

RESPONSE TO THE LYONS INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Promoting economic prosperity: considering the implications of Eddington, Barker and Leitch

Eddington Transport Study

Governance:

- Q Can LAs work effectively in partnership to deliver transport outcomes or are new/reformed institutions necessary?
- A The development of a Multi Area Agreement type model as set out in the recent White Paper will be an important tool in enabling LAs to work effectively in partnership to develop transport outcomes. However, LA's already do work effectively in partnership to deliver transport outcomes seen through PTA's and Regional Transport Board, although this regional body needs strengthening and its relationship with LA's and PTA's clarified.
- Q What are the key behaviours required of LAs to work in such partnerships? Would new institutional or contractual arrangements be needed to support them?
- A The development of the role of the PTA to support economic development/access to work is vital with the appropriate input / ability to influence by LA's essential. It is for groups of LA's working together for transport outcomes to determine relevant structures. What is clear is the "one size fits all" approach will not work.
- Q Do the issues not considered by Eddington – particularly the potential benefits of aligning transport with other policy powers – alter the best overall design for governance arrangements?
- A Yes, a balance between facilitating general access and movement versus supporting/underpinning economic development as a priority, must be found. This will influence both spatial coverage and policy areas covered by each partnership. In this case, the role and approach of the Highways Agency requires review.
- Q How could local government make use of any new bus powers in line with its broader role in promoting economic development?
- A Together with other LA's we have long argued for re-regulation, it would enable the alignment of bus routes and schedules with local economic patterns. This would very much support the Lyons "place shaping" agenda and existing well being powers under the Local Government Act 2000. Whilst recognising the need for this to take place if

we are to maximise impact, it must also be recognised that realistic review support must accompany it.

Convening:

Q How can LAs make the links between transport and other elements of economic development and quality of life most effectively at the local level?

A Through the consideration of transport/development of transport strategy as a fundamental component of local economic planning and strategy development processes. However, other links into environmental and sustainability agendas must not be missed. All these are effectively addressed in Community Strategies in conjunction with LSP's. this is the most effective level to make those linkages work.

Funding:

Q How could current funding arrangements best be reformed to support cost effective and appropriate spending and investment decisions at sub-national level?

A Through the development of area based single pot arrangements so that transport spend could be linked to economic development and vice versa, based on the local picture and strategy for going forward. This is particularly appropriate for TIF arrangements. To maximise these benefits, target setting as a whole will require review as some targets i.e. BUPI's may actually prove counter productive. How resources are allocated should also be made more effective, based on economic and social needs, rather than simply crude population, which will only continue to exacerbate regional disparities.

Barker Review of Land Use Planning

Governance:

Q What Specific measures are needed to ensure that local planning authorities have appropriate flexibility over issues of solely local impact? Are there particular implications from the Review's recommendations on the use of green belt land?

A No call in is where a proposal is consistent with the Development Plan for the area or an emerging plan where there are no objections from any statutory body. There is also a need to separate out the issues which differ from region to region, enabling locally determined solutions to be developed. It is considered that solutions and schemes developed for the South East for example are not appropriate for application in the North East where different issues exist. In this instance, tampering with Green Belt policies will have a massive economic and social negative impact.

Q What different approaches could be taken to enable strategic decisions to be taken at an appropriate spatial level. Can local authorities work effectively in partnership across wider areas to do this or are new/reformed institutions necessary?

A There needs to be a real alignment of Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Economic Strategies to enable the necessary links between planning and economic development processes, i.e. drawing them closer together into a 'single agenda' or at least agendas that complement and mirror one another, rather than containing elements which can conflict with each other. LA's are already working in effective partnership and the City Region or MAA

approach will also be helpful in moving the agenda forward. Further new institutional change is not necessary or helpful.

Q What role should LAs have in relation to a future independent Planning Commission, and how should they best work with local communities on their concerns and potential benefits?

A LAs, given their community leadership role, must be part of the system, not sit outside of it – they have an existing role through LGA 2000 and the increasing emphasis on neighbourhood's and communities. As such the LPA can undertake this role and at the very least, should be a statutory consultee.

Convening:

Q How can LAs link work on planning, housing and transport issues together most effectively?

A Through a dedicated focus/workstream for LSPs, the development of Multi Area Agreements and through City Regions mechanisms. These already exist and LA's should be given the incentive and the opportunity to take this collective work further.

Funding:

Q What would be the most effective and practical means of creating incentives for local authorities to support appropriate growth?

A Any incentives need to reflect local situations and demonstrate its relevance – see the existing debate around PDG. How ever tax incentives are decided (and there is already many discussions), any income derived should be retained locally to be spent on locally determined priorities such as economic development. Issues around charging for vacant land need a very clear definition and must reflect local circumstances i.e. deprived areas are completely different to prosperous areas.

Leitch Review of Skills

Governance:

Q With their new strategic leadership role, how can LAs relate most effectively to a reformed Learning and Skills Council on 14-19 education issues? What are the merits of the different options for managing the division of these responsibilities?

A Closer alignment of skills and economic policy development/delivery is needed rather than the prevailing silo approach. This is a role for LA's given their Community Leadership role. Skills needs to be integrated into wider education and employment debates. The LSP has the right players round the table – the LA, JC+, FE, HE and the LSC – this needs to be exploited to ensure that 14-19 and employment agendas 'feed' one another. This is especially important with the emergence of City Region, MAA's, where there are dangers of losing a local focus, which may well work very effectively.

Convening:

Q What role should LAs play in a new demand-led skills system?

A The LA should play a central role – it is the organisation with the key functions for this agenda, i.e. delivering education and economic development/inward investment, etc. At the same time LA's are often one of an areas large employers and have a role to play in developing skills in their workforce, apprenticeships and procurement policies.

Q What role should LAs play in the proposed Employment and Skills Boards, to ensure skills and employment issues are properly linked to wider work on economic prosperity and development?

A Again the community leadership role, arising from the LG Act 2000, has meant that these agendas have already been brought together by the LA, driven primarily through LSP mechanisms and the development of community strategies. It is vital that skills, infrastructure and employment agendas are aligned, and given the functions that LAs undertake in relation to all, would play a key role on the proposed Boards. However, what is restrictive is the relatively inflexible funding streams of the LSC and the relative short term nature of discretionary funding. Long term success requires effective long term solutions and funding.

In Conclusion

Lyons should be looking to join up the thinking in respect of these three separate but closely interlinked areas. All three topics are very much part of the sustainable communities agenda and should perhaps be badged under that heading.

There are potential conflicts around Lyon's view on local democracy and the views of Barker and Eddington. If we are to drive economic development and transport this must meet the strategic sub-regional, regional and national needs and this may not be possible if locality based objections emerge with the kind of weight given to them by Lyons.

It is not clear whether Lyon' s proposals will generate the savings to fund the substantial investment required to fund the ambitious plans of Leitch. Has the Government the commitment to fund the Leitch proposals from other sources?

The Leitch proposals are pivotal for the success of both the Eddington and Baker proposals. Without investment in appropriately skilled workforces this Country cannot meet the economic, planning or transport ambitions of Eddington and Baker.

