

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD**

Date: 2 March 2007

Subject: **Items for Information:**

1. **Communities England: Progress Report**
2. **Supplementary Evidence: Progress Report**
3. **Gypsies and Travellers Update**

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Board note the contents of this report.

---

**1. Communities England: Progress Report**

- 1.1 On 17 January, the Secretary of State for Department for Communities and Local Government announced the creation of a national housing and regeneration agency that brings together the work of the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and some functions from Communities and Local Government. The full text of the ministerial statement is attached at Annex.

Contact: Cath Stubbings, Housing Policy Advisor  
T: 01483 555216  
E: [catherinestubbings@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:catherinestubbings@southeast-ra.gov.uk)

**2. Supplementary Evidence on Housing for CSR: Progress Report**

- 2.1 As indicated at the last Board meeting, the project team is in the process of preparing a draft document that uses the evidence base available to the region to underpin a call for additional resources to support delivery of affordable housing in the region.
- 2.2 This will include modelling of the level of funding required to deliver the affordable housing provision in the draft South East Plan and a reference to the cost implications and benefits of providing larger units of affordable housing. It is also proposed to present evidence from the Board's research on the cost of improving private sector housing to meet the decent home standard, highlighting the contribution to the Government's climate change objectives.

2.3 It is proposed to present this document to the next meeting of the Board.

Contact: Cath Stubbings, Housing Policy Advisor  
T: 01483 555216  
E: [catherinestubbings@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:catherinestubbings@southeast-ra.gov.uk)

### 3. Gypsies and Travellers Update

3.1 At its meeting on 16 January 2006, the Regional Housing Board (RHB) noted that local authority advice to inform the partial review of the South East Plan in relation to the provision of caravan pitches for Gypsies and Travellers will be submitted to the Assembly in late July 2007. However, at the Assembly's Gypsy and Traveller Officer Task Group meeting on 25 January 2007 local authorities raised concern that the timetable for submitting advice to the Assembly clashed with local elections in May.

3.2 In response to feedback from local authorities, the Assembly's Regional Planning Committee at its meeting on 31 January 2007 agreed to change the timetable for the partial review. A revised timetable is set out below; the project plan on the Assembly's website will be amended accordingly.

Stage	Original Project Plan	Revised Project Plan Agreed by RPC 31/1/07
Deadline for provision of site data	30 April 2006	30 April 2006
Deadline for final submission of advice from local authorities	1 June 2007	15 October 2007
Submission to RPC	26 September 2007	30 January 2008
Approval by Plenary	15 November 2007	5 March 2008
Options Consultation	December 2007 to February 2008	15 May to 7 August 2008
Draft Policy to RPC	May 2008	October 2008 (Special RPC - date TBC)
Draft Policy to Plenary	July 2008	12 November 2008
Submission to GOSE	August 2008	December 2008

Contact: Dominick Veasey, Regional Planner  
T: 01483 555201  
E: [dominickveasey@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:dominickveasey@southeast-ra.gov.uk)

## Communities and Local Government

### *Housing and Regeneration Review*

17 January 2007



**Ruth Kelly** (Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government) | [Hansard source](#)

I am today announcing to the House the outcome of the Housing and Regeneration Review, launched in April last year by my right hon. Friend, the [Deputy Prime Minister](#) and the then [Minister](#) of Communities and [Local Government](#), my right hon. Friend the Member for [South Shields](#) (David Miliband).

On 24 July 2006, I told the House that I was extending the review and had asked officials to examine my own Department's delivery functions to determine the scope for rationalisation. I told the House then that I wanted to build a modern, dynamic delivery chain to realise our ambitions for stronger communities and places in which people feel proud to live.

Following my statement in July, the review has considered a range of modernisation and structural options for reform. Having studied the analysis, I am convinced that we should now move towards one national housing and regeneration agency that combines the functions of the [Housing Corporation](#) and [English Partnerships](#) with key delivery functions from my own Department including in the areas of decent homes, housing market renewal, housing [PFI](#), housing growth and urban regeneration.

I propose to establish a new agency, Communities England, to support local authorities in their drive to create and shape prosperous and cohesive communities. This new expert partner will pioneer innovative new ways of working with key partners in the public, private and voluntary sector to ensure we get even better outcomes from our investment in places throughout England.

Communities England will be tasked with embedding new and innovative approaches to regenerating strategic sites. In Hattersley in Tameside, for example, an integrated approach to estate transformation is delivering decent

homes, new private housing, new commercial and community centres and local jobs, and enhanced transport links to Manchester. Where previously the project was not commercially viable, our [intervention](#) has attracted strong private sector investment. An integrated approach to housing and regeneration, that addresses the physical, social and economic needs of the area is restoring confidence and creating the basis for long-term sustainability.

Communities England will move delivery closer to local communities, ensuring that decisions better reflect local and regional priorities. In future, for example, the regional offices of Communities England will be far better placed than [Whitehall](#) to support local authorities in the implementation of their plans for housing growth. This will enable my own Department to focus on strategic policy making.

Communities England will form a key part of the new delivery landscape set out in the [local government White Paper](#), offering a one-stop delivery partner for [local government](#). It offers a coherent portfolio of investment tools, and will work alongside local authorities, to adopt a more flexible market-based approach to housing development:

In growth areas and many new growth points, it will work to unlock strategic sites, building on successes like West Bedford, where developing key local infrastructure will deliver 2,500 new homes and [Milton Keynes](#) where the new tariff is providing the community and physical infrastructure for another 15,000 homes;

In areas of weaker housing demand, Communities England will work alongside pathfinders and local authorities to strengthen delivery and innovation, helping authorities to make best use of assets and maximise receipts and drawing on the experiences of the best performers;

It will work across England with local authorities, private developers and housing associations to build more social rented and affordable homes. It will help to meet the needs of England's communities—north and south, urban and rural, large and small households and the vulnerable; and

It will also work to improve council housing and transform our worst estates. In Manchester a project under the decent homes programme enabled additional private investment to be levered in creating new homes for sale alongside refurbishment and remodelling delivering a choice of homes to rent and buy resulting in a popular and more mixed community.

Communities England will also help to reduce the environmental impact of our homes and buildings. Domestic heating and lighting is responsible for 27 per

cent. of the [UK's](#) carbon dioxide emissions. By creating a single agency with enhanced purchasing power, and by demanding exacting standards of house-builders and [RSL's](#) including through the code for sustainable homes, we will better influence the development of, and demand for, environmentally friendly products and techniques and low carbon technologies.

Work towards Communities England starts now. We will consult on our plans to establish the new agency, and its roles and functions, later this year. The precise scope of the new agency to be finalised in the light of the 2007 [Comprehensive Spending Review](#).

I am determined to ensure a smooth transition with high levels of delivery throughout. I have therefore appointed a small senior team drawn from the two agencies and key officials in my Department, under the chairmanship of Baroness Ford to advise the Department on planning the transition to Communities England. Alongside this, English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation are putting in place business continuity and risk management processes to maintain their delivery focus throughout the transition period.