

European & International Board – report from Cllr Clarence Barrett (Chair)

European Elections

1. There have been some significant developments in recent weeks, with the local elections bringing about a new LGA political balance, whilst at the same time in the European elections new Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were elected to represent the UK's interests in Europe until 2019.
2. There is still further change on the horizon, with a wider set of changes in Brussels expected to take place over the next few weeks as part of the European Union's five-year cycle of institutional renewal. These steps include: the election of a new President of the European Commission and its committees; the appointment of a new President of the European Council by the 28 Heads of Government; and a new five-year policy programme which the Commission will announce at the end of this year.
3. The LGA has worked closely with MEPs during the 2009-2014 mandate and I would like to thank them for their work on behalf of English local authorities. As the new MEPs take their seats in July, we will be taking steps to brief them on local government priorities to ensure that they engage with the sector on future EU initiatives that could significantly impact on local authorities.
4. Many MEPs have their roots in local government and are appointed as Vice-Presidents of the LGA to act as its champions for local government in the European Parliament. We are pleased to confirm that 6 of the LGA's 7 MEP Vice Presidents were returned for another term of office, and of the new intake of MEPs, 23 out of the 60 English MEPs have a local government connection.

EU Funding 2014-2020

5. On the lobbying front, European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) developments have been moving apace ahead of key decisions being made in the coming weeks on the delivery and management arrangements for the new programme.
6. The LGA has been at the forefront of seeking to influence these decisions, most recently in explicitly defining the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and their local partners in the UK-EU Partnership Agreement, which I reported on in the last update. Submission of the Partnership Agreement to the European Commission is the beginning of a negotiation process between UK Government and the European Commission. A copy of the proposal is available on the website here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/european-structural-and-investment-funds-uk-proposals>
7. Last month LGA also responded to the Government consultations on the draft European Social Fund (ESF) and draft European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Operational Programmes 2014 to 2020 in England. These are the main document setting out the strategy and priorities for how funds will be delivered, managed and evaluated during the seven year period. The LGA's responses to both of these consultations are available on request.

State Aid

8. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) has published the final version of the Assisted Areas Map, which has been submitted to the European Commission for approval, and will go live after approval is received. The full sets of documents are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/assisted-areas-map-2014-to-2020-stage-2>.

9. For further information on any of these issues, please contact e&i@local.gov.uk

International Links: Learning and Sharing

Council of Europe “peer review” of UK local democracy

10. Following the adoption by Congress in March of a report on its recent review of local and regional democracy in the United Kingdom, Andreas Kiefer (Secretary-General of the Congress) and Cllr John Warmisham (UK Congress Delegation Leader) will be attending the LGA Executive on 12 June. The meeting will provide an opportunity for the Executive to discuss the findings of the peer review - which helpfully provide independent and objective support to the LGA *Rewiring* campaign - and to consider how the report's recommendations could be taken forward in the UK.

Pakistan Delegation

11. The week of 5th May saw the LGA host a delegation from Pakistan at Local Government House. The visit was part of a Commonwealth initiative funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and included representatives from four provincial local government associations; Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
12. Despite Pakistan's transition to civilian government in 2008, democratically elected councils have been dissolved and new elections have yet to be held in most of the country. There are now growing international calls for a return to democratic local government in Pakistan, as well as high demand on the skills and expertise of British local government.
13. We have been asked by the Commonwealth to provide support and advice to our Pakistani counterparts in the areas of public affairs and media management, campaigning, leadership development and corporate governance. Our international partners prefer to work with the LGA and councils on the front line of service delivery, rather than expensive consultants. Last week's visit was the beginning of a new DFID-funded programme aimed at building the capacity of organised local government across south Asia and parts of Africa.

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