

European and International Programme Board - report from Cllr Dave Wilcox (Chairman)

1. September has been a busy month, with the European bodies and international partners returning after their summer break. EIPB members, other LG Group members and I have been active, lobbying in Whitehall and Brussels on behalf of our member councils, seeking to maximise future EU funding. I have detailed our latest lobbying work below.
2. There continues to be demand from sister LGAs and Eastern European partners for UK support in developing democracy internationally and to share best practice. In this report, I have highlighted some of the important work that we have been doing to response to these requests.

Our lobbying work

3. Public Procurement: Our Chairman met with the CLG Secretary of State to develop work to help councils to ensure that local areas benefit as much as possible from public procurement contracts. As a result the LG Group and Local Partnerships will be working with the Cabinet Office to ensure that councils are given the best advice on 'buying local' to help them boost local enterprise and employment whilst remaining in line with EU competition rules.
4. EU Funds: Cllr Flo Clucas from Liverpool has been appointed by the EU Committee of the Regions (where she represents the LG Group) as the EU-wide spokesperson for local councils on the EU's budget for 2014-20. This debate will help define the future of the £8billion EU funds currently invested in the UK. This high-profile role has involved intensive meetings with Commissioners, EU officials and MEPs. Her report, calling for greater opportunities and involvement for local authorities in all aspects of EU funds, will be available by the end of the year. She is being supported by LG Group staff in Brussels.

Working with sister LGA

5. As I set out in my introduction, we have many requests to support sister LGAs in developing services and strengthening local governance. This work is supported by external resources and through our work with the EU Committee of Regions and Council of Europe. Some example of our recent work is below. The key issue for colleague to consider is that learning and practice from our councils continues to be actively sought by colleagues from around the world. More importantly, we improve our services from learning from our international peers.
6. Pan-African Peer Review: We have been commissioned to support the development of pilot peer reviews between African LGAs. After the successful

delivery of training in June to pan-African LGA staff by our peer support team, we are now supporting the pan-African LGA in five pilot projects. The selection process for the political and managerial peers from the UK to shadow these pilot reviews will be commencing shortly. The selection of the political peers will be made by political groups, national peers and myself as E&I Board Chair.

7. Supporting trade investment: The Foreign Office made an approach to the LG Group a year ago to support the Government's efforts to build UK trade with Mexico. As part of this work, we will be sharing local government work on climate change with our sister organisation and presenting at their annual conference. This work is funded by the FCO.
8. Commonwealth Good Practice Scheme: The Commonwealth LGA works with DFID to promote good governance across the Commonwealth. Through this DFID funded programme, the LG Group was asked to run two schemes to support local governance in South Africa and Pakistan. The schemes come to end this month. I attended the exit event in South Africa last week which showcased learning from a number of local economic development projects between the UK and South African councils. On 18 October, the Board will be hosting a dissemination seminar in London on the work of the Pakistan project.
9. Grassroots democracy in Eastern Europe: Through the EU Committee of Regions, Cllr Gordon Keymer represented UK councils at an inaugural meeting of a new EU partnership (CORLEAP). The meeting looked at how LGAs across the EU could provide targeted policy guidance, legal assistance and technical expertise to Eastern Partnership countries, in order to develop the capacity of local democratic structures. This new partnership, supported by the EU, covers the countries of the former Soviet Union, many of whom are likely future candidates for EU membership.
10. Local Government Summit on Roma Through the Council of Europe, Cllr John Warmisham (Salford) chaired a conference of 400 people to discussing practical ways of removing obstacles to Roma inclusion in European society. The conference looked at education housing, health care, employment and managing diversity.
11. These examples show where we are able to support our colleagues in strengthening democracy worldwide. Every year the Congress of the Council of Europe supports a Local Democracy Week. This year's event (from 10-16 October 2011) will highlight human rights as a fundamental component of local democracy. Please check out the website at:
http://www.coe.int/t/congress/demoweek/default_en.asp

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