

Item 4d

Environment and Housing Programme Board – report from Cllr David Parsons CBE (Chairman)

Understanding the National Planning Policy Framework – LGA Event

1. I chaired the LGA event on Understanding the National Planning Policy Framework on 10 October. This was an extremely successful event, and we heard the latest thinking from and had an opportunity to put our questions and comments to those involved in shaping the NPPF at the highest level. Greg Clark MP, Minister for Decentralisation and Cities gave the opening address, which was followed up by several plenary and workshop sessions focussing on moving the NPPF from rhetoric to reality.
2. Since then, we have submitted our response to the consultation and secured important commitments from the Government on the NPPF. Greg Clark MP has made a commitment in a Written Ministerial Statement that the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development would be "balanced". He has also said that "appropriate" time would need to be given for transitional arrangements before the new planning framework comes into place.

Total Environment

3. On 25 October, Board members, representatives from local authorities, Defra, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission met to celebrate a year of work under the Total Environment initiative. Attendees heard from Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA, and Richard Benyon MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries on the importance of continuing to support local government's innovative work on complex issues with Defra and its agencies. Places also shared their successes and plans for the future of locally-led working. Presentations from the day are available on the Total Environment Community of Practice at <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/c/7970653/home.do>

Metal Theft

4. Cllrs Clare Whelan and Clyde Loakes from the Environment and Housing Programme met with Cllr Mehboob Khan, Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Programme Board on 26 October to discuss the issue of metal theft, which is of mutual interest to both Boards. Metal theft is increasingly being raised by member authorities of the LGA as an issue, and is also being discussed with increasing frequency in Parliament and members discussed the current legislation around scrap metal dealers, what next steps are being considered by the Government, and how the LGA should approach this issue in the future.

All Party Parliamentary Flood Prevention Group

5. Cllr Eddy Poll presented to the All Party Parliamentary Flood Prevention Group on 25 October on behalf of the Environment and Housing Programme Board around three core issues for local government: funding, planning and insurance. On funding he highlighted the LGA's disappointment that overall capital funding for flood prevention has decreased but our hope that the new model could mean that more places will be able to deliver flood defences as funding from other sources can be levered in. On planning, Cllr Poll congratulated the Government on producing a concise document in the draft NPPF, which will allow individual local authorities to make their own decisions about policies for controlling flood risks balanced against economic, social and environmental factors. On insurance, and the expiration in 2013 of the agreement between the insurance sector and Government that ensures the provision of affordable insurance for areas of flood risk, Cllr Poll strongly urged the Government to act quickly on the next steps so a new model could be put in place.

Chartered Institute of Waste Management

6. I gave the closing address at the Chartered Institute of Waste Management Annual Presidential Dinner on 18 October 2011. My address considered some of the key current waste management themes, and I stressed that waste has been a success story to this point from the perspective of councils. There is a fundamental role for local government in waste management – but that is not in isolation. It is working with the community, producers and the managers of waste in ways that go beyond practice to date.

Solar Power UK conference

7. I spoke at the Solar Power UK conference on 28 October, which is a conference for local authorities to meet with suppliers and discuss issues relating to rolling out solar panels. I set out the opportunities which renewable energy provides for councils and also highlighted some key issues for local authorities on the level of intended cuts in Feed-in-tariffs (FITs) for solar on residential homes, as this will affect the financial viability of many council projects.

Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) Annual conference

8. Cllr Keith House (Deputy Chair, Environment and Housing Programme Board), Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair, Economy and Transport Programme Board) and I addressed the Adept's Annual Conference on 2 November. The theme of this year's conference was "delivery in the new context" and as such we gave the local political perspective on key strategic issues for local authorities including Local Enterprise Partnerships, transport, waste disposal, the Green Deal and the new planning landscape.

Contact officer: Sandie Dunne
Position: Head of Programmes
Phone no: 020 7664 3070
E-mail: sandie.dunne@local.gov.uk

