

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING**Friday 13 October 2017**Engineering Employers' Federation
Broadway House, Tothill St, London, SW1H 9NQ

Present: Nicolas Heslop (Chair)
Roy Perry (Deputy Chair)
David Monk (Secretary)
Ralph Bagge
Paul Bettison OBE
Jeanette Clifford
John Furey
Lynne Hack
Keith House
James Mills
Tony Page
Carole Paternoster
Tony Rooth
Linda Smith
Chris Townsend

In Attendance: Adam Cooper, National Infrastructure Commission
Jeremy Kite, Dartford BC
Mark Valleley, East Sussex CC/Transport for the South East
Kate Herbert, LGA
Heather Bolton, SEEC
Nick Woolfenden, SEEC
Ian Mackie, SEEC
Hayley Austin, SEEC & SESL
Neil Border, SESL

1. Apologies, declarations of substitutes and declarations of interest

1.1 Ann Newton substituted for Bob Standley. Apologies came from David Neighbour, Stephen Parker, Clive Woodbridge and Tim Wheadon. No declarations of interest were made.

2. Infrastructure investment to support South East economic growth
2a. National Infrastructure Commission

2.1 Adam Cooper, Director of Policy & Engagement at the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) attended on behalf of NIC Chairman Lord Adonis, who was required at short notice to launch the first draft National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) with the Chancellor. Adam explained the new NIA set out long-term infrastructure priorities, and will be updated once per Parliament. The NIA covers transport, energy, water, digital communications, waste and flood defences, as well as having an indirect remit of how these relate to housing. He said these issues were exceptionally relevant to the South East, as poor investment can hold back economic growth. The assessment identified seven priority areas:

- building a digital society;
- connecting cities;
- infrastructure to support new homes and communities;
- low cost, low carbon energy;
- revolution in road transport;
- reducing the risk from flooding or drought;
- and how to finance infrastructure in efficient ways.

The NIC is also due to report on its Oxford-Cambridge corridor study in winter 2017-18.

2.2 In discussion, members raised points including:

- Transport is important to unlock councils' housing plans; but investment is also needed to address existing South East transport deficits before new growth can be delivered.

- The need for Government to support alternative funding solutions given limited existing public funding (eg. from DfT/Housing Infrastructure Fund), for example allowing councils to capture land value uplift from planning permission. What will be the European Investment Bank's role post-Brexit?
- Concerns that the Government is not sufficiently prioritising South East infrastructure investment when compared to Core Cities or the North. High returns and GVA growth available in the South East should also be a priority.
- Need to ensure Brexit negotiations maintain UK status as an attractive location for infrastructure investment internationally.
- Ensuring there is sufficient construction sector capacity to build infrastructure and homes.
- Importance of ensuring good/healthy places to live, including good design, cycling etc.
- The need to make sure parts of the South East are not left out of broadband coverage.
- Whether councils would be responsible for providing electric car charging points.

2.3 SEEC will be responding to the draft NIA (deadline 12 January 2018) and members were invited to supply feedback to be included in the response. Adam emphasised Lord Adonis would be keen to attend a future SEEC meeting.

ACTION 1: SEEC to make a representation to the Infrastructure Assessment summarising members' key issues and questions for response.

ACTION 2: SEEC to contact Lord Adonis' office about attendance at a future SEEC meeting.

2b. Transport for the South East

2.4 The Chairman introduced Tony Page, Reading BC, Vice Chairman of Transport for the South East (TfSE) and Jeremy Kite, Dartford BC, Kent borough representative on the TfSE Transport Forum. Tony explained that local transport authorities and LEAs have come together to form a shadow sub national transport board (SNTB). He said TfSE is clear it must not duplicate existing work but should add value, new information and strategic coordination for existing and new work. Government has indicated TfSE will be recognised de-facto as an SNTB ahead of being legally designated by 2020. TfSE will push for this sooner if possible. TfSE will be commissioning an economic connectivity review, building on existing work such as SEEC's 'Missing Links', with consultation expected April 2018. Funding options are a key issue.

2.5 Jeremy explained that the new TfSE Transport Forum provides an opportunity for Districts and other partners to advise and assist the main board and senior officer group. It nominates a borough member to sit on the main board. The Forum is still in its development stage, with so far one meeting held. Jeremy is keen to ensure the Forum has timely and effective opportunities to shape and contribute to the board's work. He felt it would be important to include transport users as well as providers, and to help the board consider innovation.

2.6 In discussion:

- Members welcomed and encouraged active engagement between TfSE and SEEC, to seek clarity and alignment on key issues/priorities – including ensuring consistent messages to Government.
- Responding to a question about engagement with the Economic Heartland SNTB, TfSE is hoping for open dialogue with them on common themes.
- TfSE invited SEEC to attend its next Senior Officer Group meeting to ensure work programmes were aligned, and to look at potential representation from SEEC on some working groups to feed into ongoing work on transport strategy. It was also suggested that when the Economic Connectivity Review comes out for consultation it should be formally discussed again at a SEEC Executive meeting.

ACTION 3: SEEC to receive an invitation from the TfSE to attend its next Senior Officer Group meeting.

ACTION 4: SEEC to liaise with TfSE regarding discussions on the Economic Connectivity Review.

- 3. SEEC Executive membership, SEEC business plan 2017-18 and potential for a new, single body to represent South East councillors**
- 3.1 Members endorsed Chris Townsend from Surrey CC and Clive Woodbridge from Epsom & Ewell BC as representatives from the smaller parties on SEEC's Executive for 2017-18.
- 3.2 Members endorsed the final SEEC business plan for 2017-18. Discussing the possibility of setting up an APPG to engage MPs, members raised concerns about whether this was a cost-effective approach, and suggested there may be alternative actions to engaging MPs within the South East, or possibly more widely with London.

ACTION 5: Chairman and Director to consider options for way forward on engaging MPs.

- 3.3 An update was given on a motion to SESL's June AGM recommending merger of SEEC and SESL to form a new, single organisation for the South East. SESL had established a working group that met for the first time on 13 October. On 1 December SESL will consider whether to support a joint working group with SEEC to look at the future of both organisations. SEEC members supported the principle of the joint working group.

ACTION 6: SEEC to identify members to join a working group once details are confirmed.

- 4. DCLG consultation: Planning for the right homes in the right places**
- 4.1 Nick Woolfenden gave a brief overview of the consultation and invited member views on five key areas proposed in the cover paper as the basis of SEEC's response.
- Proposed change in starting point for housing numbers in local plans.
 - Challenge of actually delivering the homes and the growing number of unimplemented planning permissions.
 - Seeking clarity about the new Statement of Common Ground and how that will compare to current Duty to Co-operate.
 - Lack of detail on funding infrastructure.
 - Transition to new arrangements.
- 4.2 Members supported the 5 key areas. In discussion, members raised points including:
- Whilst some members support the Government's aim to build more homes nationally, its proposed housing need formula is flawed and simplistic eg. affordability should consider lower quartile ratios between incomes/house prices, rather than median; and consideration is needed re pay levels where residents work, not just in the local area.
 - Concerns around proposals for increased housing needs in areas with a high proportion of Green Belt and environmental constraints.
 - Even where councils have good delivery records, there is a limit to what the industry can build-out – construction sector capacity needs to be improved, and pressure put on builders with unimplemented planning permissions.
 - Concerns around proposals for reduced housing need numbers in areas with significant growth plans or higher existing identified affordable and market housing needs. Need to ensure the Government's proposals pass a 'sense check'.
 - The importance of infrastructure funding, and addressing current problems with s106/CIL/viability issues. However these alone are insufficient to cover all infrastructure needs. Government should also support SEEC calls for new solutions to raising infrastructure funding, including planning gain from granting permission.
 - Transition will be important – Government should allow phased increases in housing numbers for areas being asked to provide big increases. And it will be important that Government helps councils improve skills/capacity to deliver.
- 4.3 Members were asked for any further comments to be fed to Nick by 24 October, and the draft response would be shared with Executive members for comment in early November.

Members agreed the Chairman, Roy Perry and David Monk should sign off the final response. A letter to CLG ministers would also be considered, as well as briefing for MPs.

ACTION 7: SEEC to distribute a draft response to Executive members for comment in early November, and submit following Leadership team approval by 9 November deadline.

5. Election of new Chairman for South East Strategic Partnership for Migration

5.1 Members approved the selection of Cllr Roger Gough from Kent CC as the new South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) Chairman. Members recorded thanks to the outgoing Chairman Cllr Paul Watkins, following his retirement as Leader of Dover.

ACTION 8: SEEC secretariat to confirm Cllr Gough's appointment and provide relevant briefings.

6. Latest SEEC activity report and updates

6.1 Members welcomed the updates on SEEC's recent work set out in the meeting paper, including the Chairman's Wider South East meeting with Transport Secretary Chris Grayling.

7. Minutes and matters arising

7.1 There were no minutes to approve as SEEC's Executive scheduled for 24/03/17 was cancelled in favour of a joint SEEC-CLG Housing White Paper event with former Housing Minister Gavin Barwell on 6/3/17. [Notes of the Gavin Barwell event](#) were circulated at the time. There were no matters arising.

8. Confirmed forward meeting dates:

- 1 December 2017 – SEEC Executive (shared date with SESL) – SEEC workshop on Local Industrial Strategies.
- 26 January 2018 – Wider South East Summit (consultation on London Plan).
- 8 February 2018 – SEEC All-member meeting.

9. Any other business

9.1 Members were advised that a two page briefing paper is available for anyone attending the Councillors' Forum on 19 October, where Immigration Minister Brandon Lewis will be speaking. The meeting closed at 3.30pm.