



By Email Only

Message from Chief Planner

21st March 2023

This newsletter provides updates on the latest announcements from DLUHC and other government departments and agencies relating to planning practice and policy.

In this issue we draw your attention to the Environmental Outcomes Reports (EOR) and Infrastructure Levy consultations, both of which were published last week. Announced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, they both seek to streamline existing processes. EORs will replace Strategic Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments. You can join a webinar on 30 March to find out more. The Infrastructure Levy (IL) is a new approach to address how development funds infrastructure through locally-set charges, based on the sales value of development and collected by the local authority. A workshop on 29 March will provide further information on the IL. Your input is crucial as we look to further develop these proposals. Both consultations end Friday 9 June.

Given the concerns that many have raised regarding the skills and resources available within local planning authorities, we are also excited to announce that DLUHC has provided funding for Public Practice, a social enterprise that recruits placemaking professionals into local authorities. The funding will support the recruitment of new cohorts of built environment professionals into local planning authorities. This forms part of our wider programme working with partners across the planning and built environment sector to address the capacity and skills needed to deliver an effective and engaging planning service; more to come on this in the weeks and months ahead.

Finally, a link is provided to the latest announcement regarding funding for nutrient neutrality mitigation of England's river catchments.

Kind regards,

Joanna Averley
Chief Planner



Invitation to respond to the Environmental Outcomes Reports consultation

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will secure powers to implement a new system of environmental assessment known as Environmental Outcomes Reports. This will replace the EU-derived Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment processes with a streamlined system that places greater focus on delivering our environmental ambitions. The introduction of an outcomes-based approach to assessment is a central feature of the legislation and allows the Government to reflect its environmental priorities directly into the plan-making and decision-making process on developments.

The consultation page can be found [here](#). **The consultation will last for 12 weeks from 17 March to the 9 June 2023** and you are encouraged to respond before that date - you can do so on Citizen Space [here](#).

This consultation document sets out our thinking on how the powers in the Bill could be used to deliver a more effective system of environmental assessment, discussing the following proposals:

- how an outcomes-based approach could work;
- how we might address issues around when an Environmental Outcome Report is required (screening) and what they will cover (scoping);
- strengthening mitigation to reduce harm;
- improving monitoring of development;
- how we propose to unlock data to support the assessment process; and
- options for reporting on system performance.

Responses will be used to help us develop environmental outcomes across government, as well as progress the systems and processes required to implement Environmental Outcomes Reports.

The Planning Advisory Service are hosting a webinar on Thursday 30 March, including speakers from DLUHC on the content of the consultation and to help answer any early questions on the consultation. You can sign up [here](#).

DLUHC is required to review the two existing sets of environmental impact assessment regulations it is responsible for every five years to consider whether the regulations have met the intended objectives of the legislation and understand their effect on business.

The Department has taken the opportunity to publish these alongside the consultation document. The regulations are:

- the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017; and
- the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.



Technical consultation on the Infrastructure Levy

DLUHC has published a technical consultation on the Infrastructure Levy, which is a reform to the existing system of Section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy in England. This is supported by a research report prepared by the University of Liverpool.

The Infrastructure Levy will be a single, mandatory charge, set and collected by local planning authorities. It will be non-negotiable, meaning that developers will be required to contribute their fair share towards affordable housing and important infrastructure like schools, roads, active travel routes and GP surgeries. The Levy seeks to reform the negotiation of section 106 agreements that can cause delay to developments starting on site, whilst still ensuring that vital mitigations are delivered on site. It also seeks to secure at least as much, if not more affordable housing than the current system.

The consultation seeks views on how the Levy will be delivered in regulations following Royal Assent of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. This will be followed by a further consultation on the draft regulations when they are ready, followed by a phased 'test and learn' approach to implementation.

DLUHC understands the importance of getting the new system right and we are keen to receive as much feedback as possible from those who are involved in negotiating Section 106 agreements, valuing land and delivering infrastructure to help us shape this work going forward.

The consultation can be viewed [here](#) and closes on Friday 9 June 2023. You are encouraged to respond before that date using [Citizen Space](#).

The Planning Advisory Service is hosting an event on Wednesday 29 March for those local authorities interested in hearing more about the proposals. You can sign up to attend the event [here](#).

New funding for Public Practice

Yesterday the Housing Minister announced a £1 million funding boost from the government to Public Practice, a social enterprise that recruits placemaking professionals into local authorities.

Public Practice will use the funding to help councils recruit and develop skilled planners, increase awareness about careers in local government and share best practice around improving communities in the public sector.

The funding will also help councils attract and develop those in the profession leading to higher skilled jobs, speed up property development and create better neighbourhoods that people are proud to call home.

The Government's press release is available [here](#).



Additional Support for Local Planning Authorities affected by Nutrient Neutrality Advice

On Wednesday 15 March, as part of the Spring Budget, DLUHC announced that it will soon be launching a call for evidence from local authorities in England for locally led nutrient neutrality credit schemes.

Where high quality proposals are identified, DLUHC will look to provide funding to support clearer routes for housing developers to deliver 'nutrient neutral' sites, in line with their environmental obligations. Further details will be provided in due course.

If you wish to read the full statement in the budget document it can be accessed online [here](#).