

Notes from Spatial Planning Board meeting, 29 June 2009, Wakefield

The workings of the Board

LGYH officer Chris Martin and Chair Cllr Peter Box talked about the new Board and its role. It was pointed out that, under the old arrangements, the then Regional Planning Board felt like the owners of the Regional Spatial Strategy, but that it was clear that it was the Joint Regional Board (JRB) who would own the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS). The question then is, what is the focus of the SPB? Chris Martin told members to think of the Board as “the spatial element”.

Cllr Box was keen to emphasise that the new arrangements are different from the old, and proposed a paper for the next meeting: “What will be different?”

I expressed concerns that there appear to be few opportunities for those in the environment sector – and other interested stakeholders – to participate in the new arrangements. It was again stressed that the new arrangements are different, and that the SNR made it clear that they should be LA led. A member from Hull & Humber said there was an environmental rep on the Hull & Humber Functional Sub Region - perhaps there are other places available? I’ll look into this. It was agreed the issue was something the proposed paper could examine.

Spatial Planning Implementation Activities

A planned programme of 13 “Implementation Priorities” was circulated, with associated actions. The intention was to flesh out the programme, but discussion instead turned to the number of priorities, and it was eventually proposed to prioritise only those relating to housing, the economy and flood risk. I said I could not support that proposal and that the environment was poorly represented on the initial list, never mind a reduced list. It was suggested that I needn’t worry because there was another list of priorities in a later agenda item (Regional Strategy work) and that those priorities were really all part of this agenda item and should, perhaps, have been discussed first! I pointed out that there were inadequacies with the list in the later agenda item and I was not prepared to accept that as a reason for reducing the first list of priorities. It was agreed that it would be useful to go straight to the agenda item on Regional Strategy work, though we did not afterwards return this item so I hope it will be minuted as unresolved.

Regional Strategy Work

The Board was asked to agree an initial focus on the spatial planning work for the IRS, with 8 strategic issues listed as priorities for work. I questioned the omission of climate change from the list. I also suggested environmental limits should be an overarching issue and expressed surprise that it was not included given it had featured quite prominently in a paper from the last JRB. I rather got the impression there was not that much familiarity with what the JRB were doing. In response, Richard Wood (LGYH) said that climate change and the environment (it wasn’t clear whether he meant environmental limits or just environmental issues generally) should be made “cross-cutting themes” rather than separate issues.

A broad assessment of the evidence base was circulated. I questioned why the REES wasn't included – that was a simple oversight and it will be added. The leaders of the 4 Functional Sub Regions (FSRs) have been asked to supply evidence and I asked how others could provide evidence. At this stage it is through the FSRs only. I later spoke to Richard Wood who said that this was just the initial stage and that there would be a Project Plan over the summer which would probably lead to a wider call for evidence. I got the impression from speaking to him – and also to Chris Martin after the meeting – that they at least would be quite happy to discuss informally any evidence anyone wanted to submit, and Chris did mention YHREF's environmental limits work in particular.

There was a suggestion that a future meeting of the Board could include site visits to sites where key strategic planning decisions were required, and this was well received.

Response to Draft PPS4

A paper set out the suggested spatial planning response to PPS4, though there was not much discussion about it (perhaps because the deadline for comments had already passed!)

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