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SUMMIT 2005

Delivering sustainable communities

NEWS

Wed 2 February 2005

Prescott is planning to join global ideas



PHOTOGRAPHY: ED SWINDEN

Urbanist: Prescott wants to link US and European traditions in his sustainable communities drive

KEYNOTE SPEECH Mark Lupton

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott stressed his belief that the sustainable communities agenda can unite the American new urbanist approach with Europe's urban traditions, in his keynote speech yesterday.

Prescott told delegates: "It's a belief that we can do things better – we can once again create strong and sustainable communities; places that will stand the test of time.

"We can and must learn from each other," he told delegates at the conference, which he described as the biggest forum ever held on sustainable communities.

Prescott also said approaches which relied on "heavy-handed government control" or a "totally free market approach" had failed to deliver. In the South, the market had failed to deliver affordable homes and in parts of the North the housing market had collapsed. He said he wanted the Government to intervene

and provide an "enabling framework" to influence the market to act in the public good.

Huge progress had been made in improving cities in the UK since Richard Rogers' Urban Task Force was set up in 1998, Prescott said.

And he pledged more change on the horizon, including measures to include sustainability as a core principle in the planning system through a new Planning Policy Statement alongside efforts to encourage the building industry to create better designed and cheaper homes.

Prescott also announced the establishment of two new Urban Regeneration Companies in Blackpool and Salford. And he revealed plans to connect professional disciplines in a new Academy for Sustainable Communities in Leeds (*See p7*).

He also said the Government would be using its presidency of the EU later this year to "develop and discuss a common European approach to creating sustainable communities".

Salford group awarded for community clear-up

COMMUNITY RENEWAL Ben Willis

A residents' group from Salford has become the inaugural winner of a competition to find the best community space.

The Albion Residents Group were yesterday named winner of the ODPM's 'A Picture of Change' award for its efforts to tidy up their estate. Their project involved litter collection, planning a community garden and putting up hanging baskets on local housing.

Announcing the award at the Summit yesterday, ODPM Minister Phil Hope said: "The project is a wonderful example of a whole community coming together and making their neighbourhood a cleaner, safer and greener place to live."

A Picture of Change is run by the ODPM with regeneration charity Groundwork and Barclays Site Savers.

Young regenerators air film on the Big Screen

COMMUNITY RENEWAL Ben Willis

A film made by six youngsters from regeneration areas of the North was premiered by the BBC for Summit delegates as part of its Public Space Broadcasting project in Manchester this morning.

The film documenting the regeneration of the areas represented by the six children was shown on Manchester's Big Screen in Exchange Square, the first screen of its kind in the country.

The six youngsters involved were Darren Shann and Laura Tong from Hull, Dane Moores and Eamon Wright from Gorton in Manchester and Christine Flanagan and Barbie Whitaker from Liverpool. Their film, which will also be screened in Hull and Liverpool, shows how they are participating in the regeneration of their respective areas.

NEWS IN BRIEF

A review of existing planning policy is set to simplify the process by which planning applications for householders are received, processed and decided. The *Householder Development Consents Review*, announced yesterday by Keith Hill, Minister for Planning, aims to reduce the workload on planners and free-up planning authorities to "concentrate on real planning".

Putting people first was the main issue of debate at a workshop organised by the Social Exclusion Unit. Delegates called for sustainable communities to be built around the needs of people – not just bricks and mortar. Joined-up thinking and partnership were agreed to be the keys to success, but delegates also challenged the Government to address problems in funding, targets and structures. Keynote speaker Lord Victor Adebawale of charity Turning Point said: "You cannot have sustainable communities if you do not invest in social care."

The difficulties of partnership working were cited by Summit delegates as the biggest barriers against building sustainable communities in a survey by the East of England Development Agency yesterday. Forty-seven per cent cited this as a constraint, while 28 per cent said a lack of public appetite for change was also an impediment.

Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders need to "take local communities with them" if they are to succeed, the Director General of the ODPM's Sustainable Communities Group told a Summit meeting. Richard McCarthy told the meeting on renewing housing markets: "Engagement with communities is essential if we are to address their concerns."

Residents awarded



PHOTOGRAPHY: ED SWINDEN

Model partnership: members of the Grange Park Community Project in Blackpool get their awards

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Elaine Knutt

The holistic regeneration of an isolated Blackpool estate that offered a metaphorical key to residents who felt like "prisoners in their own homes" is the overall winner of this year's Sustainable Communities Award.

The Grange Park Community Project took an all-round approach that tackled community safety, education, health, housing and green spaces. The judging panel said it was a "model partnership-based local authority initiative".

Representatives from the project received their award from Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott at a ceremony last night.

Prescott also announced a special award celebrating the lifetime achievement of Sir Peter Hall, the author and academic best known for

his pioneering work on planning and urban policy.

Prescott said: "Peter was a natural choice to join Lord Rogers' Urban Task Force when I set it up in 1998. In this, and many other ways, he has helped paved the way for creating sustainable communities today."

Grange Park shared the honours with three other finalists. The Urban and Rural Renaissance Project in County Durham tackled the area's industrial and coal-mining legacy.

'Joining Up Northumberland Park', which operated in an area of north London with a history of regeneration initiatives, won praise for linking service providers and residents.

The third finalist was a project to turn Chatham's disused dockyards into Kent's Chatham Maritime development.

AGENDA: WEDNESDAY 2 FEBRUARY

09.00 Keynote speech: *Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Chancellor*

09.20 Plenary session: Sustainable communities in a global economy
Hon Donald Johnston, Secretary-General, OECD, Professor Amartya Sen, Harvard University

10.45 Tea and coffee in Exhibition

11.00 Sub-plenaries and workshops
C1 to C8, Masterclass M9

12.30 Lunch in Exhibition

12.45 Masterclasses M10, M11 and M12

13.45 Plenary session – in discussion
Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP, Home Secretary, Rt Hon Margaret Beckett

MP, Environment Secretary, Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP, Education Secretary

14.30 Plenary Panel discussion: Tools, innovation and delivering vision
Rt Hon Keith Hill MP, Planning Minister, Tony McNulty MP, Transport Minister, Professor Anne Power, London School of Economics and Member of the Sustainable Development Commission, Councillor Richard Leese, Leader, Manchester City Council, Sir Graham Hall, Chair of the Northern Way Steering Group

15.30 Closing remarks: *Rt Hon John Prescott MP, Deputy Prime Minister*

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Mayor vows to boost London housing plans

HOUSING
Elaine Knutt

London Mayor Ken Livingstone yesterday promised to find parcels of unused land in the capital he hopes will double the 4,000 homes planned in the first phase of government regeneration agency English Partnership's London Wide Initiative (LWI).

Livingstone was speaking as Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced that heads of terms had been signed between English Partnerships and three development consortia to deliver around 1,000 homes each under the LWI.

He said: "There are lots of little bits of land here and there, especially around tube and railway stations. This could be the kind of housebuilding programme we haven't seen in London for 25 years."

English Partnerships has already acquired 15 sites for the LWI, in places including Croydon, Hackney and Greenwich. In addition, the London Development Agency has put forward a site it owns at Gallion's Reach in the Royal Docks.

South-West launches development blueprint

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Herpreet Kaur Grewal

A plan to tackle unemployment, housing shortages and the disparity between rich and poor was launched yesterday by the South-West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA).

The Way Ahead: Delivering Sustainable Communities in the South-West, mentioned in Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's opening Summit address, outlines improvements in Bristol, Swindon, Exeter, Plymouth and Cornwall. It also calls for more government investment in infrastructure.

SWRDA chairman Juliet Williams said: "We don't have too many Government MPs in our region, but it was an important political development that the plan was acknowledged on the same platform as the Northern Way. The purpose of coming here was to make sure sustainable communities plans across the country are considered in the same breath because we are all contributing to the same objective."

High-profile backing for Prescott's plans



PHOTOGRAPHY: ED SWINDEN

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
Ben Willis

Two high-profile international leaders yesterday threw their weight behind Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's drive for sustainable communities.

Richard Daley, Mayor of Chicago, and Danuta Hubner, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, both staged a show of support for Prescott's aims during their keynote speeches at the Summit yesterday.

Daley, whose 16 years as Mayor have given him the stability to turn America's second city into a safe, thriving metropolis, congratulated Prescott for his leadership: "John Prescott could be a role model for mayors across America."

Daley also outlined his views on what makes sustainable communities. "You don't tear down an old neighbourhood and build a new one; this has been tried before but it doesn't work. What you do is build community anchors: schools, parks, libraries, fire stations," he said.

Speaking after Daley, Hubner praised the UK for its lead in regeneration in Europe. "The UK has played a pioneering role in regeneration. It has lots of experience that the rest of the European Union can draw on," she said.

She also pointed to examples of regeneration successes in which the EU had been able to play a partnership role with the UK, particularly East Manchester, which has benefited from £27 million of European funding.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The new national 'Academy for Sustainable Skills' will be in Leeds, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott revealed to delegates yesterday. Chris Murray, Director of Learning and Education at government design adviser the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, will be the Academy's acting chief executive.

Two new Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs) are to be established, one in Salford and one in Blackpool, the Deputy Prime Minister said yesterday. They will take the total of URCs around the country to 18. URCs are public-private partnerships typically between the relevant local authority, Regional Development Agency and regeneration agency English Partnerships.

Engaging people in the development process is key to creating Millennium Communities, delegates at English Partnerships' sub-plenary session heard yesterday. John Calcutt, group chief executive of Crest Nicholson, said: "People must come first; it is about creating communities." English Partnerships chairman Margaret Ford added that a recent stocktaking exercise had revealed some valuable lessons on the importance of early involvement by local communities and the private sector in creating developments that are key to setting industry standards.

A major report assessing England's major cities published its interim findings yesterday. *The State of the Cities Progress Report 2005* found that there are still gaps in performance between the North and West and East and South, though the gap has narrowed. The launch of the report was complemented by a fringe event showcasing international state of the cities research. It will be finalised later this year.

A follow-up survey of Summit delegates' views of the event is to be undertaken by Price Waterhouse Coopers. PWC, which canvassed stakeholders before the Summit for the ODPM, will be inviting delegates to participate in its online survey.

Two new housing videos were launched yesterday at the Summit. *Delivering for the North* showcases progress on three areas – Housing Market Renewal, Decent Homes and Affordable Housing – featuring case studies. *Building for the Future* deals with high housing demand in the South, showing how authorities can maximise housing delivery. Copies are available from 0870 122 6236.

Concerns over higher density life can be met

URBAN LIVING

Herpreet Kaur Grewal

People living in sprawl city areas in the UK want change despite an initial "please no more" attitude to new development in their area, the former mayor of Milwaukee told delegates yesterday.

John Norquist, also CEO and President of the Congress for New Urbanism in Chicago, speaking at a workshop for greener growth in urban areas, said: "The complexity of the city can make it interesting and exciting, but people want to get away from that. You can see this in an American film like *West Side Story*, where Maria and Tony want to escape the complexities of the city to live in a safe, peaceful suburban area."

Norquist said people were reluctant to accept the idea of more high-density development in sprawl and this was an important issue that practitioners in the field needed to address.

He added: "If nothing is built on green space, people will never believe urbanism is possible."

Consultation key to new planning proposals

PLANNING

Andy Kliman

Good design and an emphasis on community consultation underpin the Government's new policy blueprint for delivering sustainable communities.

The document, *Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development*, was launched yesterday by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott.

Minister for Planning Keith Hill said: "PPS1 is all about good planning, ensuring we get the right development, in the right place at the right time. It provides an important, overarching policy framework which should help to improve people's lives and the places where they live [and] work and [which they] enjoy, whilst protecting our environment and natural resources. The policies ensure a balance of environmental considerations alongside the need for sustainable economic development."

PPS1 encourages planning authorities to prepare robust policies on design while ensuring that they avoid being overly prescriptive or setting any particular architectural style. The Government's commitment to community engagement is enshrined in PPS1 which stresses the importance of involving all sectors of the community in developing a vision of the area.

Parks improve lives



Home comfort: most people said parks, such as Cathedral Gardens in Manchester, make life better

GREEN SPACES

Jez Abbott

Parks are as vital to communities as neighbourhood schools, according to a survey by the open spaces watchdog that has won political backing and will be used to advise councils.

Parks and Squares: who cares? published by CABE Space listed people's al fresco loves and hates and was backed by a MORI poll revealing over nine-tenths of people felt open spaces improved life and three-quarters reckoned they were good for health.

CABE Space director Julia Thrift said: "This is an enormous endorsement of parks and open spaces. The Government is setting a lot of pri-

orities for numbers of new housing and it's absolutely right that they should. But we must make sure the quality of open spaces does not get left behind."

ODPM Minister Phil Hope said the Government welcomed the document and added: "Parks and open spaces are vital for making sustainable communities."

London Mayor Ken Livingstone said: "The long-term management of public spaces is an increasingly important political priority and critical to the sustainable communities agenda."

Lack of funding made the top ten of hates, as did vandalism, anti-social behaviour and a lack of cleanliness or safety in parks.



Long lunch Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott hosted a welcome lunch and roundtable for more than 30 key overseas speakers and experts on Monday. The event provided an opportunity to discuss a key Summit theme: building the skills needed to deliver sustainable communities. Delegates were invited to share experiences of the skills needed and the challenges to be addressed to deliver sustainable communities. The discussions helped to identify potential long-term partners for the new skills Academy.



Hall: the North's great cities, such as Leeds and Manchester, must learn to play on their competitive advantages

Champion of the Northern revival

Implementation of the Northern Way regeneration strategy is set to breathe new life into the North. Its plain-speaking chairman, Sir Graham Hall, tells **Ben Walker** what to expect

Sir Graham Hall is a cliché writer's dream. Call him 'bluff Yorkshireman', 'straight-talking northerner' – both hit the spot. A close colleague once said of Hall that he was the right person to take on the Northern Way challenge, but that he needed to tone down his language. Well, it would be a great shame if he did, for what Hall does best of all is lay down in plain terms the thinking behind government policy and, as chairman of the Northern Way, the Government's big push to regenerate the North, that is a skill to be greatly valued.

The first thing Hall is clear on is that the Northern Way has to work. England's North Country, as it has rebranded itself, has seen successive Governments fail to bridge the North-South economic divide. Heavy regeneration means the North's great cities look a lot better than ten years ago, yet still the scars of structural unemployment caused by the closure of the mines, steelworks and shipyards remain.

So far, Hall says, the omens for the Northern Way are good. It has been widely welcomed

within the public and private sectors and within the media as being a broadly workable strategy. "The Northern Way seems to be getting an acceptance in all areas now," says Hall. "And that's important."

Ending the rivalry

He says that a theme running through Northern Way thinking is that city regions, whose economic potential the strategy aims to exploit, should avoid mimicking one another and play on their competitive advantages. "There are some commonalities between the city regions, but there are many differences as well," he says.

This will, he concedes, involve cities that are used to competing now having to learn how to cooperate. At the heart of this thinking is a deal that the two great Pennine rivals, Leeds and Manchester, agree not to tread on each other's toes. "One of the things that has come out of the Northern Way is what to do with the Leeds city region and the Manchester city region," says Hall. "Leeds has got its financial services and Manchester has got its Commonwealth

Games [legacy] and its cultural offer. We hope to see them working better together."

With key people out of action on the Northern Way strategy while the regional assembly referendum was taking place in the North-East last autumn, Hall says things slowed down. "They were out of the way for a long time, but I'm not making excuses," he says.

Rather, he says, things will speed up now: Vince Taylor has been appointed director of the Northern Way business plan; May will see the city regions developing their individual programmes; and serious pieces of policy-making have already begun.

Of these, nine pilots designed to reduce worklessness are perhaps the most radical. They will involve changes to permitted work rules, including an option for people on Jobseeker's Allowance to take up full-time learning – a life choice that would previously have precluded their receiving full benefits. "We need to skew public spending to Northern Way priorities," says Hall. "If we are going to get 100,000 people back to work we'll need a little bit of devolution and a little more responsibility."

Funding the revival

A decision, says Hall, has already been taken to increase spending on the promotion of the North. An extra £1.5 million a year has been found for marketing the North Country, while £4 million a year has been promised for inward investment. An agreement has been reached to promote Manchester, Newcastle and York as science cities, while special initiatives to boost the number of women and graduates in enterprise will be launched. To build on the North's manufacturing industries, nine private sector-led development projects are planned in the fields of advanced engineering, chemicals and defence.

For Hall, careful targeting of Northern Way funding is a must. He is keen that decisions are made on the best outcome for the North as a whole, rather than through compromises based on lobbying from individual local authorities. "We'll need to spend money where it will have the most impact," he says. He drops a big hint as to where he thinks it should go: "I travel between Leeds and Manchester by both road and rail," he says. "And I can tell you that the trains are chock-a-block."

While much has already happened with the Northern Way, Hall stresses that key decisions are still to be made. Many of those will lie with the new director, who will manage a £100 million growth fund and will help develop the Northern Way business plan, which should be out this April. That, says Hall, is when the Northern Way will really take shape.

"Rather than working from a strategy," he says, "we want to be working from a fully costed business plan. This interim period is a little bit artificial, really."



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On site: a generation of professionals with a variety of skills is needed to build new communities

Gearing up for the challenge

The Government is developing a national skills centre to meet the demands of the Sustainable Communities Plan. **Nick Loney** reports on its progress

If ambition were the sole determinant of success, regeneration would currently look like an excellent bet. From local schemes such as the New Deal for Communities and the Single Regeneration Budget, to the massive development plans for the South-East and housing market renewal pathfinders further north, the task of creating healthy, sustainable communities has been mapped out on a grand scale.

But while ambition is essential to achieving lasting regeneration, it must be matched by appropriate skills to ensure the vision becomes reality, and this is the challenge. Sir John Egan's report *Skills for Sustainable Communities*, published last April, revealed that regeneration suffers from a gap in 'generic', softer skills. So, as well as technical expertise

in areas such as design and project appraisal, the sector also needs those with skills in leadership, partnership working and communication. Unless we equip more people with these skills, Egan suggested, we will struggle to develop projects to their full potential.

The Academy

Egan recommended that a national centre for sustainable communities skills be established to promote learning and share best practice. Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott revealed that this centre, the Academy for Sustainable Communities, will be in Leeds.

The details of how the centre will operate will become clearer over the coming months but, according to newly appointed interim chief

executive Chris Murray, it will have three core functions. First, he says, the centre should create a higher profile for skills by celebrating the good work already being done by "people who have got their sleeves rolled-up".

Secondly, he argues, it should help to develop skills for the Sustainable Communities Plan. "The skills needed now to create the urban growth areas are different to those we needed to build the New Towns, and the complexity of regenerating the housing market in east Lancashire requires a different kind of cooperation than has been needed before," he says. "There are so many different funding streams and such a danger of disconnect that we have to make sure we work equally across physical, economic and community regeneration."

The centre's third function, Murray says, will be to give the regeneration sector a more coherent identity to attract young people to professions that do not currently excite them. "We have an image problem," he admits. "We need to create a deeper connection between young people and the urban environment in which they live. If we do that, we'll start getting more people in." The centre is also expected to play a key global role, working with international organisations to share best practice and expertise, promote discussion and learning and accelerate practical innovation.

Role model

Barry Shaw, chief executive of the Kent Architecture Centre, which is already working on skills, says a potential model for the centre is government design adviser the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. "CABE has been excellent at providing core resources and access to best practice for the built environment professions," he says. "It has also been at the forefront of promoting high-quality design and encouraging the industry to aim for higher standards. It would be very useful if the new centre performed a similar role for regeneration skills across the board."

But while the centre has created a flurry of excitement, the hard work is still to be done. The centre will play a vital role in helping to address the problems highlighted in Egan's report, but even its biggest supporters point out it cannot solve them on its own.

Eileen Scott, director of organisational development at regeneration agency English Partnerships, says other key organisations, including CABE, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Royal Institute of British Architects and the universities still have an active role to play. "By creating a more cohesive approach to skills, the centre will help other organisations to ensure the training and services they offer link into the wider regeneration agenda," she says. "The centre is there to work through or with existing bodies, not to replicate their work."



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