

Meeting:	BNG BOARD
Date:	14 March 2008
Contact:	Karen Anderson
Board Action:	For information
Sensitivity:	Public

**Item 12: BNG – Sharing our learning**

**Link to BNG Vision and Objectives:** To deliver our vision and objectives, we encourage innovative solutions to market renewal; this involves learning and sharing good practice across the partnership. This report sets out recent learning opportunities and activity.

**Recommendation:** That the Board note the report and consider any other areas of activity from which learning could benefit the partnership.

**Executive Summary:**

Recent learning activities have included:

- Rebalancing Communities Workshop and Housing Options and Affordability
- BoKlok and River’s Gate tour and discussion
- Housing Market Renewal, Employment and Skills Workshop
- Sustainable living visit
- Growth Points Workshop

Very positive feedback has been received on all of these events and other opportunities for learning will be sought in future. This will include the BNG research event on 20 March – Evidence based Housing Market Renewal and a visit to the Building Research Establishment’s Innovation Park in Watford.

<b>Implications</b>	
Financial:	There are no direct implications as a result of this report
Equality:	
Sustainability:	
Freedom of Information:	Public

<b>Risk Map Element</b>	<b>Brief description of any material risks, including of not proceeding.</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Probability</b>
Strategic:	The activity described in this report is essential to reducing risks across the partnership and helps in continuing BNG’s positive reputation with the public, CLG, the Audit Commission and other organisations we want to influence.		
Financial:			
Development:			
Operational:			
Reputational:			

**Report to:** BNG Board, 14 March 2008

**Subject:** BNG – Sharing our learning

## **Background**

This report provides the BNG Board with information on recent events to share learning across the partnership.

Innovation and learning have always formed part of our Strategy and Business Plan. Several examples of our work are likely to be included in the Audit Commission's web-based Good Practice Guide currently in development and this aspect of our work contributed to the Audit Commission assessment of BNG being a 'strongly performing' pathfinder.

## **Learning activity**

### **Rebalancing Communities Workshop and Housing Options and Affordability**

This workshop was held on 28 January 2008, when BNG, ALMO Chief Executives and the Councils' Directors of Regeneration and Heads of Strategic Housing considered what we can do to encourage mixed communities across whole places and the importance of a holistic approach to regeneration and place making that considers existing housing characterised by high concentrations of deprivation, as well as new build.

Graham Martin and Judi Atkinson, who have carried out a piece of work on "Practical Steps to a better quality of life on Social Housing Estates" for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation facilitated the workshop, which everyone involved found very useful.

The group will now agree a research brief looking at housing options and affordability and hope to select consultants to carry out this fundamental piece of work in spring 2008.

### **BoKlok and River's Gate tour and discussion**

The BoKlok/River's Gate visit on 20 February 2008 also proved to be very successful, with full attendance and very positive feedback from attendees. The event provided officers with an opportunity to visit the BoKlok and River's Gate developments, and then find out more about the thinking behind the sites through two presentations delivered by LiveSmart@Home and Places for People. Following the success of this event, we are planning to organise more learning events and visits for project officers and partners throughout the year.

### **Housing Market Renewal, Employment and Skills Workshop**

On 21 February 2008, BNG invited officers from Stoke City Council and Renew North Staffordshire, another pathfinder, to a workshop with BNG and economic development officers from both Councils, Newcastle Futures and Business Link. We considered our different approaches to improving employment and skills in the pathfinder areas and what more we could do together to improve housing choice and access to work in BNG.

A small group of officers will identify potential opportunities and then report back to another meeting of the wider group.

## **Sustainable living visit - BioRegional and BedZed**

In February, officers from BNG and Gateshead Council travelled to Sutton in South London to see the Beddington Zero Energy Development, or BedZED, the UK's largest eco-village. As part of the visit officers met representatives from BioRegional, the organisation behind the development, to see how they may become involved in new build opportunities in Gateshead. The BioRegional team is keen to work with local authorities, developers and the construction industry on a consultancy basis in order to see more eco-village developments built in the UK and abroad.

## **Growth Points workshop**

On 5 March 2008, BNG organised a workshop bringing together key officers who will be involved in delivering NewGrowth NewcastleGateshead (working title), Gateshead Council's, Newcastle City Council's and BNG's joint bid to the government for a new growth point. The workshop was used to start developing a shared understanding of how we will deliver growth alongside renewal in NewcastleGateshead.

It considered the context for growth in the heart of Tyneside, its links to renewal and economic development and the potential phasing plan. Discussion also took place about how we can ensure we deliver growth as part of the local authorities' Sustainable Communities Strategies and BNG's Business Plan.

Further work will now commence on a draft Delivery Plan, including:

- Pulling together the evidence and 'telling the story' in one document
- Major infrastructure (A1/highway issues, flood risk, embedded renewable energy, critical infrastructure (sewage, energy/utilities)
- Sites, masterplanning and sequencing (site assembly, CPOs, marketing/development briefs etc).

A meeting also took place with CLG and GONE on 6 March; a verbal update on the outcome of this will be provided at the meeting.

We should know whether the bid has been successful in going through to the next round by the Board meeting and a verbal update will be provided.

## **Future learning**

The BNG research event '**Evidence Based Housing Market Renewal**' is set to take place on Thursday 20 March at the Live Theatre. The event will be chaired by Professor Ian Cole of Sheffield Hallam University and attendees will have the opportunity to take part in two of four workshops: covering topics such as modelling future housing markets and work here, like to live here? About 90 delegates have confirmed attendance at the time of writing this report, from throughout the North East and other pathfinders.

To complement earlier learning and the research on value in design, BNG is organising a visit to the **Building Research Establishment's Innovation Park** in Watford on 26 March. The Park features a number of demonstration properties showcasing Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), near zero-carbon homes, and over 200 different, innovative and emerging technologies.

Members of the BNG Team will accompany relevant officers in the Local Authorities who deal with planning, sustainable construction and design, regeneration projects, urban design, or work with developers and contractors. The aim of the day is to give our partners:

- a fuller understanding of the BRE approach to the Code for Sustainable Homes, its role in sustainable construction and its intentions in practice
- a better understanding of the cost implications of achieving higher levels of sustainable construction in order to better negotiate with developers and potential investors
- an understanding, and to be able to communicate, the core elements of sustainable design and construction in respect of the CSH in their daily workload
- an understanding of the possibilities for sustainable improvements to existing properties
- the inspiration to apply what they have learnt from viewing one building to larger developments and the sustainable communities agenda
- a basis to further explore specific aspects of the subject of sustainable construction that are of interest/relevance to them, having had a broad introduction at this event to key ideas.