

NEWSLETTER 2: MARCH 2010



The Planning
Inspectorate



MEDIATION IN PLANNING PROJECT

Progress to date: The joint project was designed to assess the potential value of using mediation in the planning system by testing the use of mediation techniques in a variety of planning disputes including major development, enforcement and plan-making. It is supported financially by the National Planning Forum (NPF), Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).

To date 3 live mediations have been completed - one enforcement case and two related to an Area Action Plan (AAP) - and a further 2 are being actively pursued. Three completed mediations are being reviewed and we have followed up on the 11 cases drawn to our attention which, for a variety of reasons, were not mediated.

Evaluation: The project evaluation process has been designed to capture the views of the parties in the live cases, as well as to understand the key features of the mediation process itself. In this work the Steering Group has been supported by consultants Chrissie Gibson, Connectivity Associates Ltd and Scott Jones, Mind-the-Gap Research and Training.

We are delighted with an almost 20% response to a survey of Chief Planning Officers - sent out on our behalf by the Planning Officer's Society - which showed a widespread knowledge of, and positive attitude towards, mediation. In addition, a number of "expert" interviews have been undertaken by our evaluators with a range of stakeholders to get a feel for wider views on the use of mediation in planning.

Resources: £40k has been allocated for the project, £20k from the NPF, £9k plus printing from PINS, and £10k from PAS. To end March 2010 a total of £18k has been spent, on mediators, on evaluation, on project lead and secretarial expenses.

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Timetable: The live mediations were carried out from December 2009. A presentation with interim observations was delivered to the 4 March 2010 NPF meeting. The draft note of that meeting is on the NPF web-site <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk> We are on course to issue a final report by the end of June 2010.

The results: The report documenting the process and giving the results will be written with inputs from all the parties involved in the mediations, the mediators, the evaluators, Steering Group members, members of the NPF Executive Board and individuals from its member organisations. It will draw on the live and completed case studies and their evaluation, a bibliography and literature review of learned papers and other references to the use of mediation in planning both nationally and internationally, information on costs and benefits, our survey of Chief Planning Officers, and our follow-up survey of cases originally proposed as having potential for mediation but which - for a variety of reasons - have not been pursued.

Secretariat: Kay Powell continues as Secretary to the project after handing over her role as Secretary to the NPF to Mike Hayes from 1 January 2010. She can be contacted at powellks@tiscali.co.uk

LEONORA ROZEE OBE BA(Hons) MRTPI : CHAIR OF JOINT PROJECT