</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>NW</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Y&amp;H</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>WM</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>EM</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land &amp; Prop</td>
<td>11.66</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>11.16</td>
<td>8.17%</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td>19.94%</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>12.45%</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>15.61%</td>
<td>121.21</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>DLG</td>
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<td>5.29%</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
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<td>SRB</td>
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<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.25%</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.51%</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>9.01%</td>
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<td>142.98%</td>
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<td>4.76</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>4.28%</td>
<td>3.05</td>
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<td>0.18%</td>
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<td>1.31</td>
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<td>5.88%</td>
<td>7.68</td>
<td>6.73%</td>
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<td>12.10%</td>
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<td>176.10</td>
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<td>136.64</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>114.11</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>31.40</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>772.20</td>
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Percentage share of RDA funding by region

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<th>£m</th>
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<tr>
<td>WM</td>
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<td>14.78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>EM</td>
<td>59.18</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.07%</td>
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### ALLOCATION 1999-2000 BY REGION PER CAPITA (£)

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### EMPLOYEES BY RDA

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