

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS: BRIEFING ON THE EUROPEAN UNION'S PROPOSED ENERGY EFFICIENCY DIRECTIVE JANUARY 2012



The European Commission recently published its draft European Union (EU) Energy Efficiency Directive¹. Whilst SEEC is supportive of the need to increase energy efficiency, and the Directive rightly acknowledges the important role local authorities have in helping deliver this, **the current top-down proposals are of major concern – being both anti-localist and expensive to implement.**

SEEC recommends three key areas for amendment below. We also endorse the LGA's briefing on the Directive and the work of the UK Delegation to the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR), led by SEEC's Deputy Chairman Cllr Gordon Keymer CBE, in persuading the CoR to call for significant changes to the proposals.

SEEC priority amendments:

i. Remove top-down targets for the renovation of public buildings

- Draft Directive Article 4 would require public bodies including local authorities to annually renovate 3% of the floor area of buildings they own over 250m². Renovation would need to meet at least the minimum energy performance requirements set in current building regulations. An inventory of buildings' energy performance would also be required.
- **Whilst improving the energy efficiency of buildings is important to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the proposed mandatory annual target is an inflexible and impractical means of achieving this, and at odds with the UK government's localist approach. Such targets must be removed.**
- **A better approach would be to focus on energy use reduction rather than simply renovation.** This would recognise, for example, the impact of improved heating/cooling equipment, maintenance and behaviour change.

ii. Remove top-down requirements for the promotion of energy efficiency through public procurement

- Draft Directive Article 5 would require public bodies to meet high energy efficiency standards when procuring works, products or services.
- **Whilst SEEC agrees local authorities should play an important leadership role in procurement best practice, the imposition of mandatory top-down requirements is unacceptable and risks distorting the procurement process. In practice good procurement must strike a balance between a number of criteria,** including not only energy efficiency but also value for money and factors such as building location and size.
- **The Directive should provide high quality guidance rather than impose compulsory criteria.** Guidance on the value of energy efficient products would enable local authorities to decide how to achieve the best procurement outcomes, whilst not distorting the procurement process.

iii. Address financial and administrative burdens

- Proposals in the draft Directive would impose significant financial and administrative burdens on local government. These include the cost of renovations, regular statistical reports and evaluations, and the need to monitor the energy performance of contractors.
- **Administrative burdens must be minimised, and any additional financial or resource implications arising from the Directive must be met by the government.**

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South East England Councils (SEEC) promotes the views and interests of all tiers of local government across the South East, who together represent more than eight million residents. SEEC is a voluntary body, funded by member council subscriptions, and carries a unique mandate as the single democratic voice of the South East.

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¹ http://ec.europa.eu/energy/efficiency/eed/eed_en.htm