

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – report from Cllr Martin Tett (Chairman)

Meetings and external events

1. I met with Jesse Norman MP, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Transport, on 23 January. There was constructive discussion on a range of issues including funding, tackling congestion and electric charging infrastructure. In a follow up letter I made an offer to the Minister to work together with councils and the LGA to co-design national schemes of support and investment for local areas as the LGA felt that such an approach would help the Government to be better able to deliver its priorities as well as serving local people more effectively. The letter identified three areas where such an approach should be made:
 - 1.1. Streamlining the nature of future central government funding for local roads and transport
 - 1.2. Tackling growing levels of congestion, in particular a way forward to implement London style powers for enforcement of moving traffic offences
 - 1.3. Support to incentivise local investment and efforts on electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
2. I also met with the Parliamentary under Secretary of State for the Environment Therese Coffey MP, on 23 January. This was a useful meeting where a number of issues were discussed. On food waste the Minister flagged up that the EU Trilogue has mandated separate bio waste collections (not necessarily kerbside collections). The Minister is interested to hear from local government how we avoid sending food waste to landfill.

Environment

3. The LGA [responded](#) the Government's consultation on the Clean Air Fund. Our response welcomed the creation of the Clean Air Fund and the changes to tax treatment for new diesel vehicles as a step in the right direction. However, we feel that the Government could go further using its fiscal levers to hasten the transition to low emission vehicles as well as giving councils more funding certainty and powers to manage traffic.

Interim National Infrastructure Assessment consultation

4. The EEHT Board led the LGA's response to the interim National Infrastructure Assessment, titled 'Congestion, Capacity, Carbon: Priorities for national infrastructure'. The report examines seven key areas, and sets out the vision and priorities for helping meet the country's needs up to 2050. Those seven areas are:
 - 4.1. Building a digital society
 - 4.2. Connected, liveable city-regions
 - 4.3. Infrastructure to support housing
 - 4.4. Eliminating carbon emissions from energy and waste

- 4.5. A revolution in road transport
 - 4.6. Reducing the risk of drought and flooding
 - 4.7. Financing and funding infrastructure in efficient ways
5. [In response](#) to the wide-ranging list of consultation questions the LGA highlighted issues relating to the future of EU funding, fragmentation of national funding for local infrastructure, the role of Government, the planning regime, streetworks, capture of land-value uplift, energy, waste infrastructure, electric charging infrastructure, autonomous vehicles, water supply and demand and flood risk management.

Strategic Roads Network (SRN) consultation response

6. The EEHT Board responded to DfT's consultation on the proposals for the SRN and its current and future needs. In order to set investment in the SRN, which is operated by Highways England, the government publishes a multi-year 'Road investment strategy' (RIS). The second RIS (RIS2) will cover the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25. Our response acknowledged the benefits of long term funding certainty and sustained investment for the strategic network. However, the LGA also noted with concern the large disparity in funding by central Government between the local and strategic networks. We also stated that there is a need for this investment and long term approach to be replicated with long term funding certainty for local networks to ensure investments on both networks can complement each other and the schemes planned in RIS period 2 achieve the best possible value. Much of the language of the Strategic Route Network proposal shows Highways England has listened to the local government sector on areas of its work that could be improved.

Future transport

7. Following on from the 14 December Future Transport seminar to the EEHT Board, a [feature](#) was published in First magazine that highlighted the potential risks and benefits to the public services that councils provide, and for the residents they serve from driverless, electric and connected vehicles. A workshop at the LGA Annual Conference (3- 6 July) on the future transport agenda has also been secured.

Lane Rentals announcement

8. The EEHT Board has successfully led repeated calls by the LGA for the Government to roll out Lane Rental schemes to all areas of the country. The Government announced, on 16 February, that Lane Rental schemes, where utility companies are charged by the day for digging up the busiest roads at peak times, could now be adopted by councils nationwide after successful pilots in the Kent and London. The scheme incentivises firms to minimise the period of time occupying roads and instead focus their works outside of rush hour, or to collaborate with other companies to prevent roads being dug up multiple times. The announcement follows a DfT consultation which the LGA responded to. DfT have said they will produce guidance in the autumn to help councils develop lane rental schemes for Secretary of State approval and that the first schemes could start by the end of 2019. LGA officers will continue to liaise with DfT to ensure that

the guidance is as helpful and flexible as possible to help councils manage traffic and the process for seeking DfT approval is kept to a minimum.

Press Releases and Statements

9. I commented on research published by the LGA that there are [more than 423,000 homes with planning permission are waiting to be built](#). This helps prove that the planning system is not a barrier to house building.
10. I also [responded](#) to a report on Housing for Older People by the Communities and Local Government Committee. It was pleasing to see the Committee back the LGA's call for a national focus on providing more housing for older people. As we have previously warned, we face a chronic shortage of homes suitable to support our ageing population. Housing for elderly people currently accounts for just 6 per cent of our existing stock.
11. I called for a [crackdown on 'trojan' telephone boxes](#) amid 900 per cent rise in some areas. We called on Government to scrap the permitted development right which enables companies to install telephone boxes without planning permission. A change in the law would give councils greater controls over the excessive numbers appearing on high streets, which are in many cases, little more than advertising billboards.

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