

April 9, 2008.

Economic regeneration and climate change remain county's key issues.

County councillor Julie Girling chaired the 2008 European briefing session in Gloucester for elected members, statutory bodies and local stakeholders, when MEPs, Caroline Jackson, Glyn Ford and Graham Watson, answered questions after a series of presentations on economic regeneration and climate change.

County council chief executive Peter Bungard opened the briefing by describing the challenges facing Gloucestershire today. He said the county was uniquely placed with a good balance between social concern, economic need and the environment.

“There are challenges, with pockets of high social deprivation, an increasingly ageing population, the need to accommodate economic growth with sensitivity and infrastructural concerns highlighted by last summer's floods,” said Mr Bungard.

Duncan Jordan, county council group director for the environment, spoke about the county's response to the floods, pointing out that, though much work had been carried out to roads, buildings and drains, many families remain displaced.

“Although we have received significant funds for recovery work from various government agencies, much of this has been piecemeal and does not tackle longer-term resilience issues,” said Mr Jordan.

“With no government money in the pipeline, we are now challenged to raise money locally to invest in mitigation and adaptation measures or accept a flooding risk.”

Climate change was also addressed by Kaye Welfare, assistant director of the Severn Wye Energy Agency, who described the work her agency was carrying out in the area of energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Gloucestershire First managing director Stan Jones and colleague Catherine Farrell reported on the progress the economic partnership was carrying out to sustain a viable economy for the county, with Catherine outlining the key points of a new economic strategy due to be ratified later this year.

And Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company chief executive Chris Oldershaw said the momentum to regenerate Gloucester was now unstoppable, with £550 million committed by key partners since 2004.

The final speaker was South West Brussels Office senior policy officer Gregg Jones, who explained what EU funding programmes were available, what the money could be used for and how the South West UK Brussels office could assist in the bidding process.

Pictured (from L to R) MEP Graham Watson, environment consultant Liz Mills and Sue Stoner, Gloucestershire First's Europe manager.

Pictured (from L to R) Sue Stoner, Gloucestershire First's Europe manager, John McLaughlin, the partnership's economic regeneration manager and Sarah Harries from Business Link.

Ends

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