

Our ref: KA

ITEM 13b

Your ref:

Richard Baker
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26 February 2008

Dear Richard

BRIDGING NEWCASTLEGATESHEAD'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON 'TOWARDS A NORTHERN WAY – RESEARCH AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME'

Bridging NewcastleGateshead's (BNG's) response to the above consultation report is set out below under the questions asked in the document.

Northern Way Research and Policy Programme

1. In section 6 of the document we describe the proposed proposition and research space for the Northern Way research programme.

Do you agree with this characterisation of the space in which we should operate?

Although the focus of The Northern Way is the economy, it recognises that this needs the support of transport and housing etc. However, the document is not clear as to how The Northern Way will feed into other organisations and disciplines eg. housing and regeneration (eg. the Homes and Communities Agency with responsibility for the New Growth Points, Eco-towns) and housing market renewal pathfinders (organisations whose business plans are often closely linked to economic growth in some of the most deprived communities in the North). Are these kinds of organisations represented on the Forum(s)? If not, it should be seriously considered to ensure that the relevant expertise is drawn upon right from the evidence gathering stages of The Northern Way programme. Data may be available via the Regional Observatories but practitioner expertise is required for interpretation and strategy development.

2. In section 6 of the document, we describe the four key programme themes on which we propose to focus the programme: the northern economy, northern futures, measures, benchmarks, tools and methodologies, priority themes and policy developments.

Do you agree that these themes reflect the key priority areas that the Northern Way should focus on? Do you have specific comments about these themes or proposals for additional themes?

Overall, we support the above focus. The Northern Way approach is justifiably market based, focussing on the business element, places which have most potential to making the North more competitive. However, the social and environmental aspects/assets of the North also need to be considered in the role of different places – how can areas other than the Leeds and Manchester city regions contribute? Quality of life is to some extent a distinct Northern asset – we need to better understand how this can support sustainable growth and post-carbon economies.

What are the relevant key policy timetables?

The Economic Development Sub National Review and its subsequent, more detailed 'sister' documents, needs to remain the main driver of the research programme. The Northern Way's earlier research on transport and connectivity has helped to respond to the Eddington Review. However, there still appear to be gaps around skills (Leitch) and the residential offer (Housing Green Paper). As well as the Regional Development Agencies, The Northern Way needs to link into the work of Regional Housing Boards to better understand the complementarities/conflict between the economic growth poles and the housing new growth points/eco towns.

Can you identify key documents or reports which you would like us to take notice of which can inform the development of projects in these areas?

From a BNG perspective, we highlight our work by Professor Glen Bramley of Heriot-Watt University on modelling future housing markets. This research involved looking at the impact of several scenarios (increased/reduced economic growth, increased/reduced land supply and high/low market renewal intervention) on key indicators including poverty, affordability, migration etc. As well as looking at NewcastleGateshead, it modelled for a number of areas for comparison purposes, including rest of the North East, the North West and England. Such a model may be helpful for The Northern Way.

Are there key gaps in the evidence base, or key questions on which you would like the Northern Way to focus?

Although residential offer is mentioned, and very useful work has been carried out for The Northern Way on this issue, it is essential that this activity continues alongside consideration of the economy and transport.

Education and business, responding to the Leith review, also seems to be missing – more needs to be understood about talent retention and attraction.

3. In section 6 of the document we describe our intention to hold networking events to act as a focus for the development of knowledge about the northern economy and in section 7 we discuss some of our other ideas about products and dissemination.

Do you have any views about how these networking events should be developed and have you suggestions about other networks or bodies with which they should interact?

See response to question 1. Generally, if it is not possible to bring together representatives of the different disciplines (the economy, transport, housing and regeneration etc) then The Northern Way needs to link into the regional and sub-regional bodies that already exist. This is done for wider events but not for ongoing involvement/expertise.

Do you have any comments about the content, style or structure of the documents which we propose to publish?

The annual Profiling and Key Facts documents will be very useful, especially as they will consider quality of life as well as economic indicators. In terms of disseminating findings etc, we have always found The Northern Way events useful – with key issues being highlighted rather than having to trawl through bulky documents or the website. Your varied approach seems reasonable.

We will have the capacity to link our website to other sites. Do you have suggestions about which sites we should connect with to help us to maximise the accessibility of knowledge?

All BNG research is summarised and our 'results' papers and full reports are available on our website – it may be useful to have a link from your site within a 'residential offer' section to www.bridgingng.org.uk

Would you be interested in participating in a Northern Way Research Symposium?

BNG would welcome the opportunity to participate in the Research Symposium.

4. In section 8, we describe our aspiration that our research programme should be developed in partnership with partners and stakeholders. In this context, where is there synergy between the proposed Northern Way programme and the programme of other agencies and organisations.

Can you identify programmes or projects which you are currently undertaking or planning which could complement our own proposals?

BNG has carried out various research that links the housing offer to the economy – Work here, Like to live here? (looking at how we can encourage more of the 100,000 commuters to the area to live here to); Experian modelling on the economy and growth sectors, which led onto specific work on Housing Market Renewal and the Creative Sector; the modelling future markets work already mentioned (Glen Bramley) – several of these either look at areas beyond BNG or are informative for other areas.

We are also carrying out 2 major pieces of research in 2008/9 - Value in Design and Housing Options and Affordability that may inform your evidence for the residential offer. We will also update the modelling future markets work to consider the 'credit crunch' and the North East New Growth Points once they are announced.

Can you identify meetings or discussions which would be appropriate platforms for a discussion of our proposed programme during the consultation period?

Regional Housing Boards, Development Boards.

Can you identify partners and stakeholders who would want to engage with us in building this evidence base and who we should add to the mailing list about our proposed programme?

We would be willing to work with you where you feel we can add value.

Notes or other comments

Overall, we are very supportive of the approach the Northern Way proposes to take to research and policy development. However, having attended the consultation event linked to the report, it is noticeable how little appears to be known about the role, strengths and opportunities etc of the North East (compared to a lot of work carried out around Manchester and Leeds city regions) and this needs to be addressed urgently. This will require either additional work by the Northern Way and/or One NorthEast, in close liaison with the Tyne and Wear and Tees Valley city regions and their partners, including BNG and Tees Valley Living. The role and purpose of The Northern Way's research compared/alongside that of the RDAs and sub-regional bodies needs to be agreed and made clear to stakeholders; this will also ensure that sectors outside the direct scope of the themes identified for The Northern Way activity are identified and considered eg. skills, so they inform decision making and strategy development.

Also, it is clear from the consultation event that a lot of work has been carried out on transport and connectivity and an excellent start has been made on the importance of the residential offer. The latter needs further development as well as talent retention and attraction – to some extent ‘what’ is needed has been established but this is still not translated into the ‘how’ and ‘where’ spatially.

Finally, the programme document does not set out who will ‘own’ the strategy/findings coming out of the research – this needs to be clear to ensure recommendations are seriously considered and implemented. For example, although I know from the consultation event that The Northern Way has established a group to identify private sector needs for research, the document is not clear on this issue and private investment, alongside public support will be required to help the North narrow the gap on the rest of the country.

If you have any queries about this response please contact Karen Anderson on telephone 0191 277 2663 or by e-mail at Karen.anderson@bridgingng.org.uk.

Yours sincerely



Karen Anderson
Head of Research and Strategy