

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board– Report from Cllr David Renard (Chair)

Environment and Climate Change

Environment Bill

1. The Environment Bill has now reached the House of Lords. The LGA is supporting amendments to the nature and biodiversity section of the Bill including a requirement for Government to review the impact of new measures on councils.

Waste and recycling

2. We have now submitted all of our [responses](#) to the second set of consultation papers on the new waste and resources strategy which were discussed by Members in a special waste meeting. We also [responded](#) to the Government's consultation on the draft policy statement on environmental principles.

COP26

3. Our three expressions of interest to the Cabinet Office for a thought leadership event, exhibition space and joint partnership submission with our European and international networks CEMR and UCLG are being considered for inclusion in the UK-managed space. We've been informed that two of these proposals are being considered for the green zone only and await further information on our joint partnership proposal. It is not guaranteed at this stage and we expect to hear the final outcome in August.

Annual Conference

4. The climate change plenary session at Annual Conference took place on 7 July and was joined by Allegra Stratton, COP26 spokesperson, Niclas Svenningsen in the UNFCCC and Conservative and Labour Group Leaders. It was chaired by Liz Green, Vice-Chair of the LGA Improvement and Innovation Board. A motion on local government contributions towards national climate action in the year of COP26 also passed at the General Assembly which was supported by the LGA.

A local path to net zero

5. This is the LGA's [campaign](#) that highlights the significant role of councils in advancing the UK's net zero ambitions and our offer to work in partnership with government. It also includes a range of videos and think pieces by councils and industry experts, themed around the COP 26 goals as well as information about COP 26 and our asks.

Climate Change Task Group

6. The LGA established a Climate Change Task Group in April to oversee our strategic engagement with government and Ministers on climate change, particularly this COP 26 year. It is co-chaired by the LGA's Conservative and Labour Group Leaders and I also sit on the Group. At the last meeting, we met with Minister Eddie Hughes MP and COP26 Business Champion Andrew Griffith MP.

Low Carbon Infrastructure Research

7. We commissioned WPI Economics to produce a robust and credible business case that sets out the economic, social and environmental benefits for investing in councils to deliver local low carbon infrastructure. The research will strengthen our lobbying on climate change and a green economic recovery. We expect the research to be completed soon.

London Climate Action Week

8. I represented the LGA at London Councils' local government panel discussion on 2 July. Eddie Hughes MP also took part and other local government leaders. I spoke about local leadership and our offer to work in partnership with government. This can be found on the LGA's [A local path to net zero](#) campaign page.

Press Releases

9. We have issued the following press releases: '[Councils spearheading national climate change effort](#)' to mark Earth Day, '[Councils battling fly-tipping](#)' and '[Local leadership crucial in climate change challenge](#)' to mark the G7 Summit in June.

Economic recovery

10. A plenary session on the importance of place to local economic recovery took place on the first day of the LGA's annual conference. The session was chaired by Matthew Holehouse, political editor from the Economist and panellists included Adam Marshall, former DG from the British Chambers of Commerce, Kate Nicholls, CE of UK Hospitality, Katie Schmuecker, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Cllr Barry Lewis, Leader, Derbyshire County Council. Discussion centred around the nature of the post-pandemic economic recovery, labour market changes and the importance of inclusive growth and sector vs place-based support.

Transport

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

11. A discussion took place in May at the EEHT Board led by Local Partnerships in order to help the LGA's understanding of councils' ambitions and roles with regards to electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Roundtables were also held with councils and findings will be made available via a webinar on 15th July and a report will be published shortly afterwards. The findings will be used to inform national policy and resources, including the work of OZEV.

Parking

12. Since the beginning of the pandemic the LGA has worked closely with the British Parking Association and London Councils on good practice parking operational advice for councils. In parallel, and during the initial stages of the pandemic, the LGA made a voluntary agreement with the Government to provide critical health workers and volunteers with free parking as they dealt with the national emergency. Subsequently, the Government issued a free parking pass for those eligible. Whilst this agreement operated fine when traffic levels were low, it became problematical for councils as traffic levels reverted back to normal. With the roadmap to full reopening in sight, the LGA successfully worked with MHCLG to pull back from the voluntary agreement to full local control.

Buses

13. The Buses Minister, Baroness Vere, wrote to all bus operators and local transport authorities giving formal notification of the 8-week period for the Coronavirus Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) and announcement of bus recovery funding. In recognition of the continued support that will be required for local bus services the Government is making available £226.5m in bus recovery funding, which will be made available to the sector until the end of the current financial year. A viable bus service will be important in order to play a meaningful role in the decarbonisation of transport and to connect people to jobs, services and wider society.

Housing, Planning and Homelessness

14. I chaired a session on council housebuilding on the first day of the annual conference. Panellists included Polly Neate, Chief Executive of Shelter, John Boughton, Author and Social Historian, Councillor John Adams, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Gateshead Council and Julie Abbey-Taylor from Rentplus. Discussion focused on how investment in new council homes would accelerate our recovery from the impact of COVID-19, support a boost in local green jobs and skills, and ensure delivery of much needed carbon neutral homes.
15. On the last day of annual conference, Councillor Adele Morris chaired a session on planning reform. Panellists included Ojay McDonald, Chief Executive of the Association of Town and City Management; Professor Janice Morphet, the Bartlett School of Planning UCL and Mike Kiely, Chair of the Planning Officers Society. Discussion focused on what the new planning system may mean for communities as we recover from the pandemic and how we ensure communities and councils are empowered to lead their local recoveries.

Future Foundations council housing campaign

16. The [Future Foundations](#) campaign has been developed to highlight positive council housing stories. The online hub features case studies, podcasts, think pieces, and other resources for member councils. The campaign also covers planning and homelessness issues through topics such as the financial impact of building 100,000 council homes per year, how council housing can support people who are homeless into safe homes, and how councils can tackle their climate challenge and support community resilience by improving homes and places. The hub provides a one-stop shop for content that will be added to over time and used for future lobbying and housing campaigns.

Parliamentary Activity

17. We have briefed MPs for parliamentary debates on the following: [planning](#); [the future of the planning system and the upcoming Planning Bill](#).
18. Cllr Rachel Blake gave evidence to the HCLG Committee on 21 June as part of the Committee's inquiry into local government and the path to net zero
19. We contributed lines on planning to an evidence submission to the APPG for Rural Business and the Rural Powerhouse inquiry.

Press Releases and Statements

20. We have issued proactive press releases on the following: Eight in 10 say it is important to have a say on all housing in their local area; [430% increase in B&B spend for people who are homeless](#); [plan needed to prevent families at 'cliff-edge' of homelessness](#). We have also made public statements on the following: [response to launch of new planning apps](#); [response to ONS rough sleeping figures](#); [response to HCLG Committee report on planning](#).

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