

Environment and Housing Board – report from Cllr Mike Jones (Chairman)

Unimplemented planning permissions and housing finance

1. The LGA secured significant media coverage and highlighted our arguments that planning is not a barrier to growth, when we published initial findings of updated research on the number of unimplemented planning permissions in August ([400,000 homes with planning permission still waiting to be built](#)). The full report will be available in September.
2. We also highlighted our research which shows that local authorities could build up to an additional 60,000 homes over the next five years if they were allowed to invest in housing under normal borrowing guidelines And presented our arguments for the removal of the housing borrowing cap.

Meeting with Nick Boles MP

3. On 4 September I met with the planning minister Nick Boles to discuss to highlight the positive work that councils are doing to work with developers and to support growth through the planning system. We discussed potential areas in which we could work with councils and developers to simplify processes and improve tools within the planning system and the support provided to councils through the planning advisory service.

Meeting with Greg Barker MP

4. On 2 September, I met the Energy minister, along with Cllr Andrew Cooper, Cllr Terry Stacy and Cllr Tony Newman. We put forward LGA proposals to support locally-led action on fuel poverty; pressed for the extension of access to the ECO brokerage to councils and also had a productive discussion on the Green Deal and expressed the Board's interest in developing proposals for how delivery could be improved.
5. The LGA and Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) have signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) that recognises that councils have a unique insight and reach into communities that can ensure carbon reduction policies and programmes benefit communities and protect the most vulnerable.

Rogue Landlords

6. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee backed our warnings of the impact of letting agent rip-offs and rogue landlords in their report on the private rented sector published this week. The Committee endorsed a number of LGA calls (written evidence, oral evidence) including urging government to give councils greater powers to tackle bad landlords.

Dealing with the deluge

7. On 25 July we published 'Dealing with the deluge' - a report which illustrates the huge variety of ways in which councils supported their communities during the 2012 floods and highlights the results that can be achieved through effective partnership working to reduce flood risk. It draws out lessons and good practice for councils, other flood risk

management authorities and partners on how their communities can be made more resilient to flood risks. Download the report at: <http://www.local.gov.uk/publications>.

LGA Annual Rural Commission & Conference 2013

8. With economic recovery a priority across the country, the focus of this year's Rural Conference was growth. Owen Paterson, Secretary of State for Defra gave the keynote address on rural growth. Cllr Andrew Cooper spoke on behalf of the Board at the LGA Rural Conference, at a plenary panel session on Green growth, alongside Lord Robin Teverson, Liberal Democrat spokesperson on energy and climate change in House of Lords and Chair, Rural Coalition and Mike Smyth, Chairman, Energy4All. The event also hosted a number of other sessions on broadband investment, rural housing, infrastructure planning and delivery, and fuel poverty.

Environment and Housing Board at the party conferences

9. The Board will have a strong presence at each of the party conferences, with Members representing the LGA on a variety of platforms, many focused on the need to deliver housing where it is needed most. We are also participating in events on food waste; housing and dementia care.

2013-14 Priorities

10. The Environment and Housing Board Lead Members and wider Board have already begun discussions on our priorities for the forthcoming year, and this will be the main focus of our first board meeting. We will look to continue our work in four key areas:
 - 10.1 **Housing**; Work to increase the Housing Supply, secure a better deal for tenants in the private rented sector, and support the sector in managing the housing implications of welfare reform;
 - 10.2 **Planning**; We will promote a locally led planning system, work to safeguard councils' role in strategic planning for infrastructure and growth, and to support councils to drive improvement in planning, alongside work to ensure that communities benefit from fracking, where this takes place, and are resilient in the face of flood risk;
 - 10.3 **Waste**; We will continue to communicate the key messages from the Waste Review, and establish a Reuse commission to investigate the opportunities for councils in this area, alongside work to reduce packaging and get a better deal for councils; and
 - 10.4 **Energy**; We will seek to lead the debate on energy efficiency with a view to securing changes to current programmes which deliver greater value for money for the tax and energy bill payer and support vulnerable households more effectively. The LGA's Climate Local programme will play a key role in providing evidence and input to this work.

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