

Environment & Housing Programme Board – report from Cllr Gary Porter

1. **LG Group offer on Planning Reform - September 2010**

The Government is committed to a radical reform of the planning agenda giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals. The planning policy initiatives that underpin the localism agenda – and which will have an increasing impact on the Government's work over the next five years – are set out in the document 'The Coalition: our Programme for Government'. http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf
 2. The LG Group has strongly welcomed the principles put forward by the government. Many of the proposals reflect the LGA's fundamental principles that:
 - 2.1 People should have the power to shape the places in which they live;
 - 2.2 Councils are uniquely positioned as the accountable public body to plan for their communities and;
 - 2.3 Unlocking councils' potential to play a leadership role is critical to the delivery of housing and other development.
 3. We are particularly encouraged by the potential of community-led planning to engage more local people and produce greater mutual understandings on the needs and aspirations of communities. However, it is vitally important that planning reform builds on the good practice already out there; and avoids creating additional costs, duplication or wasted effort.
 4. In September 2010, the LG group wrote to government offering it support to help deliver on the principles defined in the Open Source Planning document. The document identifies key areas where the LG group can help support local authorities in delivering on sustainable decentralised planning. Alongside this we also identify a number of key areas where we believe central government can provide clarity and leadership.
- Defra's Natural Environment discussion paper**
5. On 26 July 2010, Defra published a discussion paper "An invitation to shape the Nature of England". A key commitment under this priority is the publication of a White Paper on the natural environment by spring 2011. I encourage colleagues and interested parties to have a say in shaping the development of the White

Paper. See further information at <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/our-responsibilities/nat-environment/>

Air Pollution

6. In September, the Chairman of the Economy and Transport Board and I jointly wrote to Defra Minister Lord Henley and Transport Minister Norman Baker to seek further commitment to, and action on, tackling air pollution caused by transport emissions. The LG Group has made a commitment on behalf of local government to play its part in reducing air pollution, but is seeking definitive action from Government to help councils to adequately tackle pollution. This includes the Government changing the method used to assess transport projects to better take account of pollution, better supporting cleaner fuel options such as biomethane already used by some councils in their fleets and putting greater effort into changing the behavior of the public including increasing the use of public transport, and cycling and walking.

Board Meeting – 17 November 2010

7. At our last meeting of the Environment & Housing Programme Board, members welcomed Sir Bob Kerslake and discussed future delivery of local and central government policies and priorities in terms of housing and planning. Other issues discussed included Local Government's offer on Climate Change and the work programme for the forthcoming year. See a note of the meeting discussion at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=13470780>

Contact officer: Fatima de Abreu

Position: Member Support Officer

Phone no: 020 7664 3136

E-mail: Fatima.deabreu@local.gov.uk