

DRAFT NOTE OF A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM

FRIDAY MARCH 4<sup>th</sup> 2011

LOCAL GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SMITH SQUARE, LONDON

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**44 members and guests attended and there were 12 apologies for absence – names recoded in the Minute Book.**

All the presentations made at this meeting can be viewed at <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk/pres2011.html>

## 1. Welcome and opening remarks

Councillor Mike Haines, Local Government Association, Chair of the National Planning Forum and NPF Vice-chair (Local Government) welcomed members and guests.

## 2. Engaging with the Localism Bill – presentation and a Forum discussion

### Shona Dunn, DCLG Director of Planning

The Chair introduced Shona Dunn, the recently appointed Director of Planning at CLG, who overviewed the background to and content of the Localism Bill; the main issues arising from consultation on the Bill, the amendments that had been introduced during its Parliamentary passage and the relationship of the Bill to initiatives introduced in the government's Plan for Growth launched on November 29<sup>th</sup> 2010 such as the National Planning Policy Framework.

Shona's presentation was followed by a series of short presentations from Forum members outlining their current response to the Bill; viz:

- **Andrew Whitaker – Home Builders Federation**  
Andrew asked is the Bill radical and will it deliver? His answer to the first question was 'No' – the jury was still out on delivery.
- **Adam Dodgson – Planning Advisory Service**  
Adam outlined the PAS programme to support local authorities in engaging with the new planning system.
- **Fiona Howie – Campaign for the Protection of Rural England**  
Fiona emphasised the continuing importance of the local plan and outlined the areas where CPRE supported measures in the Bill and those where they had continuing concerns.
- **Pat Aird – English Heritage**  
Pat outlined EH's role, its view of how the Bill impacted on the protection of heritage assets, the concerns this raises and EH's approach going forward.
- **Thomas Pienaar – Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors**  
Thomas outlined the RICS approach to the Bill and, in particular, the Land and Society Commission established to examine how to equip communities to fully embrace their emerging land and property roles in the context of localism and the Big Society.
- **Liz Peace – British Property Federation**  
Liz emphasised the importance of the planning system delivering growth and the issues raised by the Bill for business, particularly the need for business to engage with neighbourhood planning. The NPPF and plan-making were very important.
- **Phillip Vincent – Action with Communities in Rural England**  
Phillip outlined ACRE's views on the Bill, from a rural community's perspective. Generally ACRE welcomed the Bill; but there were concerns about the capacity of communities to engage and particularly around the operation of neighbourhood planning in non-parished areas.

The presentations were followed by a Forum discussion chaired by **Kelvin MacDonald, policy adviser to the RTPI**, who asked:

- Have any issues been missed?
- How are organisations preparing for this new system?
- How is the sector responding to the demand for culture change implicit in the Bill?

Cllr David Smith (LGA) emphasised the need for locally elected members to be convinced of the merits of the Bill as they are crucial to delivery.

David Brock, Chair of the Law Society Planning and Environment Law Committee, made four points in relation to the importance of the general power of competence; a welcome for the proposed brevity of the NPPF; proposed Clause 104 dealing with concealed breaches of planning, which was raising concerns around property disposal; and third party right of appeal to which the Law Society is opposed.

Graham Jones, Planning Officers Society, questioned whether the definition of the presumption in favour of development should be on the face of the Bill where, in his opinion, it would usurp the provisions of Section 54 A of the 1990 Act.

Andrew Pritchard, East Midlands Councils, asked whether there had been too many changes to the system and what was needed was a period of stability.

Leonora Rozee asked where the relationship between the NPPF, the NPSs and national infrastructure would be spelt out. It was difficult to see an NPPF without a spatial element.

Colin Haylock from the RTPI asked about the relationship between neighbourhood plans, the local plan and the need for conformity with 'strategic elements', to be defined in the NPPF – these needed to go beyond the need for housing and embrace design and heritage.

Tony Burton from Civic Voice raised the importance of addressing culture change and whether the resources devoted to it were enough and whether the impact of the cumulative changes to the Bill was leading to power moving towards or away from communities.

Cllr Mike Haines (LGA) raised the question of the relationship of other government departments like DEFRA and the Marine Management Organisation to the implementation of the Bill.

Shona Dunn replied to the discussion in the following terms:

- There are no plans for further primary legislation. The focus would be on delivery.
- The NPPF and the NPS's represented two parallel systems; she accepted the argument for greater connectivity.
- Ministers were concerned about the potential for gradual power-shift away from communities.
- She recognised the difficult issues around where the presumption in favour of sustainable development sat in legislative terms.

Corinne Swain from ARUP asked how government would deliver on emissions, renewable energy and reductions in landfill targets in the absence of previous mechanisms.

Tony Fyson, TCPA, raised the question of accountability in neighbourhood forums and plans and the challenge that producing multi-faceted neighbourhood plans would present for local groups.

Kelvin MacDonald concluded by emphasising the need for core strategies to be brought up to date and remarked at how impressed he was by the government's willingness to listen through the process.

### **3. Planning Summer School 2011**

#### **Leonora Rozee, President of the Town and Country Planning Summer School**

Leonora made a short presentation on the history of TCPSS and the programme for the 2011 event in Swansea to be held from 3 – 7<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **4. Update from the Executive Board**

##### **The Secretary**

Mike Hayes updated the Forum on progress:

- 2009/10 Annual Report
- The 'Localism in Practice' project
- 2010/11 budget, membership policy and subscriptions
- 'Mediation in Planning' project
- Appointment of Simon Leask, HCA ATLAS as Vice-Chair for Government Agencies on a pro tem basis
- NPF at the 2011 RTPI Planning Convention

CLlr David Smith asked whether the NPF should take a stand at the Local Government Association conference. Mike Hayes replied that this had been considered previously; but was thought to be too expensive.

#### **5. Draft note of October 2010 and December 2010 meeting**

The minutes of the Forum held on 8th October 2010 were approved. Those for the 15th December 2010 meeting were not available.

#### **6. AOB**

There were no matters arising.

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