

European and International Update

Summary

This paper provides an update for the Board on the current project work of the European and International Group.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the update

Action

Members and officers to take forward the actions summarised in this report.

LGA European and International Update

Background

Membership for 2009-2010

1. The Board is expected to nominate its 2009-2010 representative to the LGA's European and international strategy group. The role of the Board rep is to:
 - champion EU issues at the Board and ensure LGA policy positions are reached, where needed; and
 - receive early-warning on EU legislative proposals and to champion these issues at their Boards.

E&I Strategy Group Board reps meeting, Brussels, 14 October 09

2. As part of LGA's engagement strategy with new UK MEPs, LGA Board reps of the E&I strategy group will meet UK MEPs on Wednesday 14 October in Brussels. The meeting will be a series of 1-2-1 meetings based on policy themes between LGA board members and MEPs. Cllr David Potts will represent the Environment Board at this meeting.

Revising the EU's Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

3. Communities & Local Government (CLG) issued a consultation on the European Commission proposals to revise the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), which can be viewed here:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1301240.pdf>
4. LGA will respond to this and has consulted local councils and specialist advisers. Our response will serve to ensure the final version of this Directive fully considers all implications for local government and will be used to influence UK government position as well as those of the European Parliament (EP), Commission (EC) and Council of Ministers, all of whom are instrumental in deciding the final text of the Directive.
5. In summary, we support the general thrust of the revised Directive as we believe councils should exercise leadership in improving energy efficiency, however we do have concerns over a number of practical implementation issues, specifically the suggested timings and the extent of support to be given to the public sector. We are also concerned that the cost of implementing the revised directive within the suggested timescales are unrealistic, especially coming at a time when the economic downturn has put unexpected pressures on councils' budgets. A word document of the annexed LGA consultation can be downloaded at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/3424880> and comments are invited until Monday 21 September 2009 to jasbir.jhas@lga.gov.uk

Management of Biowaste Green Paper

6. The LGA responded to the European Commission's consultation on whether EU rules on the collection and treatment of biowaste (kitchen and garden) should be harmonised. The Commission has now published a composite report on responses received and intends to publish a legislative proposal in early 2010. We will continue to promote our position to EU institutions before the proposal comes out, stressing that separate collection must not be forced on local authorities, who are best placed to make decisions on the most appropriate solution depending on local circumstances.

WEEE Directive revision

7. LGA will work to influence the European Parliament on this issue during the autumn. A key issue for councils is the potential extension of producer responsibility for costs of separate collection from households. Industry has claimed that councils sell around 70% of the WEEE they receive at collection centres to scrap dealers and retain the income and propose that all WEEE is registered and reported and that industry should not have to provide any additional funding to local authorities. We have carried out research with local authority specialists in order to provide robust arguments to counter this claim. Our research shows that many councils do not receive any income from the sale of WEEE as scrap metal. Our lobbying to the European Parliament will therefore insist that producers cannot use this as an excuse to avoid their broader responsibilities, in line with the 'polluter pays' principle.

Climate Change Adaptation White Paper

8. The European Commission published the White Paper in April, which aims to reduce the vulnerability of the EU to the impacts of climate change. An LGA position has been developed, building on our Green Paper response. LGA will work with UK Government and other European LGAs to influence the outcomes of the White Paper. LGA officers recently met with DEFRA officials to outline LGA domestic work on adaptation and to highlight the local authority role in this area.

International climate change

9. The post-Kyoto deal will be negotiated in 2009 and will influence EU and UK policy with knock-on effects for on councils' own strategies, funding etc. LGA is working with international partners to influence the international deal and ensure local government's role in carbon reduction is acknowledged. The Chair of the Environment Board wrote to Minister Ed Milliband to suggest amendments to the international negotiation text. While the specific amendment was not taken into account, we received a positive response from the Minister and we will be following this up as negotiations continue.

Contact Officer: Helen Jackson
Phone No: 00 32 (0)2 502 36 80
Email: helen.jackson@lga.gov.uk