

Environment and Housing Board – report from Cllr Gary Porter (Vice-Chairman)

National Natural Environment 2012 Conference and Exhibition

1. The LGA was represented by officers on 12 June at the National Natural Environment 2012 Conference and Exhibition, which focused on the first White Paper for over 20 years on the Natural Environment. The LGA's contribution welcomed the positive ambition and rhetoric of the white paper, and the recognition of the role that local authorities can play in maintaining and enhancing our natural environment. However, we reiterated that compared to the significant challenges posed by pressures on public sector funding, the White Paper lacks ambition in supporting local action.

Meeting with Rt Hon Ed Davey MP, Secretary of State for the Environment

2. Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell and Chief Executive Carolyn Downs met with Rt Hon Ed Davey MP, Secretary of State for the Environment on 13 June. The meeting discussed the Green Deal, the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), the LGA's new Climate Local initiative and Collective Energy Purchasing.

Licensing scrap metal dealers: councils' role in fighting metal theft

3. The LGA held a well-attended conference on 15 June chaired by Cllr Duwayne Brooks, Deputy Chair, LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board. Speakers included Richard Ottoway MP who has tabled a Private Members Bill on Metal Theft, Deputy Chief Constable Paul Crowther, ACPO Lead on Metal Theft, and representatives from the Energy Networks Association and British Metal Recycling Association. On 26 June, the LGA's Annual General Meeting debated and approved a motion put forward by Central Bedfordshire Council which called upon government to support a local licensing regime, in line with Government's stated commitment to localism.

Launch of LHDSG Viability Guidance

4. The LGA has been involved in the Local Housing Delivery Steering Group (LHDSG) since September 2011. The cross-sector working group's first products were launched on Friday 22 June in conjunction with the LGA's Housing the Nation Campaign. Cllr Ed Turner spoke at the launch event. The documents are: (i) *Viability Testing of Local Plans: Advice for planning practitioners* and (ii) *A Review of Local Standards for the Delivery of New Homes*. The final reports are available on www.local.gov.uk/planning.

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5. At the Environment and Housing Board meeting held 25 June, the LGA considered an action-plan based approach to the LGA's revised Memorandum

of Understanding (MoU) with the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC). Delivery against specific aims within the MoU / action plan is now clearly the accountability of certain positions in both organisations. It is hoped that once finalised in September, the MoU will drive co-operation with the department.

Successful lobbying by LGA on EU Energy Efficiency Directive

6. Lobbying by the LGA in Brussels and Whitehall has contributed to an agreement between the European Parliament, Commission and Council that new energy efficiency legislation will not contain provisions that apply to local government. This concerns a target for renovation of public buildings and procurement of energy efficient products and services.

Environment and Housing at the LGA Annual Conference

7. On the first day of the conference, LGA President Lord Best was joined by Councillor Robert Gould, Leader, West Dorset District Council, and representatives of the Town and Country Planning Association, Design Council and the Homes and Communities Agency, to discuss **How to deliver development that communities support**, as part of the LGA's **Housing the Nation campaign**. The workshop was well attended and delegates put forward a number of robust views on the importance of community engagement in scheme design, the role of local plans and the potential of community planning.
8. **Using planning to deliver for – and with – your communities** - This workshop, which included Councillor Barry Wood, Leader, Cherwell Council; Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader, Oxford City Council and Councillor Mike Haines, Teignbridge District Council looked at how councillors can best work with local people to challenge the status quo and secure the best outcomes for their community and look at the evidence you need to support you in that task.
9. Cllr Clyde Loakes, Vice Chair of the Environment and Housing Board and Cllr Shona Johnstone, Vice Chair of the Economy and Transport Board, took part in a fringe event entitled **Revitalising our high streets**, which looked at the challenge facing town centres and the financial opportunities available to councils to help meet that challenge. This event reiterated the need for Government to give councils the planning use class powers needed to tackle unsightly clusters of sex shops, bookies and takeaways that can blight so many of our high streets.
10. **Is there a future for Gypsies and Travellers in our Society?** –This workshop considered the impact of the NPPF and the government's localism agenda on local authority housing, planning and equalities obligations.

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