

Regional Planning/RDAs

Summary

This paper contains LGA key messages in response to the CLG consultation on regional strategies and leaders' boards.

Recommendations

- Members are asked to note the report.

Action

- Officers to reflect members' comments in ongoing lobbying.

Contact Officer: Philip Mind
Phone No: 0207 664 3243
Email: philip.mind@lga.gov.uk

Regional Planning/RDAs

Background

1. We have now responded to the CLG consultation on regional strategies and leaders' boards.
2. Our key messages were:
 - The biggest challenge for the integrated regional strategies is to bring together national and local priorities at the regional level. We emphasised the need for the strategies to be developed bottom up. In our view, the Leaders' Board will play a vital and important role in setting the priorities based on their assessment of local, sub-regional and regional needs – and fundamentally, they bring local democratic legitimacy to that priority setting.
 - The new local economic assessments – the subject of an LGA conference on 25 October - will be a key building block for the strategies.
 - Without a proper iteration between national and local economic need, there is a risk that the new strategies and national priorities "bounce off" local economic realities, making it less likely that we will ameliorate the differences in economic performance both within regions and between them that have persisted for many years. We need a two way flow from national to local and vice versa.
3. We identified 2 key omissions:
 - The Regional Leaders Board needs to have joint responsibility, with the RDA, for identifying regional skills needs and determining the priorities of the Skills Funding Agency. This will be discussed separately by the Board.
 - The Infrastructure Planning Commission will consider applications for around 50-60 nationally significant projects in its first year, including new nuclear build at Hinkley Point and Sizewell, and associated high voltage grid lines. The government guidance is silent on the iteration between the National Policy Statements that will guide the IPC and Integrated Regional Strategies, and how the strategies should take account of the options around the decisions the IPC may make in consenting projects.
 - We are pleased that the government does not wish to be prescriptive about regional structures and working arrangements. Any rules about how Leaders Board are set up or operate run the risks of unintended consequences, compromising the high level objectives or being gamed.

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4. We are also considering the implications for the emerging regional arrangements of the Opposition's commitment to "abolish regional government". Officers will brief the Board on our work on this contingency planning.

Financial Implications

5. None arising from this report

Implications for Wales

6. RDAs exist only in England. The IPC remit will extend to Wales, but only in the areas of energy infrastructure and Ports. The LGA will liaise with Welsh members as appropriate where specific issues of concern arise regarding the IPC.

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