

# mutual appreciation society

A 'growth coalition' is a body of representatives drawn together to achieve a series of mutual objectives, driven by the vision of a growing, successful, local economy where serious disadvantage is alleviated.

The successful and fair operation of the local economy requires private sector commitment, action on the part of core services, additional resources and potential intervention in local markets. Research shows that regeneration activity in the fields of education, work and the economy, housing and the physical environment, crime and health positively influences the economic vitality and viability of an area.

These fields reflect the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's national strategy action plan. Tailored regional development agency strategies and resource allocation, alongside regional impact assessments of central government expenditure, would also support the growth coalition concept. Growth coalitions are active in the United States, contributing to the prosperity of local economies and regeneration.

But there is a state of confusion in the regeneration field arising from the tranche of new initiatives – some area-based, others not. Many working in local areas now find it necessary to try to 'map' what is happening to maintain a handle on the disparate range of local regeneration initiatives.

The growth coalition project (see panel) has evolved in the environment as it is, with the demise of area-based initiatives and larger programmes such as the single regeneration budget. It seeks to address the regeneration scenario since the introduction of 'neighbourhood renewal' and local strategic partnerships, and in the light of current policy, programme and funding options.

The project is an attempt to develop a single, inclusive body for regeneration in local areas that has clout, building on and benefiting from all of these new initiatives, while maintaining overall renewal goals. It also looks ahead to new programmes in the pipeline.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's review of the wide range of schemes it administers has been considered a paper exercise that has not covered the initiatives operating under other government departments. The growth coalition project is concerned with joined-up thinking, working with existing programmes, projects and structures, ensuring they all sing the same tune by creating one

Confused by the state of regeneration policy and practice? Maybe you need a 'growth coalition'. **Adam Fineberg** explains what it's all about

overarching strategic regeneration vision. Goals could be developed and shared between all the partners who would be encouraged to work in unison in the execution of local initiatives. The coalitions would be the conduit for regeneration expenditure locally.

The unity and coalescing of efforts arising from an organisation

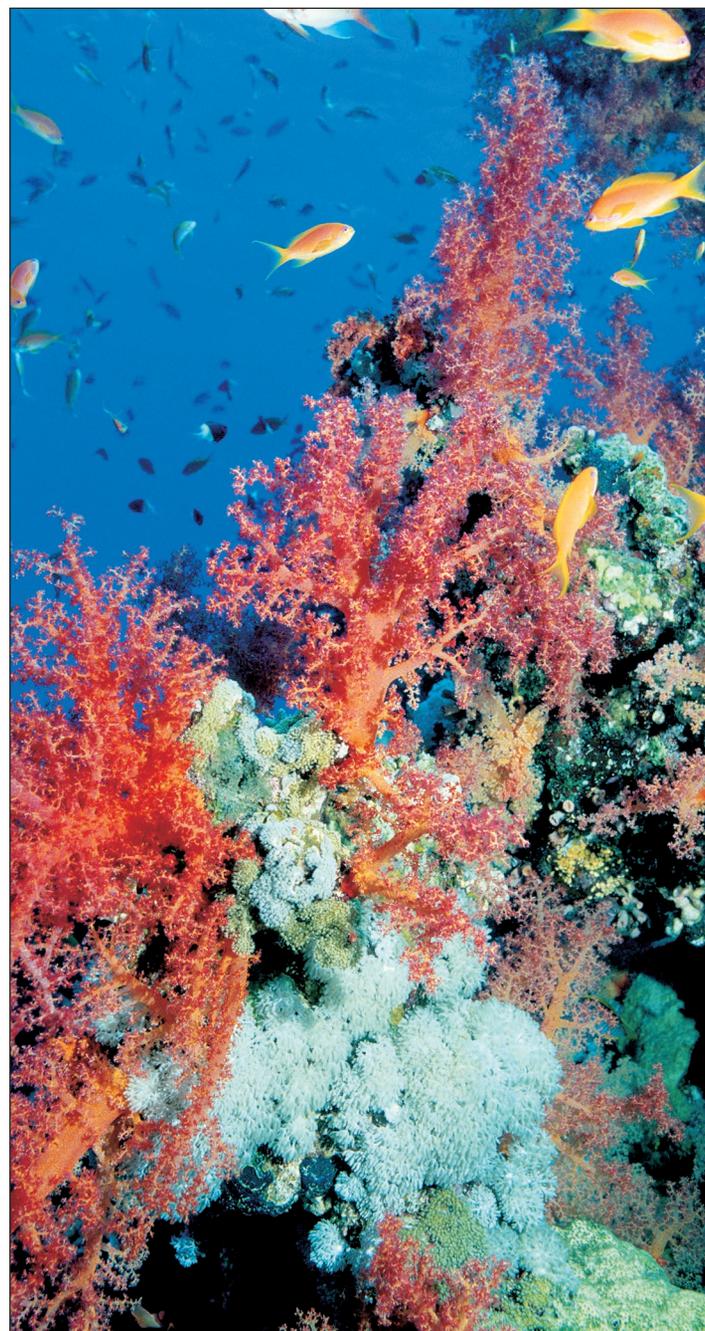
with such a focus would increase the chances of gaining project funding and result in all sectors of the local community working for the common good to agreed objectives.

The growth coalition concept is in the process of being developed and draws on a range of national and international initiatives over a period

of time. It is suitably tailored to meet the needs of the English regeneration environment and is cost-effective in terms of best value.

The concept builds on the move towards 'a new localism' in the form of locally elected mayors, legislative support for revenue-raising business improvement districts and increased delegation and enhancement of local authority powers as a result of comprehensive performance assessments.

**Adam Fineberg** is a regeneration consultant. He can be contacted at: adam@fineberg.co.uk



## key points of growth coalitions

- Partnerships and partnering between the public, private and third sectors
- Incorporates and builds on the local strategic partnership model
- Develops an agreed vision and shared objectives
- Comprehensive, holistic approach
- Focuses on local labour markets, with an economic, social and physical agenda
- May be initiated by all 88 neighbourhood renewal area local authorities
- Local authorities act as responsible bodies
- Leadership and vision supported and augmented by a private sector representative as 'champion director'
- Fair formula governing local representation and sectoral balance in the organisation
- Joined-up working that includes all partners
- Elected mayors are able to make their mark on local regeneration
- Mainstreaming and bending core programmes, ensuring value for money
- Business improvement districts are incorporated into the organisation, with widened activities and interests
- Revenue stream drawn from European Union, central and local government regeneration initiatives
- Performance management in relation to national and local floor targets
- Potential representation on regional development agency boards