

NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM: *inspiring planning*

Draft note of meeting: Tuesday 20 June 2006

Local Government House, Smith Square, London

Attendance and apologies: there were 33 members present, and 12 apologies

1. Welcome from the NPF Chair

Henry Oliver (CPRE, and NPF Chair) welcomed members, particularly Colin Byrne Director Planning Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and Paul Hudson Deputy Director Planning DCLG and Chief Planner, who was attending this meeting as one of his first engagements after taking up his post. He announced that Cllr Jim Harker (Northamptonshire CC) is the new LGA Vice-Chair; Graham Jones (POS) will provide support. Henry (HO) thanked Lee Searles (until recently with LGA) for his work in support of NPF.

HO said that the Executive Board (EB) had agreed a new way of working. Each Vice-Chair leads an element of work, and the EB meets DCLG officials regularly to input to developing policy. The EB also wants to ensure improved governance and delivery, and to activate NPF as a whole. Members' support is needed for this – specifically via “commitments to action” made by each sector on a chosen topic, and reported on at the next Forum meeting.

HO proposed that this approach be tested on Bill Boler's presentation (Item 4). He asked members to think during, and after, that presentation about one SMART (specific, measurable, appropriate, realisable, timely) change their organisation/sector could make to help deliver for deprived communities. This could be discussed with others outside this meeting, an action agreed, and a report back made to the next meeting.

HO said that he is leaving CPRE to join the New Economics Foundation (nef). The Secretary congratulated him on his new appointment, and gave him a card signed by members. HO invited nominations for the consequent vacancy for the 3rd Sector Vice-Chair to be sent to the Secretary by 20th July. **ACTION: All 3rd Sector members** A vote would be conducted amongst those members if necessary. Ideally, the new Vice-Chair would be in place by September. HO confirmed that Mark Southgate, NPF Vice-Chair, will take over as Chair of the NPF for a year from the end of August.

Two items of AOB had been received; HO invited others, but there were none.

2. DCLG Update

Colin Byrne, Director Planning DCLG, said that the new Department benefited from continuity as well as change. The new Minister, Ruth Kelly, joined an established team including Yvette Cooper and Baroness Andrews; John Prescott is still Chair of the Cabinet sub-committee on Planning and Housing. Proposals for a new structure for the Department are out for consultation. The 6 Programme areas are: Places; Governance and Engagement; Strategy and National Programmes (Planning likely to fit here); Corporate Delivery; plus Fire and Resilience and Women and Equality. The aim is to join up work across DCLG and Planning more effectively under an overarching Board of Directors General (DG), chaired by the Permanent Secretary (Peter Housden). Decisions on this structure would be taken by the end of June, appointments of Programme Executives in July, with implementation from September.

The structure of the Directorate has been reviewed (copy on the NPF web-site <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk>); Colin (CB) didn't anticipate further change arising from DCLG restructuring.

Reports from the Energy, Eddington (transport) and Barker II reviews were due out in the next few weeks, all with potential implications for planning, in particular the planning process for major infrastructure projects. There was a need for greater clarity at different spatial levels.

Recent policy implementation included removal of Crown Immunity from planning control; publication of PPS9 Biodiversity guidance note; guidance on Tourism, Design and Access Statements, Mezzanines and LDOs. Research on S106s had shown its increasing use and potential, but had also highlighted patchy implementation and regional variation.

Future work included:

- ❖ the draft Climate Change PPS, on which there was a need to strike the right balance - making a significant difference but not blocking development;
- ❖ a study of how micro-generation is controlled;
- ❖ work with Ministers on PPS3 and PGS (for the pre-Budget report November/December); and
- ❖ conclusion of the Householder Development Consents Review.

The Local Government White Paper was expected to issue after recess, linked to work on city regions. Issues arising from Buncefield were being considered; and Department of Health advice on power lines was expected shortly.

CB introduced Paul Hudson: Paul said that he was impressed by the breadth of work underway in the Directorate. He added a point to the DCLG overview - research recently commissioned from Arup on the role of Members in taking decisions and the interface with officers, particularly when they take a different view; he invited NPF to contribute case studies.

ACTION: All

Questions and comments (*responses in italics*):

Qu: What does Fire and Resilience cover? *The Fire Service, Regional Control Centres, and Emergency Planning for flooding, terrorism etc.*

Qu: Where will the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) sit, and under which DG? *The NRU could be in the "Places" or "Strategy" Group; the DGs had not been assigned yet.*

Qu: Noting the Department's interest in planning for city regions, should there be one body to plan the London city region? *This is becoming a more prominent issue, although of course, the GOs do work with each other currently.*

Qu: Could CB give an indication on timing of issue of new policy on PPS3, the Climate Change PPS, Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) and Article 4 Directions? *The aim is to announce something on PPS3 before recess, with detail later; the draft Climate Change PPS would issue for consultation in the Autumn, final version in Spring 2007; DCLG would provide a note on timing on PDRs/Article 4 Directions.*

Qu: Could the structure chart include photographs of senior officials? *This would be considered.*

CB asked if the presentation and answers had been helpful; those present indicated that it had been. HO thanked Colin and Paul for their contribution to the meeting.

3. National Spatial Framework

Presentations were given by Professor Sir Peter Hall, President TCPA; Will French, RTPi; and Lucinda Turner, CBI. Copies are available on the NPF web-site: <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk>.

The Chair thanked Sir Peter, Will and Lucinda for very thought provoking presentations. Lack of time prevented discussion by members. HO invited comments, in the light of the presentations, on principles for an NSF. These had been drafted earlier by the NSF Liaison Group (see Annex).

He asked for comments on the draft principles to be sent to the Secretary by end July, and for an indication of agreement to the EB taking these principles forward (as amended). Members agreed. **ACTION: All**

4. Pro-active Planning for Deprived Communities

Bill Boler, BitC gave a presentation (copy on <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk>). Questions/comments were as follows (*responses in italics*):

Qu: What other mechanisms are there to offer a “carrot” for business? *In the US they are looking for financial incentives; in UK reducing time, and area incentives are the norm, however it's important to note that many proposals take years to get to the planning application stage.*

Qu: Should local authorities have more powers or use what they have? *Using existing powers would be a good start. There's a need to join up regeneration and plan-making, take account of PPS 6 changes, and have a good Member/Officer interface; DCLG's study would be interesting.*

Qu: CPRE's report (issued 19/6) had shown the impact on a Suffolk market town of NOT having a Tesco – one of the key issues is the impact on local suppliers. *A key issue (for rural and urban areas) is the need to increase circulation of local money, and attract new – there's no real analysis of this. Growing a market town needs a pro-active spatial strategy.*

Comment: Sound, visionary, up-to-date spatial plans at the local level can balance the needs of affluent and deprived communities; more case studies could help analyse “what works”.

Qu: Could deprived areas benefit from designation as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)? *In the US BIDs are based on owners of land, in the UK they are based on occupiers who generally take a shorter term view, and have local managers who are not necessarily empowered to take decisions. Larger corporate issues need to be addressed by (new) UK Government retail policy.*

HO thanked Bill, and reminded members of his request to consider how their organisation might contribute to planning for deprived communities, and commit to one action on it. **ACTION: All**

5. Report from the Executive Board

HO asked for any comments on the items that had been circulated; there were none.

6. Update from the Culture Change Working Group

Mark Southgate offered to provide a written note. This was agreed.

7. Note of meeting on 9 March 2006, and matters arising

The draft note of meeting had been circulated. It was agreed, and later signed by the Chair as a true record of proceedings. HO noted that PINS would be making a presentation on early lessons from DPD examinations at the next meeting. There were no other matters arising.

8. Any Other Business

(i) The Secretary said that amendments to the Database had been circulated with the papers in error. Two web-site questionnaires had been returned to date. She invited others to reply/express interest in meeting to discuss a refresh of the website

ACTION: All

(ii) Graeme Bell (NIF) had raised the issue of “planning for oldies”; RTP1 has a working group on this currently. HO suggested that, as the question “planning for whom?” is relevant to the delivery agenda, the focus for the 17 October Forum meeting, the EB should consider this when it plans the detail of that meeting. This was agreed.

ACTION: KP

(iii) Kevin Leigh (PEBA) wants to exchange experience of the new LDF system. The Secretary had suggested contact with PAS/POSE, PINS and DCLG (Spatial Plans in Practice). Anyone with any other best practice experience was invited to contact PEBA.

ACTION: All

HO reminded members of the dates of future meetings - TUESDAY 17TH OCTOBER and THURSDAY 14TH DECEMBER. He thanked LGA for providing the room and catering, and in particular Cathy Tanod for administrative support to the Secretary.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm.

ANNEX

DRAFT LIST OF PRINCIPLES FOR A NATIONAL SPATIAL FRAMEWORK

- comments invited on these BY 31 JULY (see Item 3 above)

- ❖ reducing frictions that stop people cooperating/coordinating
- ❖ synergy between different strands of sustainability
- ❖ spatial clarity/specificity
- ❖ subsidiarity - international / national / regional / sub-regional / local / community levels
- ❖ spatial proofing - policies and decisions
- ❖ “light touch”
- ❖ one product or several?
- ❖ a different way of doing things, rather than a product?
- ❖ participative
- ❖ transparent