

Economy & Transport Programme Board – report from Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair)

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

1. On 6 June Cllr Peter Box and Cllr Jim Harker met with the CLG Minister Baroness Hanham to reinforce concerns over the availability of match-funding for the £1.3 billion remaining in the English ERDF programmes. The Minister echoed these concerns, and welcomed further work between CLG and LGG officers in developing ideas for securing match-funding, to be carried out on the back of expected LGG survey results. CLG is to establish a cross-Government focus group to work up solutions, LGG officers and some local authorities be represented on the group. E&T members also argued for the future ERDF programmes to be better driven by local priorities from 2014-2020.

Bus Funding

2. Building on recent lobbying successes, the Board is working with the sector to ensure that it has the right tools to achieve greater control over the commissioning of local bus services. This month Cllr Peter Box chaired a workshop on reform of bus funding at the Local Government Group Conference in Birmingham. The workshop brought together representatives from local authorities, bus operators and the community sector to consider how, working in partnership, we can use greater localism to achieve better bus services for local communities

Street works

3. The Board has been lobbying government on behalf of the sector to increase the powers that local authorities have to compel utility companies to improve the quality of highways reinstatement. Following our representations, the Minister, Norman Baker MP wrote to Cllr Box this month confirming the intention to introduce regulations on lane rental and to remove the requirement for local authority permit schemes in England to be approved by the Secretary of State. These are steps in the right direction, but the Board will continue to press for greater powers for local authorities in this area.

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