

NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM

THE ROLE AND STATUS OF PLANNING – STEERING GROUP REPORT

Purpose

1. The aim of the NPF in commissioning this report was to build on culture change work already in progress. Its importance had been underlined by a number of events including publication of the Planning White Paper [May 2007], and the RTP1 report (by Professor Janice Morphet et al) supported by Communities and Local Government and others on “Shaping and Delivering Tomorrow’s Places: Effective Practice in Spatial Planning” (EPiSP) [Executive Summary Jan 2007, Report May 2007].
2. This commission represents an important and timely opportunity for the NPF to take a lead role in clarifying and driving the culture change needed across all sectors involved in planning to enable it to regain its pivotal role in place-shaping.

Background

3. The report being prepared for NPF was commissioned after the March Forum meeting, based on the draft specification prepared by the Culture Change Working Group considered then [see Annex]. Culture change requires action and behaviour change by all sectors involved in planning. It requires planning to be seen as a positive force for change that ‘shapes places’ rather than a system of control. It is about planning that is an exciting profession rather than one bogged down in rules and procedures.
4. Three products will emerge from this commission:
 - (i) a **brief literature review** highlighting the key issues, informing....
 - (ii) a high level “think piece” **report** written to engage key leaders and decision-makers, to encourage them to commit to culture change in their organisations, with an **executive summary** that will be a succinct, powerful document explaining **why** culture change is needed and **how** to achieve it, and....
 - (iii) an **action plan** that sets out in detail “who needs to do what” to progress the required culture change, with individual actions ascribed to key organisations or sectors.
5. The specification was sent to 20 prospective tenderers, 6 strong tenders had been received and were assessed by a sub-set of the CCWG. IDOX plc was appointed with a team comprising Janice Morphet, Tony Burton and Laura Hughes.
6. An Induction meeting was held on 8 May, following which the outline report was sent to all Forum members for their input. A number of useful suggestions and comments were received. The first draft report was considered by the Steering Group on 11 June and - as a result - the initial draft report is being sent out with the agenda and papers for this meeting [Item 3(ii)]. This will provide the full Forum with an early opportunity to see how the report is developing and comment on it. Please note that the report will change as result of comments of the Steering Group on 11 June– there has not been enough time to incorporate these before sending out the first draft. After the Forum and a further Steering Group meeting will be held so that we can see that the additions and deletions requested have been made and to check numbering, layout, spelling etc.
7. The report is over 60 pages long. If you don’t have a chance to read it all before the meeting, Chapters 1-7 provide the analysis for the “conclusions” in Chapters 8-11. The Introduction and Chapters 8-11 provide much of the rationale for why a change in culture is needed, and would be useful to read if you haven’t got time to read the whole report.
8. Please also note that the Steering Group’s points remain to be addressed, including:
 - text to be shorter and punchier;
 - mention to be made of the opportunity presented by the Planning White Paper;

- mention that inspiring and visionary political leadership is vital;
- more rural examples and examples of best practice, and good progress;
- information exchange to be encouraged where it facilitates better analysis;
- more emphasis on planning supporting the delivery of local and regional (shared) vision;
- the Future Planners Literature Review and clear reference to both Barker Reviews;
- clear identification of the audience;
- ensure the focus is widened to include planning and planners in all sectors, and organisations involved in planning and emphasise the need for join-up thinking (plan-making and decisions);
- a reference to instances of positive coverage of planning eg Local Government Chronicle 7 June;
- note about avoiding going for short term wins when extra time pay long term dividends;
- we need to care for all places, not just regeneration areas and Conservation Areas;
- detailed design can be as important as getting big decisions right;
- need to explain the term “calming” environments;
- the action plan will derive from the think-piece (when finalised) plus member “commitments to action”;
- the structure of the action plan might, for example, include 5 overarching themes as the framework for future behaviour by all sectors eg:

CLARITY	- of purpose, timescales, roles, scope for action etc
TEAM WORKING	- planners included as an integral part of the team
LEARNING	- an approach that is open, shares skills and develops individuals, teams and stakeholders (including the community)
SHARED EVIDENCE	- a commitment to base policy on shared knowledge and analysis
OUTCOME-FOCUS	- identifying and recognising the value added by planning, sharing the benefits and improving outcomes

9. Presentation of the initial draft at this stage is intended to open up a debate on the strategic issues raised, and to test emerging conclusions. Members are asked to use this opportunity to comment on and influence the overall shape, rather than the detail, of the report. The Steering Group will meet again in late July/early August to consider a final draft report, and draft action plan. The next meeting of the Forum (on 17 October) will provide an opportunity to bring both documents to the Forum for approval, and to agree an implementation plan and monitoring programme.

Next steps

10. Publication of this report and Action Plan will provide opportunities to increase the NPF profile and its role in driving culture change. Initial consideration by the Steering Group (SG) suggests that the full report should be made available on the web-site, and a Summary plus Action Plan printed for circulation. The SG will consider dissemination, publicity and communication and spin-offs such as improving our web-site and raising the profile of the NPF eg via presentations at conferences of member organisations.

11. The SG wants all members to input to thinking at this stage. We need to consider how the NPF, and its constituent members, can best contribute to continued culture change. If culture change is to be achieved then it is all of us who will help to make it happen; it needs our commitment. We need to be clear about what needs to be done, do it, and then demonstrate the difference it has made. And we need to involve and engage others beyond those represented on the Forum, for example via a high level seminar across all sectors to discuss the report and action plan.

Resources

12. We have received an offer of £5k sponsorship for publication from a leading City law firm (subject to the content of the final report). Possibilities for sponsorship of other parts of the programme will be canvassed after the June Forum meeting. Once interest in being involved is known, and potential sponsors can be consulted, plans will be drawn up by the Research Steering Group and finalised by the Executive Board.

APPENDIX: NPF RESEARCH SPECIFICATION: MARCH 2007

THE ROLE AND STATUS OF PLANNING

Background

1. The National Planning Forum (NPF) is the largest cross-sectoral forum focussing on planning in England. It attracts high level representation from a wide range of organisations involved in planning and its work is supported by key players including the Planning Directorate, Communities and Local Government; the Local Government Association; British Property Federation; Environment Agency; Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI); and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Further information on the NPF is in the Annex; examples of its work are on <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk>

2. The NPF makes a major contribution to work on delivery and culture change for the planning system in England. We take as our starting point the Government's commitment to planning in Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development as an activity that *"shapes where people live and work and the country we live in (and) plays a key role in supporting the Government's wider social, environmental and economic objectives and for sustainable communities"*, and spatial planning as an activity that *"goes beyond traditional land use planning"*. The RTPI has devised a useful definition of spatial planning (in the Effective Practice in Spatial Planning: Executive Summary: 29 January 2007) that should be used for the purpose of this commission. Spatial planning is defined as *"the practice of place shaping at the local and regional levels that aims to:*

- *enable a vision for the future of regions and places that is based on evidence, local distinctiveness and community derived objectives,*
- *translate this vision into a set of policies, priorities, programmes and land allocations together with the public sector resources to deliver them,*
- *create a framework for private sector investment and regeneration that promotes economic, environmental and social wellbeing for the area, and*
- *coordinate the delivery of the vision with other agencies and processes (eg LAAs and MAAs)."*

3. Culture change requires action and behaviour change by all sectors involved in planning. It requires planning to be seen as a positive force for change that 'shapes places', rather than a system of control. It is about planning that is an exciting profession rather than one bogged down in rules and procedures. Planning consists of a wide range of work and activity undertaken by professionals in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Change is happening already in response to both the challenges of implementing the new planning system. There are encouraging signs of progress in different sectors and areas of the country, but there is now a clear need to capitalise and expand on the progress being made.

4. The NPF has undertaken a number of initiatives to help identify common ground in the area of culture change, including commissioning research into the conditions for creative planning. More recently, the NPF Culture Change Working Group has defined key messages for the main players in a report entitled "Planning – renewing the approach" (see para 7 below). The NPF Executive Board is now seeking to commission work on the status of planning that will complement, and add momentum to, its drive to support continuing culture change. It is envisaged that the final report will be circulated to the main opinion formers, policymakers and practitioners, and that it will have a significant impact on the future of planning in England.

Purpose of the proposed study

5. The Executive Board envisages a short, sharp piece of work split into a desk study (about 30% of the total effort), a "think piece" of creative intellectual input (a further 60% of the effort),

and an action plan (the remaining 10%). The think piece should focus on the following objectives:

- identifying and summarising the key points from existing documentation and evidence on the existing role and status of planning;
- highlighting the potential for providing greater clarity of the role, and improving the status of planning in the context of current high profile planning reforms – how to deliver ‘inspiring planning’; and
- making recommendations on an agenda for the changes needed to achieve an improved status for planning, including an action plan which the NPF can take forward – making the most of its unique position as a cross-sectoral body made up of representatives from the key agencies and interests in planning.

Product

6. Three products are envisaged from this commission:

- a **brief summary of the literature review** highlighting the key issues; informing, but not dominating...
- a **report** - the most important product - a high level ‘think piece’ written to engage key leaders and decision-makers, to encourage them to commit to culture change in their organisations. It will be a succinct, powerful document explaining **why** culture change is needed and **how** to achieve it; and a separate...
- **action plan** that sets out in detail “who needs to do what” to progress the required culture change, with individual actions ascribed to key organisations or sectors.

7. The chosen consultants will be expected to use the following main sources:

PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development: Communities & Local Government (2005)

Barker Review of Land Use Planning, Final Report (Dec 2006)

Effective Practice in Spatial Planning: UCL et al for RTPI (forthcoming)

Review of Skills for Sustainable Communities: Sir John Egan (2005)

Future Planners: Demos for CPRE, RICS and RTPI (Feb 2007)

Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills: Leitch Report (Dec 2006)

The Conditions for Creative Planning: POSe for National Planning Forum (2004)*

Planning – Renewing the Approach: National Planning Forum (Jan 2007)*

[NOTE: * report can be down-loaded from the NPF web-site: <http://www.natplanforum.org.uk> - the 2004 report from “archived documents”]

Spatial Plans in Practice: Communities & Local Government (continuing)

8. A small number of other relevant policy documents, reports and information may be used - including from the following sources - but we do not envisage the need for an extensive or exhaustive literature review, or interviews, being undertaken for this commission: UK Government [including Communities and Local Government];

Academy of Sustainable Communities;

Planning Advisory Service; and the RTPI.

9. The draft report will be presented to the full NPF for comment and inputs, with the final report being produced as a result. The presentation to the NPF should be in Powerpoint (or similar software) and should contain the key points from the draft report and recommendations. It will be required to be presented to a meeting of the Forum in London on 21 June 2007.

10. All three products should be written in plain English, and each should have a 1 page Executive Summary. The literature review should include references to all sources used. The main report should be of no more than 3k words in electronic Word and PDF formats.

11. Once finalised, consideration will be given to the report’s design in order to maximise its appeal. It will need to engage and persuade a range of audiences including key opinion formers, politicians, business, professionals and the community. Consultants may offer

design ideas to complement their text, but the contract fee does not cover the cost of design, production or printing.

Timescale

12. The commission is required to be completed **by the end of June**. A dissemination strategy and programme will be commissioned separately. Tenders (including joint bids) will be invited from a list of consultants who can meet the following tight timescale (all dates in 2007):

Invitation to tender/issue of study specification	by	Fri 30 March
Tender deadline	5 pm	Mon 16 April
Tender let		Mon 23 April
Inception meeting		late April
Steering Group meeting		mid May
Receipt of final report	5pm	Fri 1 June
Presentation to the Forum	pm	Thurs 21 June
Completion of commission	5pm	Fri 29 June

13. Tenders should be e-mailed to kay.powell@ntlworld.com **by 5pm on Monday 16 April**. The documents should be brief, and should not include logos, to facilitate electronic communication for assessment purposes. A brief example of similar work that you have undertaken should be submitted electronically with the tender.

Steering Group

14. The steering group will be chaired by the NPF Chair and Chair of the Culture Change Working Group (Mark Southgate) and will comprise a sub-set of that Working Group. The report is being commissioned by the NPF Executive Board and will be signed off by them (or the Chair on their behalf) before being finalised.

Costings

15. The details on the proposed method, person or persons undertaking the work, the amount of time each will take on the assignment, their daily rate, travel and other expenses, producing the report in Word/PDF format, preparation of the presentation, and VAT if applicable. Options including the implications of involving different personnel would be helpful. Total costs are expected to be in the region of £10k.

Intellectual property rights

16. The report, summary literature review and action plan - and any drafts produced - will be the property of the National Planning Forum. The authors will be acknowledged when it is used by the NPF.

ANNEX: THE NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM

Vision

The vision of the National Planning Forum (NPF) is to be the principal cross-sectoral voice on planning issues and to be recognised as a key agent for change in delivering a better planning service.

Mission

The NPF aspires to “inspire planning” and all those involved in the planning process and in delivering the new planning agenda. It aims to help achieve quality, inspiring places that enhance productivity as well as peoples’ well-being. The Forum seeks to:

- **M1** critically inform and positively influence the planning agenda for England through a broad spectrum of interests;
- **M2** act as a bridge and extend the common ground across the Forum membership, the best to deliver sustainable development; and
- **M3** promote the acquisition and exchange of knowledge and best practice amongst Forum membership and disseminate this so that it may be widely applied.

In support of this Mission, the Forum:

- represents multi-sectoral views, aiming to reach consensus wherever possible, and informed differences of opinion where not;
- acts as a sounding board for Government initiatives;
- formulates expert advice on specific issues and emerging policies;
- promotes good practice;
- enables a two-way flow between policy and practice, involving dissemination and feedback; and
- facilitates cross-sectoral networking.

We concentrate on areas in which all sectors have a common interest, aim to be constructive in all that we do, and avoid duplication of effort.

Membership

Members are drawn from five sectors: government and its agencies, local government, business, the voluntary/third sector and the professions. Representative organisations with an interest and involvement in planning within these sectors are invited to join the Forum to contribute to its work, in order to maintain broadly equal numbers, and balance between the sectors.

Executive Board

The NPF Executive Board - which drives the work of the Forum - comprises 5 Vice-Chairs, each directly elected by members of his/her own sector, and is supported by the Secretary. One of the Vice-Chairs acts as the Forum Chair for one year, on a strict rotational basis amongst the five sector groups. The current Executive Board comprises:

Chair, and Vice-Chair (Government Agencies):	Mark Southgate, Environment Agency
Vice Chair (Professions):	Mike Hayes, RTPI
Vice Chair (Local Government):	Cllr Paul Bettison, LGA
Vice Chair (Business):	Liz Peace, BPF
Vice Chair (3 rd sector):	Simon Marsh, RSPB
Secretary:	Kay Powell