

Jane Davidson AM, Minister for the Environment, sustainability and Housing met with representatives of third sector networks under the auspices of the National Assembly Voluntary Sector Scheme on 12 November 2008. Also present was Jocelyn Davies AM, Deputy Minister for Housing who highlighted the projects she had been involved with, emphasising the positive relationship between her work and that of the Minister.

The Minister explained that her priorities were focussed around the wider Sustainable Development agenda. Sustainable homes were critical to the work and it would be necessary to promote this approach both to Registered Social Landlords and the private sector. The Minister informed the group that she would be signing a charter with representatives from key organisations in the building industry that set out a commitment to reduce emissions from construction projects.

She further explained that she would be looking at the planning system within the context of tackling climate change to encourage energy efficient developments that made use of renewable. WAG is currently working towards excellent BREEAM ratings for the buildings it was constructing and the Minister confirmed that the devolution of building regulations was on track for a transfer of functions scheduled in 2009. These powers would go a long way to ensure that the 2011 aspiration of making all new homes zero carbon could be met. The sector also wanted to look at the opportunities to acquire land for construction projects by bringing future spending into the current financial year to help support the new buyer scheme. The Deputy Minister said that a number of issues would need careful consideration.

A discussion followed on the issues of Climate Change and the Minister reported that WCVA had been invited to join WAG's Climate Change Commission. The sector questioned the Minister about the Renewable Energy Routemap and the progress of the Marine Energy Framework. The Minister explained that the more achievable elements of the Routemap would be reflected within the proposed Energy Strategy while other elements would be made available next year. The Minister went on to talk about the Flood & Water Bill that would require critical input from the third sector and this would be agenda item for the next meeting.

Simon Bilsborough from the Corporate Strategy Unit told the group of the plans to hold an awayday in spring 2009 to develop a Strategic Action Plan for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing Division which would focus on the draft Sustainable Development Scheme & the 2nd Environment Strategy Action Plan, giving a stronger drive and clearer policy context for the day. WAG confirmed it was agreeable to outside organisation attending the day.

Charles Coombs from the Strategic Policy Division presented his paper 'Better consultation - better for everyone', explaining that a great deal of good practice existed within WAG but it needed to be drawn together and applied more consistently. Issues already identified included:

- Joined up activity beforehand to avoid consultation
- WAG'S duty to respondees, ensuring that proper feedback was given
- Ensuring consultation process was transparent

The Minister acknowledged that capacity was crucial for effective engagement from the voluntary sector and that targeting consultations effectively would be crucial in their success. A discussion followed around consultations and the third sector were thanked for their comments

Bethan Lewis, Senior Policy Officer with WCVA also used the opportunity to present the research WCVA had carried out on the Green Volunteering paper and work within the voluntary sector to respond to the challenge of climate change.

Meeting papers can found on WCVA's website:

http://www.wcva.org.uk/policy/dsp_paper_ministerial.cfm?0=0&display_sitetextid=174&sub=3