

SOUTH EAST FIRST

The Newsletter of South East England Councils

March 2018



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Further member views are invited by mid April to help shape SEEC's formal response.

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Councillors' guide to working with LEPs

SEEC has published a short [South East guide and checklist to support councillor engagement with LEPs](#) to shape new Local Industrial Strategies (LIS). The guide builds on a SEEC member-LEP workshop.

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News Roundup

South East supports Major Roads Network

Responding to DfT consultation, SEEC has [supported a new Major Roads Network](#) but called for a greater proportion of the new network to be in the South East to reflect high traffic levels here.

DfT has proposed creation of a national Major Roads Network (MRN) to complement the existing Strategic Road Network (SRN). Points in SEEC's response include:

- Greater certainty over capital funding is welcome but revenue funding is also needed for road maintenance.
- Environmental and safety measures should have a higher priority in designing MRN upgrades.
- The South East should have more MRN roads than suggested in the consultation. This reflects the fact that the South East currently has a smaller-than-average share of SRN roads, despite higher-than-average traffic volumes.

South East welcomes 1,000th refugee

A workshop to mark the mid-way point in the Government's refugee programme has celebrated the fact that more than 1,000 refugees have now been resettled in the South East. In 2015 former Prime Minister David Cameron launched a programme to resettle 20,000 refugees in the UK by 2020. Since then, some 56 South East local authorities have offered places for around 3,000 refugees by 2020.

The 1,000th refugee arrived in the South East in March 2018 but barriers, such as high housing costs in the SEEC area, have made it difficult for councils to turn all their offers into tangible places. The workshop, organised by the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM), discussed barriers that have prevented councils accepting more refugees and shared good practice.

SESPM is working with councils to translate more offers into places for refugees. Any authorities who want to discuss capacity to increase their rate of resettling refugees should contact SESPM Head of Partnership Roy Millard by email at roymillard@secouncils.gov.uk

LGA call for evidence on post-Brexit England

LGA's People and Places Board is calling for local authorities to submit evidence by 13 April to a 'Post-Brexit England' Commission. The work aims to highlight the challenges and opportunities facing counties and districts to help make the case for greater devolution in non-metropolitan areas. Views are invited on topics including:

- Improving productivity and increasing inclusive growth
- Training a better skilled workforce and providing more effective employment services
- Providing better transport and digital infrastructure
- Building more and better housing
- Increasing exports and attracting more foreign direct investment
- Meeting the public service challenge in more rural areas.

There is further information on the [Commission's web page](#)

Spring statement

SEEC circulated a [same day briefing for members](#) on 13 March summarising the Chancellor's first Spring Statement. Published alongside the Statement was [Sir Oliver Letwin's initial report on unimplemented permissions](#), setting out his intention to focus on delays by major housebuilders on large sites.

28 Jun - SEEC AGM & All-Member meeting

[Heather Bolton – SEEC Director](#)

28 Sep - SEEC Executive

[Nick Woolfenden – Policy Co-ordination](#)

30 Nov - SEEC Executive

[Hayley Austin – Admin](#)

18 Dec - Wider South East Summit

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SEEC members meet Housing Minister



A small group of SEEC members met Housing Minister Dominic Raab MP (pictured) in March to discuss the opportunities and challenges of delivering homes in the South East. It was a very positive meeting from both sides said SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop.

Cllr Heslop said: “As councillors we understand and support the Government’s ambition to build more homes. We stressed that the South East is already playing its part, with just under 100,000 homes completed in the South East over the past 3 years. But we also highlighted some areas – such as infrastructure and unbuilt planning permissions – where extra help from Government would help us achieve more.

“From the Minister’s side he was interested in what extra powers councils might need to incentivise swift delivery of homes and how this could help us meet the proposed housing delivery test. He understood our concerns about loss of Green Belt and the need for more infrastructure investment. He encouraged us to explore how higher density housing could avoid use of protected land and to maximise bids to the Housing Infrastructure Fund, which has been designed to help high cost areas such as the South East.”

SEEC’s [briefing for the Minister](#) covered key points discussed, including:

- Infrastructure funding shortfalls.
- Balancing pressure for homes with pressure to preserve protected land such as Green Belt and AONB.
- Whether MHCLG’s proposed affordability methodology should be based on average residents’ salaries or average wages in an area.
- Unused planning permissions and the tools local authorities would need to be able to encourage building so they could meet proposed housing delivery tests.

Council input vital in social care redesign says SEEC



SEEC has called for councils to have a central role in designing the future of social care. As Government prepares a Green Paper on older people's care, SEEC has this month submitted evidence to two national reviews on how to secure long term funding and sustainability for health and social care.

The first [submission was made to MPs as part of a select committee inquiry](#) on long term funding of adult social care, being held jointly by the Housing, Communities & Local Government and Health select committees. The second [input was made to the independent Lord Darzi Review](#) of Health and Care. Lord Darzi is reviewing health and care services, with the aim of making recommendations for future funding and reform of the system.

Both submissions were jointly made with SESL. Key points include:

- The Government's expected Green Paper on social care is welcome but it should cover social care for all adults, not just older people.
- Boundaries between health and social care should be reviewed to ensure clarity on responsibilities. All tiers of councils have important roles in preventative work – this is often more cost effective than NHS care and can keep people healthy and safe at home longer, delaying the need for residential or hospital care. This locally-led care improves residents' quality of life while also reducing pressures and costs in NHS acute services.
- A national funding solution for social care is needed instead of using council tax.
- Government should establish a short-timescale Royal Commission to review funding options and make recommendations. Local government councillors and officers should be included to ensure any review draws on councils' practical experience of delivering social care.

Help shape SEEC response on planning reform

SEEC's [March Executive](#) discussed headline issues from Government's planning and housing reforms, launched for consultation this month. Further member views are invited by mid April to help shape SEEC's formal response.

Government wants to boost home building to 300,000 a year nationally. This would be an increase on the 217,000 homes built in 2016-17 – of these 36,526 were in the South East.

Consultations include a new [draft National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and explanatory document, updated [National Planning Practice Guidance](#), proposals for a [Housing Delivery Test](#) and draft [Planning Practice Guidance on Viability](#), plus [reforming developer contributions](#). To help shape SEEC's response please send any comments, suggestions or local evidence to Nickwoolfenden@secouncils.gov.uk by 10 April.

Headline issues discussed at SEEC Executive were:

- **Housing needs methodology.** Members want clarity on how protected land constraints can be factored into Local Plan housing numbers and whether affordability can be based on average residents' salaries rather than average local wages.
- **Housing delivery test.** As councils do not build the majority of homes, they need additional powers to

- be able to meet the test – for example, powers to incentivise builders to deliver quickly.
- **Infrastructure.** Changes to developer contributions for infrastructure may help but are unlikely to fill a funding gap of £15.4bn. Problems remain with lack of contributions from small sites and office-to-residential conversions.
 - **Transition.** The NPPF transition period is welcome for Local Plans nearing completion. There remain concerns about how the Statements of Common Ground will work in practice.

Councillors' guide to working with LEPs

SEEC has published a short [South East guide and checklist to support councillor engagement with LEPs](#) to shape new Local Industrial Strategies (LIS). Commissioned from consultants Shared Intelligence, the guide builds on a SEEC member-LEP workshop in December.

Government sees locally-developed LIS as a key tool to help deliver its national Industrial Strategy framework.

SEEC's guide includes a checklist to help councillors think about how they can shape and contribute to LIS – especially given councils' place-making role, democratic accountability and wider partnerships. Effective councillor engagement will help ensure LIS reflect local priorities and provide a robust basis for securing investment that will support strong local economies.

The guide also gives background to the national Industrial Strategy, local case studies on successful partnership working, and highlights some of the major South East economic issues to consider during LIS development.

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