

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

Caroline Spelman - 'one year on from the waste review'

1. On 9 May, lead members from the Environment and Housing Board met with Caroline Spelman to discuss progress under the DEFRA Waste Review. Key issues discussed included the powers available to councils to manage the presentation of waste, reward and recognition schemes to encourage residents to recycle, the new recycling regulations taking shape as a result of the Judicial Review of DEFRA (the LGA is an interested party in the legal proceedings). The discussion also extended to the new code of practice for materials recovery and recycling facilities, sufficient funding to meet new packaging recycling targets and the impact of the new planning system on waste infrastructure planning.

Montague review of institutional investment in the Private Rental Sector

2. Cllr Ed Turner attended a roundtable with Sir Adrian Montague and his review group on the 10 May; as part of a call for evidence for Sir Adrian's review. He expressed the LGA's message that councils play a central role in encouraging investment in their areas by providing and facilitating an environment which encourages and attracts growth, and that councils can help the private rental sector by new partnership models, using the planning system to encourage investment and growth, by cutting down on red tape and by helping to raise standards across the rented sector.

Flood Insurance

3. As part of ongoing lobbying by the LGA, a number of councillors from the LGA's Inland Flood Risk Management Group met with representatives of the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and DEFRA on 14 May to discuss possible solutions to ensure the availability and affordability of flood insurance given the expiry of the current Statement of Principles on 30 June 2013.
4. Officers met with Richard Benyon MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment and Fisheries, on 21 May, and the Minister emphasised that he recognised local government's concern that a long-term solution for flood insurance needed to be found urgently. The minister had added that the government as a whole was interested in finding the best solution, including No.10 and the Treasury.
5. The LGA's Inland Flood Risk Management Group met on 22 May, chaired by Cllr Andrew Cooper, and received updates from colleagues and partners in the Environment Agency, OFWAT and DEFRA. The group and the LGA continue to seek a risk-based model based on a shared understanding of risk. The model should also incentivise householders to reduce their own flood risk and allow homeowners/businesses to use insurance payouts flexibly to reduce their future flood risk.

Associate Parliamentary Sustainable Resources Group (APSRG)

6. Cllr Clyde Loakes spoke to the Associate Parliamentary Sustainable Resources Group (APSRG) about planning policy as it relates to waste management and infrastructure, by invite, on 15 May. He highlighted the importance of waste management as a key public service delivered by local government, and our huge improvements in reducing waste to landfill over the last ten years. Cllr Loakes also pointed the difficulties in delivering waste infrastructure, but made clear it is crucial that local decision making and accountability is retained in line with the principles of localism and set out in the NPPF. We will continue to work for on PPS10 transition and on establishing sector-led guidance where it is needed.

Report Launch - Local Authorities and Climate Change

7. On 17 May, I was delighted to be part of the launch of the Committee on Climate Change's report on how local authorities can reduce local carbon emissions, possible approaches to deliver that ambition, and how this would contribute to national carbon budgets. Despite cuts to council funding, local government continues to effectively tackle climate change and is achieving excellent results. Some of the biggest polluters, such as motorways, airports and industry are beyond the control of local government, but where local government can have an impact, the LGA will lobby for well designed, well funded policies which enable councils to promote and undertake meaningful local action.

Lead members meeting with Greg Barker

8. As part of an ongoing dialogue with the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), Environment and Housing board lead members met with Greg Barker MP, Minister of State for Climate Change on 21 May, to discuss how to renew the Memorandum of Understanding between the LGA and DECC, the LGA's Climate Local initiative, and new proposals for the Green Deal and new Energy Company Obligation, amongst other issues.

Green Deal Finance event

9. On 24 May, I was part of an event looking at the financial requirements and opportunities presenting themselves as part of the new 'Green Deal', which will be launched by the Government in October this year. A number of finance models are developing, and there is a significant emphasis on the role of councils in enabling low cost finance. Whilst the Green Deal is set to offer opportunities for economic growth and job creation, this needs to be balanced with responsible financing. I envisage the debate around finding a low cost of finance will continue.

LGA Climate Summit

10. Also on 24 May, the LGA hosted a successful summit led by Sir Merrick Cockell and attended by Caroline Spelman MP (DEFRA), Andrew Stunell MP (DCLG) and a number of councillors from across the LGA's boards. The LGA has agreed a joint statement with DEFRA and CLG on the role of local government in managing climate risks and improving resilience.

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