



6 September 2005

Dear Colleague,

ROUND 8 OF THE BEACON SCHEME

The Beacon scheme plays an important role in encouraging excellence in local services through the sharing of best practice. Local Government Minister Phil Woolas has announced the themes for Round 8 of the Government's Beacon Scheme. The purpose of this letter is to notify you that emergency planning will be one of the themes in Round 8 and to outline the application process and timescales.

The purpose of the Beacon Scheme is to highlight the achievements of authorities that have delivered excellent services within a particular theme, stimulating and supporting service improvement in other authorities by facilitating best practice sharing. Those that are chosen as Beacons will engage in an extensive period of dissemination activity, whereby their policies and practices, initiatives and change processes are publicised and policy makers and practitioners alike are given extensive access to beacon officers and members. Round 8 will be officially launched in the spring of 2006.

Beacon awards are made by Ministers following a rigorous application and selection process, overseen by the independent Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils on the advice of the theme leads drawn from relevant government departments (in this case the Civil Contingencies Act Team), the Improvement and Development Agency and specialist advisors with particular expertise in a given area. All 'best value authorities', (as long as they are not rated "Poor" under Comprehensive Performance Assessment), are eligible to apply including local authorities, police authorities and fire authorities.

The inclusion of emergency planning as a theme demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to the resilience agenda. The Civil Contingencies Act – which comes into force in November of this year – will be an important catalyst for change in this area, and I believe that the Beacons Scheme will be an additional tool for local bodies in responding to the challenges it poses.

The ODPM press notice making the announcement can be found at: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pns/displaypn.cgi?pn_id=2005_0181. For further information on the scheme, who is eligible and the application process please visit http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_localgov_038549.pdf. Specific enquiries should be directed to beaconsinfo@odpm.gsi.gov.uk.

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