

# South East First

The Newsletter of South East England Councils

April 2017

## *Invest in South East to deliver national economic growth*

**SEEC's response to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper calls for increased investment in the South East and the addition of an extra 'pillar' to reinforce the importance of housing to the economy. Without these, the South East's role as a major funder of public spending and as a global gateway for UK plc is at risk. South East skills gaps, non-delivery of homes and under-investment in transport and infrastructure threaten both local and national economic growth.**

The South East's economic track record demonstrates our ability to support the Industrial Strategy's aims nationwide, but only with the right investment and policy. Our submission asks for clarity about how the Government plans to extend the South East's strengths, and build on existing sectoral excellence in areas such as life sciences, engineering, defence, motorsport and technology. SEEC calls for a more locally responsive education and skills system and reversal of past under-investment in strategic infrastructure which holds back the South East's economic potential.

While supporting Government's aim to close the gap between the best performing places and those which are less productive, our response stresses that it must not be achieved by holding back potential in already high-performing areas such as the South East.

Our response focuses on two of the 10 'pillars' for action in the Green Paper – 'Developing skills' and 'Upgrading infrastructure' – and recommends that 'Delivery of housing' should be an 11<sup>th</sup> pillar. Economic success is constrained if workers are unable to find homes where needed by businesses and longer commutes create more congestion. This is a key issue in the South East which has a backlog of unimplemented permissions for at least 66,750 homes. SEEC recommendations include:

- **Skills:** increasing the responsiveness of the skills system to each area's economic and business needs by including more input from local authorities and employers; providing opportunities for young people to switch between academic or vocational routes at a range of ages; creating an all-age locally commissioned careers service.
- **Infrastructure:** closing the South East's estimated £15.4bn infrastructure funding gap over the next 15 years by reallocating existing funding and providing councils with more financial freedoms and flexibilities. For example: creating more infrastructure funds; reviewing proposed changes to the New Homes Bonus; allowing councils to retain first-time sale stamp duty for infrastructure funding; greater local decision-making over income streams such as business rates; updating national criteria for investment to take better account of the GVA uplift that infrastructure schemes will deliver.
- **Housing delivery:** giving councils greater powers to incentivise delivery where building is too slow; increasing access to finance for smaller builders; improving construction skills by allowing councils to target funding at training gaps; increasing funding for affordable homes by allowing councils to borrow more and determine developers' contributions locally.

# *SEEC to set out South East views to inform Mayor's new London Plan*

**SEEC representatives at the 31 March Wider South East Political Steering Group (PSG) meeting committed to setting out high level principles to help inform the draft London Plan expected later this year.**

Following the meeting with Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe they will write to him and Mayor Sadiq Khan to highlight opportunities and challenges that arise from the growth pressures in both the South East and London.

Key topics discussed at the meeting will be reflected in the letter. These include:

- Earliest possible discussions if London's analysis shows it may be unable to meet housing demand within London's boundaries.
- The importance of incentivising brownfield development and considering London Green Belt reviews before any discussion on meeting London's housing need outside the capital.
- Ensuring transport investment helps economic growth inside and outside London, rather than simply promoting more commuting into central London.
- Ensuring any effort to move development outside London is focused solely on willing partners.

PSG members also agreed a phased programme of work to call for mutually beneficial strategic infrastructure investment and will write a joint letter to Housing Minister Gavin Barwell on the Housing White Paper.

## *28 April deadline for councils to bid for migration funding*

**Local authorities facing pressure on services from recent immigration are encouraged to submit funding bids to the Controlling Migration Fund by the 28 April 2017 deadline.**

The Fund asks councils to identify projects that will help them respond to problems caused by high migration. Funding should deliver benefits to the established resident population. Over 4 years to 2019-20, there is:

- A local service impacts fund of £100m, to help English local authorities ease pressures on local services where there are high and unexpected volumes of immigration.
- An enforcement fund worth £40m to support enforcement action against illegal migrants to reduce the pressure on local areas.

Funding proposals must be designed to mitigate any evidenced, negative impacts of recent immigration from outside the UK on established resident communities. The Fund criteria are deliberately broad to encourage local authorities to come forward with solutions to particular local issues.

Another submission deadline is expected on 2 June 2017. Local authorities can contact DCLG to discuss bids by emailing: [migrationfund@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:migrationfund@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

# *Copse to be named after Cllr Van Coulter*

**Oxford City Council have announced that part of a nature park due to be planted with 3,500 trees later this year will be now be named after SEEC Executive member Cllr Van Coulter who passed away unexpectedly last month.**

The planting will be named Coulter's Copse in memory of Cllr Van Coulter, whose work made this project possible by linking council officers to a tree planting offer made via SEEC. Coulter's Copse will be located on Burgess Field, a site of approximately 8.5 hectares adjacent to Port Meadow Nature Reserve and near Oxford City centre. Currently the field is largely open grassland and walking paths. It is home to wildlife including roe deer, cuckoos and other woodland birds.

From October this year, 3,500 native trees and shrubs are due to be planted including Oak, Cherry, Field Maple, Hazel, Hawthorn and Guelder. These will help improve the biodiversity of the 27 hectare former landfill site which Oxford City Council's Parks Team now manages as a Nature Reserve.

## *News Roundup*

### **23 June: SEEC AGM and Brexit Workshop**

SEEC's AGM will be held on 23 June 2017. SEEC business will include the opportunity for members to elect SEEC's leadership team and Executive Committee for 2017-18. Following the success of incorporating a topical workshop into January's All-member meeting, the formal part of the SEEC AGM will be followed by a workshop on 'Brexit, Migration and the South East Economy'. Contact [admin@secouncils.gov.uk](mailto:admin@secouncils.gov.uk) to confirm your attendance.

### **Homelessness and temporary accommodation workshop**

The [SEEC-LGA housing workshop](#) in January showed the high level of South East interest in housing, with around 90 delegates attending. Developing the housing theme, the LGA is now organising a national event on homelessness and temporary accommodation. It will share good practice on reducing the costs and numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation. [Homelessness and temporary accommodation – lessons from local government innovations](#) takes place on Tuesday 16 May 2017 at the LGA offices. For further information contact: [events@local.gov.uk](mailto:events@local.gov.uk)