

Meeting:	BNG Board
Date:	21 September 2007
Contact:	Anne Mulroy
Board Action:	For Discussion
Sensitivity:	Public

<b>Item 4: Director's Report</b>
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This report includes:

- Response to Communities England consultation
- Update on the Business Plan 2008/11
- North East Regional Spatial Strategy
- The Green Paper
- Sub National Review
- City Development Company Newcastle and Gateshead
- Update on purchase of Gateshead site
- Appointment of new member of the BNG Appraisal Panel
- National Audit Office Review

## 1. **Response to Communities England Consultation**

Our response to this document has already been submitted to meet the Government deadline. As agreed at the Board meeting of 13 July, it was approved by the Chair and Director. Appendix 1 to this report gives the background and our specific responses to the questions raised in the consultation document. We have welcomed the document but raised key points which include:-

- The new Eco-Towns are only mentioned in relation to the Growth Areas; the Green Paper clarifies that northern cities/towns will be able to bid for Growth Point and Eco-town status subject to fulfilling certain criteria. Discussions are taking place with both local authorities on the potential for the above in NewcastleGateshead.
- Although the Government is clearly still committed to Decent Homes work and CE will have a holistic approach to regeneration, there is still no mention of resources to deliver 'Decent Places', whilst public realm improvements are essential to creating places where people want to live and work.
- Moreover, CE's remit is very much focussed on delivering new homes, only part of successful regeneration and HMR. It will be essential that CE give enough emphasis to improving existing homes/places as well as creating new ones; that growth and renewal are linked as set out in the Green Paper.
- The subsequent change in the working title of CE to 'The New Homes Agency' also weakens the perception of the organisation as taking a holistic approach to the regeneration of places and communities and not just the bricks and mortar.

## 2. **Progress on the Business Plan 2008/11**

Progress continues on developing the Plan for submission to CLG on 2 November. As reported to the last Board, the Business Plan Steering Group has been established across the Partnership including representation from the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and One NorthEast. Progress is on target and an initial draft can now be

progressed following the completion of the Strategic Commission Reviews and our Review Day on 18 September. The Board are asked, because of the deadline for this submission, to delegate approval of this document to a small sub group headed by the Chair. A further report on the Business Plan and Strategic Commission Reviews is attached at item 6.

### 3. **North East Regional Spatial Strategy**

Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is a more detailed note on the current RSS proposals and their implications for BNG. The latest proposals are much more in line with the aims of BNG.

### 4. **The Green Paper**

Attached as Appendix 3 to this report is a summary prepared by NCC of the key points of the Green Paper published in July 2007. A full response from BNG will be submitted by the Government, deadline of 15 October.

The Business Plan will also respond to the opportunities presented by the Green Paper in particular the inclusion of NCC as one of the first Local Housing Company pilots. NCC have established a working group to consider the development of a pilot including BNG, English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation. Initial discussions have focussed on the already well advanced proposal for a Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV) for the Expo. In Gateshead GVA Grimley are currently commissioned to assess the most appropriate use of Council land and resources. The potential of a LABV will be considered within this review. Initial informal discussions have been held with CLG on the potential for BNG to become an investor in LABVs. The Business Plan will include a proposal. Initial informal discussions are also proceeding on the potential for Newcastle and Gateshead to bid for Growth Point Status within the Green Paper proposals. The Board will be kept updated on these issues.

### 5. **The Sub National Review**

Attached as Appendix 4 to this report are the key points of the Sub National Review.

### 6. **City Development Company Newcastle and Gateshead**

Since the last Board meeting Newcastle and Gateshead have made progress on the establishment of a City Development Company with each authority having achieved Executive and Cabinet approval to establish the Company.

It is anticipated that the newly formed Company would sit alongside BNG and NGI with strategic direction from and accountability to an overarching member-led partnership across the two authorities. A further update will be given at the meeting.

### 7. **Gateshead Site Acquisition**

The purchase of the part of the site currently in private ownership is likely to complete by the end of October. To support the site assembly and secure the future of this site Gateshead Council have resolved to pursue a Compulsory Purchase order for the remainder of the site should negotiations not be completed. Negotiations continue at

present with other land owners and lobbying continues on the purchase of BRB surplus land. An update will be given at the meeting.

8. **Appointment of New Member of Appraisal Panel**

Colin Garbutt has joined the Appraisal Panel. Colin has a wealth of experience in Housing. He is currently employed by Faithful and Gould and has extensive experience of RSL management and development and work in the private sector.

9. **National Audit Office Review of CLG**

This review will be published on 9 November. An update will be given at the meeting.