

New Agendas, the implications for the Lancashire Environment Forum and moving forward

Summary

The purpose of this note is to give Forum members an early insight into new agendas and announcements that are shaping policy and delivery of local services. A full picture is still emerging but it is recommended that the Forum undertakes a facilitated review of its own agenda and work programmes towards the end of the year when national policy and drivers are clearer.

1. The Lancashire Partnership Review

The Lancashire Partnership is undergoing a 'root and branch' review. The Forum is the environment themed group of the Lancashire Partnership and has representation on the Board and Executive. The Forum has responsibility for the performance management of the environment indicators in Lancashire's Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Various factors are driving this review but include:

- Structures and performance frameworks for local government and its partners are changing. CAA and performance indicators will be gone, and coalition government are indicating a greater degree of trust in setting local agendas
- Performance reward grant is wiped out.
- A Difficult expenditure climate. Awaiting comprehensive spending review in October.

The Lancashire Partnership will be making its recommendations for going forward in September.

2. Communities and Local Government – Draft Structural Reform Plan

The DCLG [published its Structural Reform Plan](#) last week demonstrating its contribution to the coalition agreement and forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

Key points include:

- Decentralisation and Localism Bill likely to be introduced November 2010, and to receive Royal Assent November 2011
- Regional Development Agencies replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships by April 2012
- Planning, home building and social housing: proposals requiring legislation will be included in the Localism Bill; the new planning framework being in place by April 2012.
- Elements of framework for local authority accountability to local people in place by April 2011

The proposals appear to leave in place partnership structures based on Local Area Agreements and Multi-Area Agreements, although more may emerge as details are provided of the partnerships that will replace Regional Development Agencies.

3. The Coalition Programme for Government

The Coalition: our programme for government sets out a programme for partnership government over the next five years. The sections on 'Environment' and on 'Energy & Climate Change' are available to download at: <http://programmeforgovernment.hmg.gov.uk>

The Government's immediate spending reductions and the emergency Budget announcement confirm that a very tough climate for the public sector is ahead. Yet the new Government is also very strongly committed to devolving decisions to the local level, and has made some important early announcements in that direction. A picture of new policies and programmes is still emerging, but some recent development have included

- Launch of **Natural Environmental White Paper discussion paper** – 26 July 2010 is the start of the creation of a new environment policy for England, and emphasis is on the 'Big Society' approach.
- **Climate Change Minister sets out vision for local energy economies**, launching the first stage of the Government's plans to help communities become more self-sufficient in the way they use heat and power. Empowering communities to generate their own energy on a large and a small scale can not only bring in an income but also help save money on fuel bills and increase domestic energy security. Homes, schools and businesses are already guaranteed cash payments through the 'feed-in tariff' for producing their own green electricity through technologies such as solar panels or small wind turbines, as well as for selling it to the national grid. Around 100,000 homes and organisations have installed this kind of technology so far. The Government wants to see what more it can do to help develop the industry, create more job opportunities, and make sure customers can trust the green technology they buy. [DECC 12 July](#)
- **Consultation on draft national policy statements for energy (Press release)**
The Government's draft National Policy Statements for energy infrastructure will be strengthened. Charles Hendry, Minister of State for Energy said: "For large energy projects we need to give industry maximum certainty, so that if sound proposals come forward, they will not fall victim to unnecessary hold-ups. "We have decided to take a further look at the Appraisal of Sustainability of our draft Energy Policy Statements to make sure that they are fit for purpose. Taking this decision now is essential to safeguard our long-term goal of a sustainable and secure energy supply". Plans for the first new nuclear power station to begin generating electricity by 2018 remain on course. [DECC 15 July](#)
- **June 2010 Budget Statement**
The emergency budget released on 22 June outlines the commitment to moving towards a low carbon economy. The full Budget document is available at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/2010_june_budget.htm.
- **Review of waste policy announced**
The Government is to carry out a full review of waste policy in England, looking at the most effective ways of reducing waste, maximising the money to be made from waste and recycling, and how waste policies affect local communities and individual households.
The review will include:
 - the effect of waste policies on local communities and individual households, and how local authorities can best work with people to make the best decisions;
 - maximising the contribution of the waste and recycling industries to the UK economically and environmentally;

- how we work towards the “zero waste economy”, and drastically reduce the amount of waste created and valuable resources sent to landfill, looking at the entire process from source to end of life.