

Note of last Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board meeting

Title: Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board
Date: Wednesday 16 March 2016
Venue: Rathbone Rooms 1&2, 7th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Declarations of Interest No declarations of interest were made.	
2	National Infrastructure Commission (Lord Adonis, NIC Chairman is attending) The Chair introduced Lord Adonis, the Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), and invited him to address the board on infrastructure strategy from the perspective of the NIC. The Chairman further invited the board to engage with Lord Adonis on the current and future work of the NIC and how this interacts with Local Government. Lord Adonis addressed the board stating the NIC's purpose as: to assess national infrastructure over a 20-30 year horizon, make recommendations based on these assessments, and give credibility to forward plans. He stressed that the NIC acts in a consultancy role, and its power lies solely in its ability to persuade other bodies through strong proposals. Lord Adonis further elaborated on three reports the NIC have released within the last ten days: Smart Energy, Major London Infrastructure, and Northern connectivity. Some key points raised by Lord Adonis follow: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The chancellor is expected to announce £10million in today's budget for investment and research into power storage technology.• The NIC have scrutinised the London Mayor's proposal on a North-South Crossrail line, and found the report broadly well founded subject to 4 conditions the NIC report sets out. Lord Adonis stressed the government will likely accept the NIC's recommendations and commission CrossRail2.• Northern connectivity infrastructure projects should also consider the short-term gains from proposed projects such as smart motorways, and rail electrification, as well as long-term strategy.	

- The trans-Pennine tunnel proposal, in Lord Adonis' opinion, will be difficult to achieve with its success hinging on lowering costs and utilizing new technology.

Two further studies on the horizon for the NIC are: the rollout of 5G i.e. the next steps in wireless technology, and the East-West transport corridor linking Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Bicester, and Oxford. Lord Adonis stated that there is strong government support for the latter, especially in light of plans to build settlements on the route to meet the UK's housing targets. He further mentioned that cooperation with multiple local authorities involved will be crucial to the project's success.

In the discussion that followed, board members raised the following points:

- The NIC should investigate making recommendations to devolve responsibility for sub-national infrastructure projects to local authorities. The board also asked the question of how national infrastructure projects will engage with new combined authorities. Lord Adonis commented that it is sensible for combined authorities to take on regional planning roles, and the NIC will encourage them to do so.
- The Board welcomed the discussion on Northern infrastructure, especially enhancing the East-West transport links, but noted that there may be more cost effective projects to consider than a trans-Pennine tunnel. Lord Adonis commented that it may be the case that alternative projects give more bang for the buck, and encouraged regional authorities to speak up and get involved in the debate.
- The board raised the concern that the long-term strategy is not always realised by the action and allocation of funding, and that projects like HS3 must not be delayed due to the difficulties inherent in the projects. Lord Adonis commented that good planning will spur funding and progress and that diversity of funding and buy in from multiple local authorities will add to a projects success potential.
- The board raised concerns that South London infrastructure projects are catching up with demand rather than being ahead of the curve. Lord Adonis commented that major infrastructure projects in London like the runway extension at either Heathrow or Gatwick should insist that the airport operators, should pay for local infrastructure works to cope with the rising demand.
- The board raised the concern that infrastructure projects will struggle to go ahead without a flexible green belt policy. Lord Adonis commented that green belt restrictions can be relaxed if a persuasive exception case can be made, and that transport hubs are good candidates for these.
- The board raised the concern that while large infrastructure projects are receiving large amounts of funding and attention, local infrastructure is degrading rapidly. Lord Adonis commented that over time, large infrastructure projects will spur overall transport funding.
- The board asked the question: what lessons have been learnt from HS1 funding from train tickets in local areas that receive little benefit

from the line. Lord Adonis commented that local areas should be a part of the decision as to whether they contribute to major infrastructure projects.

- The board pointed out some examples of local power generation and asked whether the NIC would be promoting similar such projects nationally. Lord Adonis endorsed this in principle but stated the NIC is doing no work in the next year in this area.

Decision

The Chair thanked Lord Adonis for his time and views, and agreed to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the NIC to be more involved in the process of infrastructure planning.

Action

The board invited Lord Adonis to speak at the LGA's annual conference. Lord Adonis agreed to attend subject to diary commitments.

3 Transport

The Chair introduced the item as a paper requested by Leadership Board discussing the key transport issues affecting local government, and the LGA's work in supporting councils' interests. The Chair further stated that the EEHT Board's recommendations on housing in the past have made a significant impact on the Leadership Board's decision making process; in which case this is an opportunity for members of the board to reflect on the draft report and to highlight any issues that they feel should be included in the report.

In the discussion that followed, board members raised the following points:

- The board pointed out that the Total Transport project provides real opportunity for efficiencies in public services and should feature more prominently in the report.
- The board suggested that the report feature transport solutions rather than just meeting needs i.e. green technology and solutions like broadband that reduce the need to travel.
- The board mentioned the lack of inclusion of parking issues in the report.
- The board requested that the payback on investment in local roads be compared with the payback on major infrastructure projects. The Chair commented that the LGA has previously published research on this issue and that it should be reiterated in the paper.

Decision

The board noted the report and agreed to consider including the following actions in to the report for Leadership board.

Actions

- Total Transport should feature more prominently in the report.

- Transport solutions should feature in the report i.e. green technology and solutions like broadband that reduce the need to travel.
- Payback period on investment in local roads compared with the payback on major infrastructure projects should feature.
- Parking issues should be included.

4 EEHT Update Report

The Chair introduced the report which features a number of other areas of work within the EEHT programme.

In the discussion that followed the board members raised the following points:

- There are a growing number of councils which are setting up housing companies due to changing relationships with HSAs. Can we be assured of legislation from Government on issues like right to buy.
- The Chair updated the board on the housing commission, stating that there had been two meetings so far, and two more pending. He further stated that the draft report will be signed off by the EEHT lead members in May for completion in June. The report should be a positive document and a key element for the LGA annual conference.
- The board asked that the maintenance of existing flood infrastructure be considered as well as the construction of new infrastructure in future work. Additionally, that more long-term funding towards this end be secured, and the powers necessary to implement lasting solutions.

Decision

The board noted the report.

Actions

Lead members to meet in May to sign off the housing commission report.

5 Chair's Report

Decision

The board noted the report.

6 Minutes of the previous meeting

Decision

The board agreed the minutes of the 2nd December 2015.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Box CBE	Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
Members	Cllr Jason Ablewhite	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Cllr Steve Count	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Cllr Jim Harker OBE	Northamptonshire County Council
	Cllr Simon Cooke	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr David Westley	West Lancashire Borough Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr Timothy Moore	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Tony Newman	Croydon Council
	Cllr Ed Turner	Oxford City Council
	Cllr Gillian Campbell	Blackpool Council
	Cllr Simon Greaves	Bassetlaw District Council
	Cllr Adele Morris	Southwark Council
Apologies	Cllr Alyson Barnes	Rossendale Borough Council
	Cllr Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council