

**NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM: 17 MARCH 2008
CULTURE CHANGE MANIFESTO**

KEY MESSAGES:

i. There have been many improvements in the way the planning system works, but if spatial planning is to achieve more sustainable outcomes there needs to be further action from all 5 sectors - Central Government and its Agencies, Local Government, Business, Professional Institutions and the 3rd Sector.

ii. The National Planning Forum¹ (NPF) - comprising the major organisations involved in planning in England - agrees that more needs to be done to:

- understand and promote the role planning plays in place-shaping;*
- appreciate the complexity of planning, but simplify its procedures;*
- remove barriers to partnership working;*
- provide the support needed to enable planning to be more effective; and*
- devise better means to show what planning can achieve.*

iii. National Planning Forum members who sign this Manifesto commit to specific actions under those 5 themes which will help planning to deliver more sustainable, inspiring, places.

iv. The NPF will monitor the effect of this Manifesto and report 6 monthly on progress on the actions identified by Forum members.

The need for Culture Change in Planning

1. The planning system has been subject to a number of reviews and changes over the past 5 years designed to improve the way it operates. The changes are starting to take effect and there have been some improvements, but to be successful the new spatial planning system must deliver improved outcomes everywhere. It must help to create more sustainable communities that take account of character and distinctiveness and deliver access to jobs, housing, health, education, recreational and community facilities, and space for business to grow, all within a diverse natural environment with well-designed buildings and spaces, efficient transport and resilient infrastructure.

2. It was always recognised that changing the system alone would not be sufficient to deliver this; we also need to change the way everyone - across all sectors - interacts with planning.

3. Some progress has been made in changing the way planning works - its “culture”. However we still have a system that encourages people to be defensive and take sides, rather than to agree what is needed to ensure a sustainable future for our cities, towns, villages and countryside. Planning is still viewed as negative and regulatory, rather than positive, facilitating and involving. This isn’t an issue just for planners - it’s an issue for everyone. Every sector, and everyone, needs to change the way they work and behave to secure better outcomes.

The potential to change for the better

4. Membership of the National Planning Forum¹ (NPF) comprises all the major organisations involved in planning in England. The work of the NPF thus has the potential to reach everyone in England, to inspire people to take action that makes a positive difference, and to contribute to making planning more effective.

5. By committing to this Manifesto, by taking action in support of it, and by monitoring and reviewing progress, NPF and its membership will help deliver sustainable development that contributes to the economy, promotes social justice, respects natural and historic environments, and contributes to the health and wellbeing of the current, and future, generations. In doing so, the Forum is acting in line with the principles of the Vancouver Declaration, signed by sixteen national planning organisations including the UK at the UN World Forum in 2006.

“Delivering Inspiring Places - The Role and Status of Planning”

6. The NPF took as its starting point the Government commitment to planning in Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development **[PHOTO OF COVER]** as an activity that *“shapes the places where people live and work and the country we live in ... (and plays) ... a key role in the creation of sustainable communities”*. In debating the issues, and in commissioning research which underpinned its work on culture change, the NPF also took into account the Government’s requirement for planning to support local government delivery, and its importance to the economy.

7. The research report² highlights the fact that planning makes an important contribution to maintaining and increasing land and property values, and so is critical to our economic success and competitiveness, helping to create jobs and encouraging businesses to grow, but it is rarely seen in this role. Major projects around the country involving planners have shown the benefits of regeneration and new development in key

places when they maximise the benefits to everyone - St Pancras Station in London, the Sage in Gateshead, Laganside in Belfast, the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, and major projects in Manchester, Plymouth, Taunton and Kings Lynn are key landmarks and places of local and national pride to which planners have contributed. **[INSERT PHOTOS OF THESE]** There are many examples of planners helping to maintain environmental quality through heritage-led regeneration by revitalising market towns, developing parish plans and enhancing natural areas and biodiversity. As all places are special to someone, all merit special attention.

8. The report's agenda for change was discussed by NPF members; they concluded that:

- (i) Everyone needs to understand the value added by good planning;
- (ii) Planning can deliver more if it is given funding, skills, powers and political support;
- (iii) Political leaders should integrate planning into their work at Cabinet, Chief Executive and senior management levels in all sectors;
- (iv) Planners need to be aware of market forces, and work with them where possible, in a holistic way;
- (v) Planners should ensure clarity on what is to be delivered by whom, and when and can help audit this;
- (vi) Planning and those involved in it should be more accessible and transparent;
- (vii) Everyone involved in planning needs to move from being adversarial to a focus on finding common ground and consensus building;
- (viii) Partners and stakeholders are a key part of the change process, so planners need to reach out to them and work in an integrated way;
- (ix) Maintaining and enhancing the local distinctiveness and character of areas is vital;
- (x) Planning will be viewed more positively when it is seen to deliver sustainable outcomes.

Actions to Deliver Inspiring Places

9. The NPF believes that we need to tackle these issues, and that although there has been some progress on some of them, this has been uneven. We believe that all participants need to "raise their game" under 5 Manifesto themes:

- ❖ understanding and promoting the role planning plays in place-shaping;
- ❖ appreciating the complexity of planning, but simplifying its procedures;
- ❖ removing the barriers to partnership working;
- ❖ providing the support to enable planning to be effective; and
- ❖ devising ways of showing what planning can achieve.

10. For each of these themes there is a strategic action that all NPF members have agreed to support:

THEME 1: Understand and promote the role planning plays in place-shaping

ACTION 1: Improve awareness by all stakeholders of the new approach to planning and their role in it

THEME 2: Appreciate the complexity of planning, but simplify its procedures

ACTION 2: Demystify planning and link it to corporate policy and programmes to ensure joined-up policy and delivery

THEME 3: Remove the barriers to partnership working

ACTION 3: Improve relationships between Chief Executives and Chief Planning Officers so improving wider partnership working

THEME 4: Provide the support to enable planning to be effective

ACTION 4: Improve planners' skills for example in delivering sustainable development; in development finance; in managing people, resources and programmes

THEME 5: Devise ways of showing what planning can achieve

ACTION 5: Collect and publicise examples of good practice

Specific Actions

11. A focussed Action Plan with a small number of specific actions under each theme is being prepared by NPF members and will be published within 3 months of this Manifesto being agreed. Each action will have a lead organisation and timescale. The lead organisation will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the impact of its work on 1 or more actions in this Plan.

12. NPF members commit to work together on this Manifesto, and the Action Plan that will support it, to change the culture of planning and help deliver inspiring places everywhere.

- TO BE AGREED BY THE NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM IN MARCH 2008 -