

NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM: *inspiring planning*
DRAFT NOTE OF MEETING: TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2009

Local Government House, Smith Square, London

31 members and guests attended; there were 21 apologies for absence (see Minute Book)

1. WELCOME - Liz Peace NPF Chair, BPF and NPF Vice-Chair (Business) welcomed members and said she was today handing over the Chair for 2009/10 to **Mike Haines, LGA and NPF Vice-Chair (Local Government)**. Mike thanked Liz for her excellent leadership of the NPF over the past year and for her continuing involvement in the work of the Forum.

He announced that **Mike Hayes** had been appointed to the post of Secretary after an open competition, with a pleasingly strong field. **Dave Chetwyn**, nominated by Heritage Link, had been elected as the new Vice-Chair (3rd Sector) to fill the vacancy left when Simon Marsh had stood down after three years on the NPF Executive Board. He thanked Simon for his contribution, and noted that he would remain as the RSPB representative on the NPF.

2. BUSINESS PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME - the Secretary outlined the paper. Liz Peace added that the Executive Board was keen to spread the burden of funding the NPF, but wanted to hear members' views before taking a decision on how to take this forward. She recognised that a minimum subscription could present problems for small organisations, but would have the advantage of developing a stronger bond of commitment. Member comments were:

- the principle was good, but small organisations would find paying £500 difficult;
- it would be useful if the new Vice-Chair (3rd Sector) could propose a solution;
- all members could be e-mailed with 3 or 4 questions about funding to inform the Executive Board's deliberations;
- if CLG's contribution was going to reduce they could not expect the same level of work to be undertaken;
- on the contrary, we shouldn't be rigid, and in any case the NPF specifies its own agenda.

The Chair clarified that CLG would consider project funding but could not maintain core funding at the current level. He felt the suggestion to e-mail all members to get a direct response on this issue was a good one and should be actioned. **ACTION: KP**

3. PRESENTATION ON PPS 15 CONSULTATION DRAFT - DUNCAN McCALLUM, ENGLISH HERITAGE

The presentation is at <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk> Comments and questions, *with responses in italics*:

- surely the PPS was predicated on the Heritage Act being in place. It has taken everyone since 1994 to understand "listed building", now we have to adjust to "heritage asset". *Responding for EH not CLG, the PPS recognised the totality of heritage. This was not the case in PPG 15 and 16 at present. Drawing these 2 together was an improvement, although the terminology could be explained more clearly*
- resources were an issue as well as language, particularly in relation to heritage asset research. *It was common sense to record more and to use this as an evidence base. EH was encouraging this work and supporting development of databases to ensure it could be made available to the public.*
- terminology was important and needed to be looked at again, as do resources. There was no problem with the principle of what is proposed, although there would be if recording takes over from practical conservation work. For many people the most important issue is the utility value of heritage. Heritage has helped in the transformation of places, yet this role is underplayed. Heritage can help to deliver economic regeneration, community facilities, and low carbon economic benefits.
- the previous point was supported - the RTP1 response to the Heritage White Paper gave a raft of good practice examples.
- issues relating to climate change need to be expanded. *CLG didn't want this PPS to repeat what is already covered in the Supplement to PPS 1.*
- there were climate change issues that were unique to historic buildings such as the impact of unsympathetic insulation – retrofitting this in buildings without cavity walls was difficult. EH needed a coherent policy on this. *EH was aiming to launch guidance on energy saving this autumn.*

- sites that were known about but were buried under newer buildings are important. *Many of these were not scheduled ancient monuments, but were nonetheless important. Some remains eg the Axe Factory at Langdales (?) were not suitable for scheduling.*
- should there be more protection for buried archaeology eg from deep ploughing? *In the current climate of de-regulation this would be difficult.*
- the draft guidance was weaker – the word preservation was missing, and significance was used instead of importance. The references to pre-application discussions and to historic monument records were welcomed, particularly if the later were electronic. There was concern about the lack of resources – more were needed.
- 2 articles in the October edition of Planning in London by Robert Adam and Ian Morrison were recommended reading. Issues that have been omitted from the draft PPS - eg there was no reference to Section 8 which supports seeking alternative uses for redundant churches - should be cross-referenced. *Agreed that this was so, and other issues were missing such as the need conservation management and architectural skills. Responses to the consultation were due in by 30 October.*

The Chair thanked Duncan for his very helpful presentation on the PPS and for responding to questions.

4. MONITORING PROGRESS ON THE CULTURE CHANGE MANIFESTO AND ACTION PLAN - PROFESSOR JANICE MORPHET

The presentation is attached. Comments and questions, *with responses in italics* were:

- did planners and other professionals know the new policy and delivery agenda? What were the new boundaries? The 3rd sector was represented on the NPF, but not the wider networks (public health, blue light services, community services etc). *Delivery at local level is multi-sectoral. The capital programme to underpin total place comprised the LDF and Delivery Plan which required an audit trail for the public sector. Community engagement needs to be part of the evidence gathering stage. Organisations need to think through the implications of this.*
- Planning used to be about creating a framework for other organisations to deliver. We needed to ensure that planners knew that they had the responsibility for LDFs **and** supporting delivery (via development management). Planning was key to making the new system work. *Government documents over-emphasised delivery as this was a new imperative, but clearly the balance between plan-making and delivery needed to be right. Not 1 LA in England can say at the moment the quantum of public sector capital investment in their area each year. The problem is that no community thinks that the necessary infrastructure will come as a result of housing growth. Delivery Plans should set out how much investment was being made, how it fits and evaluate the gaps. There was a need to get a handle on this and to make the process transparent. This gave planners a key role to influence. Re-use of assets was a key role of the LDF (as set out in PPS 12)*
- A problem is that changes often get overtaken. We needed to be cautious at the moment about the direction of policy next year ie after the General Election. Planning had a key role but we need to focus on priorities, resources and skills. *Offered to go into this in the report. There had been a sea change in attitudes over the last year - LSPs, Cabinets and CEOs were now grasping the new agenda, and planners needed to be more aware of it.*
- Within the NPF most organisations were dealing at a strategic level, so questioned the references to “local vision”. We needed to assess how much consensus could be achieved through the NPF. There were common issues such as training but, for example consultancies could not develop outcomes, but could increase the understanding of clients. House-builders and developers (with some exceptions eg Argent) tended to have short terms objectives. *Private developers needed to know about the changes and where the power lies.*
- For the bulk of significant developments this was not just about building, but utilities, transport, and communities - the issue became how best to orchestrate these. For CIL to work the LA has to draw up an infrastructure plan and decide the amount that can realistically be drawn from development. There was a concern that there was no onus on LAs/utilities to do this in the Regulations. Government was asking Las to do more and more with a worrying lack of expertise and resources. Also worrying was the reference in the presentation to the Lisbon Treaty and the EU requirement for a focus on place from 2013. *In EU terms planning (a State level responsibility) is seen as the issuing of building permits. The*

new role is more strategic. There is only one delivery plan, and that is the one linked to the LDF. We all know that we need to get more value out of available public funding (who-ever is in Government) hence, for example, people are increasingly looking at co-location. Understanding these changes is vital.

JM drew attention a 1 page summary of work she had undertaken for PAS on a 'steps' approach to infrastructure planning and delivery, copies of which were available for those interested.

The Chair thanked Janice Morphet and Tony Burton for their work to date, and looked forward to seeing the first monitoring report at the end of October. In the meantime all members would be asked to respond to the questions posed in Janice's presentation within the next 2 weeks. **ACTION: KP**

5. FIT FOR PURPOSE SPATIAL PLANNING - MIKE HAYES, RTPI AND NPF VICE-CHAIR (PROFESSIONS)

The presentation had been circulated to all members with the Agenda. A copy is on the web-site at <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk>

The Chair opened the discussion by saying that he was most concerned at the prospect of Regional Spatial Strategies/Regional Strategies being abolished without the alternative being in place. In this context he was pleased that Bob Neill MP, Conservative Spokesperson on Planning, had accepted our invitation to the 15 December Forum. Further comments were as follows *with responses in italics*:

- congratulations on the admirable scope of the paper; it had highlighted a lot of issues, but needed to focus attention on effective engagement of local communities.
- people's first contact with planning is almost inevitably development management - this needs to be more educational. It was an important responsibility of LAs, and needs to be much more than process. Largely due to lack of resources it often gives planning a negative image, and needs to be much more positive.
- we need to emphasise that changing the (planning) system doesn't change policy, although the latter is what is needed.
- this was a brilliant discussion document
- there should be references to the importance of, and need for, principles underpinning the location of new development

There is a tension between where we are and what we have to deal with. A debate is needed about what is needed to deliver high quality outcomes.

- the culture of planning was still a problem - consultation was often added as an after-thought. The 2004 Act was supposed to bring in front-loading, so that the community could make a contribution to the evidence base. *Another dimension of this is the political one, for example the Sustainable Communities Plan was landed on communities without any prior consultation, media coverage or debate.*
- who are the audiences and given the timing issues what do we do with this paper? *The audiences are the main political parties, and timing to be before they finalise their policy on planning.*
- the Executive Board should fine tune the messages.
- there is concern and cynicism about community engagement and what it means. Planning needs to widen community trust; constructive dialogue will do this, but communities and interest groups are enormously disparate. LAs need to look carefully at the scope of their engagement.
- congratulations on the thinkpiece - it would form a useful basis for future work. He looked forward to the address from Bob Neill MP. RSS currently cover a whole lot more than housing numbers, though it is a criticism that this is all that they appear to be about. Combining RSS and ES will provide a better framework. It was easy to be swept along by the rhetoric – localism sounds positive but whatever system is put in place needs a strategic as well as local element. The purpose of the Sub-national Review was to ensure that decisions were taken at an appropriate level. We have a breathing space within which to ensure that policies for housing link to those for infrastructure.
- this is an excellent piece of work. It could be summarised as: (i) we don't need a new planning system, and (ii) we need a period of stability to think about policy and strategy.

The Chair confirmed that the Executive Board would finalise the paper in the light of comments made today. It would help that process if every member specified the 5 key principles that the NPF proposes.
ACTION: Secretary and Executive Board

6. ITEMS FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

(i) **Mediation Pilot** - see attached note.

(ii) **Planning and Building Control** - Mike Hayes reported that CLG had produced a report on implementing an improved interface between the 2 services. He was continuing to work on a paper being drafted with the help of the Planning and Building Control Working Group. A draft report would be considered at the December meeting with 5 priorities:

- (a) an integrated approval service for small scale applications;
- (b) rethinking construction/design/management;
- (c) recognising the increasing role of building technology by making building control a statutory consultee;
- (d) ensuring better clarity between the roles (by reducing the scope of planning in relation to building technology); and
- (e) unlocking the potential to deal more effectively with enforcement issues.

7. DRAFT NOTE OF JULY MEETING - the note was agreed and signed by the Chair as a true record of proceedings. All actions had been completed.

8. AOB

(i) **Tony Burton** said that the **Civic Societies Initiative** had been set up at Easter this year, funded by the National Trust and the Esme Fairbairne Trust. Civic Societies form a network of over 1,500 involving 250,000 people. A report is being published on 16 October incorporating the results of an on-line survey - he thanked those who had contributed. Civic Societies made a major input into the planning system, mainly in relation to planning applications, but they wanted to make more of a contribution to plan-making. They were aiming to launch a new national body at Easter 2010. He would welcome comments on the report which would be available on their web-site at: www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk

(ii) The Chair drew attention to this year's **LGA Planning Conference "Using planning to make a difference to local economies"** to be held on **17 November** in LG House. KP added that the NPF would be running one of the workshops with HCA ATLAS to showcase one or two developments which had delivered improved outcomes from cross-sectoral involvement.

(iii) KP had been sent an invitation to an Earthwatch debate **"From Tsunami to drought"** taking place 7-9pm on Thursday 19 November in the RGS, Kensington Gore, London. She had further details if anyone was interested in attending.

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS:

TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2009
THURSDAY 4 MARCH 2010
WEDNESDAY 23 JUNE 2010

All at 12.45pm for 1.30pm in LG House, Smith Square, London