

Meeting: Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board

Date: 24 January 2023



Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board Updates

Purpose of report

For information

Summary

This paper provides updates on a range of issues within the remit of the Board that have not already been covered in other Board agenda items.

Recommendation

That the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board note the update

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Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Update Paper



Housing, planning and homelessness

Nutrient and water neutrality (please can this be moved to the environment section?)

1. We are currently writing the report to summarise the policy enquiry on nutrient and water neutrality launched in 2022. Both issues relate to river catchment areas and advice to local planning authorities to stop housing development immediately in order to protect weakened natural environments. We have previously published research on the impact of this on local housebuilding objectives. The enquiry has brought together councils with a range of partners to explore solutions in the short-term and find long-term resolutions to protect the environment.
2. Government has proposed amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that would require water companies to improve water treatment infrastructure. The LGA is [briefing the House of Lords on the draft Bill](#), highlighting the need to involve local authorities.

Homes for Ukraine Delivery Board

3. LGA has been invited by the Ukraine Humanitarian Taskforce to sit on the Homes for Ukraine delivery board which looks in depth at statistics relating to homelessness and housing outcomes for households in England under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. In its first meeting LGA was given the action to consider how best to share best practice on accessing the PRS and thank you payments. We are looking to do some joint work with DLUHC to set up a knowledge hub with examples of best practice and launch this with a webinar.

Investment in Homelessness Prevention

4. We will be hosting a joint webinar with Local Partnerships on 18th January to launch the work on Investment in Homelessness Prevention. The full report looks at what approaches have worked in homelessness prevention, how much they cost, costs that can have been avoided, and some of the benefits accrued by their implementation. A tool has also been developed that councils can use to calculate their own savings. Full report and event details are available [here](#).

CAS-2 / LGA Protocol

5. The protocol which forms the basis of a partnership approach between offender accommodation providers and local authorities has been refreshed due to the service being recommissioned in October 2022. Formerly known as BASS, the service accommodates people subject to a Bail Order or Home Detention Curfew and who would be either bailed or released if not for a lack of a suitable address.

6. The new protocol puts more onus on CAS2 service to ensure appropriateness of location in collaboration with councils and ensures properties are not too close together or in areas where the police and the local authority are concerned about the over-use of accommodation for similar purposes. There is also the inclusion of a Single Point of Access within councils to ensure a speedy response when identifying the appropriateness of accommodation.

Housing Improvement

7. The 2022/23 Housing Advisers Programme (cohort 6) closed to applications on 24 November 2022 and 55 applications were received. 21 successful projects from across all regions were notified on 12 December with more than 90 councils and other partners benefiting this year. [Brief summaries of this year's successful projects](#) are available to view on the LGA website along with [case studies from previous cohorts](#)
8. The 2023 Leadership Essentials: Housing course, aimed at helping council leaders, deputy leaders and housing portfolio holders to develop their leading role in shaping their local housing markets, took place on 19th and 20th January at Warwick Business School. This year the theme was "Leading through challenge" and, in addition to green homes and housing delivery, there was a focus on councils' role in raising housing quality and tackling inequality, both in the social and private rented sectors.

Exempt Accommodation

9. The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill had its second reading in parliament on 18th November 2022. The LGA published our view on the proposed clauses [here](#). We are broadly supportive of the bill but have expressed concern around resourcing issues which will need to be adequately funded in order for the bill to be successfully implemented. Some further amendments were tabled last week which we were also [generally supportive of](#).

Local Authority Housing Fund

10. Government announced a new £500m Local Authority Housing Fund which will run over financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24. The capital fund is aimed at supporting the local authorities who will be facing the greatest challenges in providing move on and settled accommodation for people from Ukraine through the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and the Afghans who worked alongside the British Government.
11. The fund prospectus, setting out more detail on what it is for and how it works, can be [found here](#). Councils have been asked to complete a validation form which provides basic details on their proposal by 25th January.

Building Safety Levy Consultation

12. DLUHC has launched a technical [consultation](#) on the implementation of the Building Safety Levy, and the LGA will be responding. We are currently in the process of engaging stakeholders that have an interest in the levy to enhance our lobbying on

this issue. There will also be LGA representation at the Delivery Working Group on the levy, hosted by DLUHC. The levy was announced under the Building Safety Bill 2022. The key proposals that DLUHC are seeking views on relate to the scope of the levy; exemptions; the basis for calculating the levy; protection for small and medium enterprises; and the collection agency. It is also worth highlighting that DLUHC previously consulted on the levy in 2021, and the LGA submitted a [response](#). Since that consultation, the scope of the levy has expanded to apply to all new residential developments that require building control approval.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

13. The bill has now reached the House of Lords and is in its Second Reading. The LGA's Second reading briefing has been updated and cleared. DLUHC has forecasted the bill to become an act by June 2023, with a number of further consultations being published in that time. The Secretary of State for Levelling Up published a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) on the direction of travel of the reforms in December 2022. Peers have been contacted regarding our amendments. We have so far met with Baroness Thornhill and Lord Best to talk through LGA lines and proposed amendments, as an opportunity to gain traction on the views and concerns of local government on the reforms.

National Planning Policy Framework Consultation

14. DLUHC has launched a [consultation](#) on its proposed approach to updating the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the LGA will be responding. The intention to revise the NPPF was announced under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The NPPF was introduced in 2012 and its purpose is to provide guidance for local planning authorities on national policy priorities and a framework for implementing planning powers.

Housing Revenue Account Research - Savills

15. The HRA research is approaching the tail-end of the project, and the income report has been circulated to EEHT Lead Members for clearance before publication. Both the expenditure and right to buy research will be circulated for clearance shortly. In December 2022, the LGA hosted a meeting with Savills to discuss the draft findings from the expenditure research with civil servants from DLUHC and BEIS. Following clearance of all three reports, we will present key findings and asks with support from media and public affairs colleagues.

Economy

Identifying and promoting green growth opportunities

16. The LGA has commissioned Green Economy to produce a report highlighting the social and economic benefits of having businesses located in a local authority area that provide low carbon and environmental goods and services. The report will be evidence based with case studies and the provider will suggest measures councils can take to make their area more attractive for these businesses to locate in. Focus

will be on the supply of goods and services required for the Net Zero transition. Work is due to complete in February.

Identifying local authority best practice in repurposing shopping centres

17. The LGA has commissioned The Retail Group to produce a report highlighting the social and economic opportunities and benefits of repurposing shopping centres to reflect the needs of the town centre, the community, the local authority, and the businesses located within their area. The report will be evidence based with case studies and the provider will suggest measures and approaches councils can take to repurpose shopping centres or support the repurpose of shopping centres where their ownership lies solely in the private sector. The project is due to complete February/March with a pre-launch [webinar](#) booked in for 22 February 2023.

Environment

Waste

Incineration of domestic seating containing harmful chemicals (POPs)

18. The Environment Agency (EA) published [new guidance](#) at the end of December on the collection, storage and disposal of fabric covered soft furnishings containing chemicals classed as POPs (persistent organic pollutants), which should not be disposed of in landfill. Following feedback from the LGA and representatives of the waste industry and professional networks the Environment Agency has issued a set of regulatory position statements to support interim solutions for handling and storage of POPs material. The three regulatory positions statements cover [shredding](#), [temporary storage](#) and [separation at HWRCs](#). New Environment Agency advice also covers the [re-use of soft furnishings](#) containing POPs.
19. Due to the delay in the publication of the guidance and regulatory positions statements the Environment Agency has extended the deadline for councils to supply information on compliance with the new guidance until 31 January 2023.
20. Finding compliant disposal routes remains a challenge for many councils and it will take time for the waste industry to install new equipment such as shredding facilities to meet EA standards for safe handling of POPs material. In the short term there is a steep rise in disposal costs, as well as additional infrastructure costs for councils in adapting HWRCs to handle POPs material. The impact on bulky waste collection services is different, but they may also need to adapt for POPs material.
21. Discussions to date have largely focused on local authority activity. The Environment Agency is starting to engage with private waste businesses and others involved in furniture re-use and they will also have to comply with POPs regulations. This will place further pressure on limited disposal infrastructure and the full picture is yet to emerge. The LGA is continuing to work with councils, Defra and the Environment Agency to ensure that the costs are fully understood and that there is a pragmatic approach to the transition period and a plan for addressing the shortfall in disposal infrastructure.

Implementation of the resources and waste strategy

22. The [last spending review](#) provided Defra with additional capital money to fund the introduction of mandatory food waste collections from households by councils (where they are waste collection authorities). Defra are engaging with stakeholders including the LGA on the allocation of the funding. The additional funding is intended to cover transitional costs such as the purchase of additional vehicles
23. Defra is expecting to publish the outcome of two consultations imminently: proposals for consistency of collection of materials for recycling (England only), and the implementation of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers (England and Wales). The outcome of consultation on recycling collections will confirm timetables for implementation and key decisions, for example on whether councils will be required to introduce mandatory, free garden waste collections.
24. Defra has set out proposals to ban some single use plastic items, including cutlery, plates and some types of takeaway container, from October 2023. Further detail is awaited, but it is likely that local authorities will be responsible for enforcing the ban with retailers and businesses.

Electricity Generators Levy

25. HM Treasury has published [draft legislation](#) for the Electricity Generators Levy which confirms its intention to include Energy from Waste (EfW) within scope of the Levy, the LGA had made representations to exclude EfW. The legislation will be introduced with the Finance Bill early this year. The draft legislation does make some concessions, deducting from the Levy cases for exceptional fuel costs and revenue sharing, and we're seeking further clarification that this applies to EfW. The Levy's impact on individual councils is uncertain, because it will apply to companies at the Group level, and so it is unclear whether and how this will be passed down to individual EfW plants and onto councils using those plants. We will continue to engage with the Government and in the parliamentary process.

Environment

Biodiversity net gain and nature recovery

26. Natural England, the Berkeley Group and the LGA are hosting a [Biodiversity net gain conference](#) in London on 2 March 2023. The conference, which is free to attend, will help prepare the housebuilding and local authority sectors for the requirement for all new development to deliver a minimum 10% net increase in biodiversity, from November 2023, and share experiences from current projects. Councillor Pippa Heylings from the EEHT is speaking at the event. In the meantime, we are waiting for Defra to clarify the details of implementation, for example in regulation and new burdens funding for local authorities.
27. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) will become mandatory and are closely linked to biodiversity net gain. We are working with Defra to understand the timetable for implementation and support for councils, including new burdens funding

Flooding and water quality (the text on nutrients would be better if placed in this section)

28. On 18 January 2023 an LGA webinar will focus on the unpredictable risk of surface water flooding. The webinar is chaired by Councillor David Renard and speakers include the Environment Agency, Severn Trent and the Greater London Authority. This is a popular event with 200 delegates registered to attend.
29. In January Defra [published details of the Government's intention](#) to make sustainable drainage systems mandatory to new developments in England. The review into [the benefits and impacts of making sustainable drainage systems \(SuDS\) a legal requirement for new developments](#) aims to reduce the risk of surface water flooding, pollution and help alleviate the pressures on traditional drainage and sewerage systems. Defra will carry out a consultation in order to collect views on the impact assessment, national standards and statutory instruments later this year and we will be working with government to understand the implications for councils and any new burdens arising from the implementation.

Coastal landfill

30. The LGA's Coastal SIG (special interest group) published new research in November 2022 into the [extent of closed landfill sites threatened by coastal erosion and flood risk](#). The survey revealed that many councils have sites that are already spilling waste onto cliffs and beaches. The report findings were shared in a webinar hosted by the LGA and the LGA Coastal SIG on Thursday 12 January 2023, chaired by Councillor Ernest Gibson from the Coastal SIG.

Climate Change

Net Zero Review

31. [Mission Zero, the independent review of net zero](#) led by Chris Skidmore MP was published on 13 January 2023. The LGA engaged with the review team, including holding a roundtable between LGA members and Chris Skidmore MP. The report recognised the critical role of councils and that there must be more place-based, locally led action on net zero. The LGA and our positions were referenced throughout. The review recommended funding consolidation and simplification, reform of planning and the viability system, supporting a range of 'trailblazer' places, support for council capacity building, a political element to the Local Net Zero Forum, and much more that is positive for the sector. The review could have gone further in pushing for place-based funding allocations to all places and could have talked more specifically about the role of councils in decarbonising heat, buildings, transport, energy and land. The review also recommended there be a new general net zero duty on councils, the LGA is clear that councils do not need to be told net zero is important, they need backing from the government in funding and policy. We will engage with the government on the progress in responding to the Review, including through the Local Net Zero Forum.

Advancing local and central government collaboration in climate change adaptation

32. We have commissioned Local Partnerships to undertake a project to investigate, capture, understand and present what local government needs from the update to the National Adaptation Programme. It will also consider and make recommendations on how the wider policy, regulatory and funding environment across Government can best enable councils to lead place-based climate adaptation. Local Partnerships have considerable experience working with councils, the LGA and government on climate change adaptation, including developing the [climate change adaptation toolkit](#). The project is due to complete February / March 2023 and officers will continue to work with Defra officials throughout the project to ensure project findings feed into the development of the NAP3 in a timely manner.

Green Streets

33. In November we published [our report](#) on Neighbourhood approach to decarbonisation and held a webinar to present the findings chaired by Councillor David Renard, Chair of Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board and Leader of Swindon Borough Council. The event was well attended with approximately 100 delegates who heard from the report authors, [DG Cities](#), Cllr Geoff Harvey, Vice-Chair of Climate Change and Environment Committee, South Cambridgeshire District Council and officers from South Cambridgeshire District Council, and Doncaster City Council presenting their case studies.

Energy Company Obligation Plus (ECO+) consultation

34. Last month the consultation on introducing the [Energy Company Obligation PLUS \(ECO+\)](#) concluded. ECO+ will be an addition to the current ECO4 scheme aimed at delivering the rapid installation of energy efficiency measures to households, including those on the lowest income and those in the least energy efficient homes in the lower council tax bands. In [our response letter](#) to the Government's consultation, we welcomed the provision of new money and the expansion of the ECO to include households struggling to pay their bills and unavoidably wasting energy when living in poorly insulated properties that would not have received support through ECO4. We also highlighted that Councils are extremely resource-constrained, and any investment in council resources would significantly increase the ability of councils to work with health and emergency services to identify a more significant number of householders in need of support.

Energy UK Parliamentary event

35. On 10 January the LGA joined Energy UK, Federation of Master Builders and the National Housing Federation at an Energy Efficiency Parliamentary drop in event at Portcullis house. Ahead of the event, we wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as a coalition of four leading associations representing energy, construction, social housing and local government welcoming the steps that the government has taken so far to support households in reducing their energy consumption and highlighting further interventions from government that match our members ambition to ensure energy efficiency remains at the core of the UK's response to the rising cost of living. The LGA Chairman Councillor James Jamieson OBE attended the event and 18+ MPs or representatives dropped in for a conversation.

Government energy efficiency investment and awareness campaign

36. In December, government launched its [‘It All Adds Up’](#) energy saving campaign providing advice on quick and easy no cost actions, low-cost home improvements and spend to save home improvements that households and homeowners can take to reduce their energy consumption. The £18 million campaign aims to raise public awareness of straightforward actions people can take to reduce their energy consumption, stay warm and save money.

Energy

Energy Bills Discount Scheme

37. The Energy Bills Discount Scheme confirms that public sector including councils will be eligible for support, a reversal from the indication at Autumn Statement and so a positive step responding to LGA concerns. However, the scheme is not as generous, and alongside forecast falling energy costs it is not clear the extent to which the new support will help. Further, key areas such as leisure are not identified as a priority sector to receive higher levels of support. The LGA published a [press release](#) highlighting this point widely covered in the media.

Update on board discussion with National Grid

38. Following the November EEHT board meeting at which Paul Jewell from National Grid DNO presented, officers have been speaking with National Grid ESO, Energy UK, BEIS Local Net Zero Hubs, Ofgem, Local Partnerships and One Public Estate about running an energy systems hybrid seminar in spring/early summer focusing on energy system plans to achieve net zero the engagement opportunities and future relationship necessary between local government, the energy systems operators and regulators. The Climate Change Task Group will be asked to provide a steer on the content of the event and further details and timings will be shared with members nearer to time.

Transport

Car clubs and shared micromobility

39. The LGA’s work on [car clubs](#) and [shared micromobility](#) has now been published. The work was undertaken by Steer on our behalf and follows a special session with EEHT Board members. The findings were also shared in two webinars that took place in November 2022.
40. On the issue of scooters, a popular form of micromobility, the Government has now confirmed that there will not be any new legislation introduced on this issue during this session of Parliament.

Active Travel

41. The Government announced that Active Travel England (ATE) has [allocated £32.9 million](#) of revenue funding to local authorities via the Capability Fund. The LGA has

long called for revenue funding to be provided to get the most out of capital investments. The types of activities supported include:

- bespoke training for local authority officers and local councillors
- development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)
- network design and planning
- feasibility studies
- public engagement/consultation and co-design
- data and evidence collection

42. Whilst councils have been notified of their allocation at the time of writing there is no published table of allocations. LGA officers are meeting with the new chief executive of ATE and hope to get a more detailed understanding of their work programme for the year ahead.

Meeting with local transport minister

43. Following a letter to the new minister for local transport, the Chair of the EEHT Board will meet with Richard Holden MP to discuss a number of priority issues raised by LGA members, including funding for buses, highlighting cost inflation and fixed penalty notices for non-motoring related highways' obstruction.

£2 bus tickets

44. £60 million of Government funding is being used to [cap the majority of bus fares at £2](#) from January 2023 until the end of March 2023. Over 130 bus operators outside of London will charge no more than £2 for their single tickets across over 4,600 routes. While the temporary reduction in bus fares will help individuals with the cost of living, the LGA has called for the Government to fulfil its longer-term commitments as set out in its National Bus Strategy.

Fixed Penalty Notices

45. The LGA has now published [findings](#) from its survey on non-motor related highways obstructions and calls for councils outside London to be able to issue fixed penalty notices – this will bring all areas into line with the capital. The survey revealed overwhelming support for this change. This information has recently been shared with the relevant minister.

Highways extreme weather survey

46. The LGA reinstated its annual survey on highways extreme weather preparedness and the results from the Autumn 2022 survey are now [available](#). Findings were shared in our [media release](#). For the first time there were questions on preparedness for extreme hot weather, cost inflation and gritter driver shortages.