

Policy Digest

January – March 2007

Issue No. 10

Introduction

This Policy Digest provides a review of Northern Housing Consortium policy activity and an update on recent national legislative, policy and regulation issues that have an impact on our members in the North.

The digest is moving towards a more analytical and future focus. We welcome any comments from members on the new format.

Further information

Visit our website www.northern-consortium.org.uk or contact the NHC Policy section for further information on the work of the Consortium featured in the Digest or any other policy areas you would like to highlight:

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FUTURE NHC CONFERENCES

- **Driving Service Excellence: where next for inspection, regulation and improvement? The Housing Inspection Conference 2007, 17th April 2007, York Racecourse**

The Local Government White Paper heralds a significant shift in the way that the public sector is to be held accountable, with the emphasis on citizen focused outcomes and risk based assessment. The changes are likely to particularly affect the housing sector, with the regulatory future uncertain and the Cave study due to report in the spring.

This established conference will provide delegates with the opportunity to examine these changes with key representatives of government agencies involved and consider the potential impact on their organisations.

Speakers include:

- Terrie Alafat, Director of Housing Strategy and Support, CLG
- Roy Irwin, Chief Inspector of Housing, Audit Commission
- Alistair McIntosh, Chief Executive, Housing Quality Network

Issues to be covered include:

- The Local Government White Paper – the implications for housing organisations
- Regulation and inspection – can it be more joined up?
- New KLOEs on allocations and homelessness – What are the changes and how will they affect services?
- Value for money
- Maintaining excellence without inspection
- What the Audit Commission looks for in self-assessment

- **Private Sector Housing 2007: “Consolidating, challenging, changing”, 26th and 27th April 2007, Majestic Hotel, Harrogate**

It has been a year since the final provisions of the Housing Act 2004 came into force and during this time local authorities have made substantial progress in consolidating the new provisions into their areas of work. However, there are still challenges to be faced for private sector housing, for example undertaking the private sector decent homes standard by 2010 and getting to grips with the range of new powers now at its disposal. In addition to this, there are changes ahead in terms of tenancy agreements, new recommendations regarding housing renewal and public health and the pressures the increasing influx of Eastern European migrants will have on the private sector.

This conference is a must for anyone interested in consolidating their knowledge and applications of the Housing Act; getting prepared for the challenges that still lie ahead for the private sector; and understanding the changes that will be happening in the very near future. Now in its 6th year, this is the only national event of its kind providing practical advice

To book a place on any of these conferences or to find out more information visit our website:
www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Page/Events

View the Inspection conference flyer
<http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Assets/EventsPDF/2007%20-%20Inspection%20Flyer.pdf>

View the Private Sector Housing conference flyer
<http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Assets/EventsPDF/2007%20-%20PSH%20Full%20Flyer.pdf>

and technical information for those involved in the field of private sector housing.

Speakers include:

- Richard Tacagni, Head of Function (Housing), LACORS
- John Bryson, Housing and Regeneration Consultant and Chairman of the CIEH Policy Development Board
- Jim Grundy, Housing Policy Manager, Government Office for the East Midlands

Issues to be covered include:

- Eastern European renter's issues
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System – one year on
- Moving from grants to loans – The equity release experience
- Tenant referencing scheme
- Energy efficiency
- Decent homes in the private sector

■ **Adaptations 2007: “Fairer, faster, equitable and affordable housing adaptations”, 3rd May 2007, York Racecourse**

The Government is striving to ensure the housing adaptations system is more accessible, comprehensive, equitable and fair. January 2007 saw the launch of Government consultation in response to the Bristol Report. Key challenges the sector faces include providing services which are focused on the individual, fast tracking systems outside Disabled Facilities Grant, and building homes which are flexible, adaptable and affordable.

This timely conference will enable delegates to hear the views of Government on the progress made on this issue. It will provide a valuable opportunity for practitioners and strategic housing and health professionals to consider the proposed changes and recommendations for improvement. It will also consider what the future may hold for delivering housing services to disabled people, including the changes they need to make within their own organisations to meet the challenge.

Speakers include:

- Jane Everton, Deputy Director Housing Strategy and Support Directorate, CLG
- Bernadette Simpson, Change Agent, Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP)
- Frances Heywood, Senior Research Fellow, University of Bristol
- Peter Archer, Principal in the Housing Consultancy Partnership (THCP)

The established adaptations exhibition will also allow delegates to interact with a wide range of suppliers. The conference will consider:

- Strategic approaches to housing adaptations
- Effective delivery, offering choice and flexibility
- Integration and partnership working

View the Adaptations conference flyer
<http://www.northhern-consortium.org.uk/Assets/EventsPDF/2007%20-0-%20Adaptations.pdf>

View the Strategic Housing conference flyer
<http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Page/Events/Strategy2007.aspx>

- **Quality of Place and Engaged Communities: The Strategic Housing Role, 22nd and 23rd May, Royal York Hotel, York**

Improving the quality of life of our communities has long been a key driver for the strategic housing function. We are committed to the principles of partnership, engagement and innovation in delivery. But to achieve the scale of our ambition, we must embrace new agendas – including place shaping; new governance arrangements, and a step change in our leadership aspirations.

This third strategic housing conference run in conjunction with CLG and the Audit Commission allows us time to debate the future of the strategic role; to consider the implications of the myriad of reviews underway, from Lyons, to Hills, from the implementation of Local Government White Paper to the launch of Communities England.

The two day event will equip delegates with a detailed understanding of the raft of issues facing the sector and enable them to consider their implications for their own services, organisations, places and people.

- **Understanding the Mental Capacity Act: Implications for housing, care and support**
Monday 11th June, Leeds Federated Housing Association, Leeds
Thursday 14th June, Royal Society of Medicine, Wimpole Street, London

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 comes into effect in April 2007 introducing a major overhaul of the law relating to individuals who lack capacity in decision making, particularly around changes in accommodation. The Act introduces a legal obligation on health and social care commissioners to jointly commission advocacy services and will also have significant implications for the provision of supported housing, care and support services.

What are the implications of the Mental Capacity Act? What difference will the Act make to commissioners, providers and users of housing, care and support sector services and, importantly, how will it be implemented? Commissioned by the Department of Health, these national events will support delegates to understand the implications of the Act on their work with vulnerable people, and will provide essential guidance and practical advice direct from Government, policy makers and practitioners on the implementation of the Act. Delegates will also benefit from the opportunity to share innovation and network with colleagues from around the country.

Sessions will explore:

- Making sense of the Act and its implications for housing, care and support
- Integrating the principles of the Act into commissioning - assessments of capacity, concepts of best interest
- Understanding the Code of Practice – how will the Act will work on a day to day basis?
- IMCA services – how do they work in reality?

- Best practice and best outcomes in service delivery
- Implications for the individual - promoting choice and social inclusion, ending neglect and institutionalisation

Speakers include:

- Richard Kramer, Director of Policy, Turning Point
- Sarah Haspel, London Legislation Lead, NIMHE/CSIP
- Keith Nieland, South East Regional Lead, CSIP
- Sylvia Manson, East Midlands Regional Lead, CSIP
- Jill Malcomson, Living with Dementia Advisor, Alzheimer's Society
- Julie Coffey, Policy Advisor Service Delivery, Stonham
- Paul Murphy, Advocacy Project Manager, Skills for People, Newcastle
- Vicky Cowin, IMCA Development Worker, Cambridge House, London

■ **Resident Involvement, 26th and 27th June, Hilton Hotel, Blackpool**
Delivering Change through Resident Involvement

The Government sees devolved decision making, community ownership and grass roots governance at the heart of transforming public services and delivering thriving neighbourhoods and strong and prosperous communities. But what does this really mean for housing organisations and residents?

This is about delivering real change and positive outcomes for all. Recent legislative and policy developments make clear the move towards a more outcomes focussed agenda for resident involvement. Treating residents as consumers at the forefront of regulation, with meaningful influence over services, local decision making and greater innovation, are just some of the challenges the housing sector faces. How will you respond to these challenges and opportunities, and what does the delivery of positive outcomes mean for resident involvement in your organisation?

In its 7th year, the Annual Resident Involvement Conference will provide delegates with the chance to consider how the housing sector is meeting the current and future challenges around resident involvement. The conference is an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues; see first hand innovation from across the country; consider how your own organisation is delivering, and what more needs to be done.

Speakers include:

- Richard Capie, Head of Corporate Policy, Housing Corporation
- Yvonne Davies, Head of Housing North, Audit Commission
- Phil Morgan, Chief Executive, TPAS

Issues to be covered include:

- Delivering positive outcomes for residents, communities and businesses
- Increasing the role of residents in regulation
- A seat on the board – the residents view
- Measuring the impact of involvement
- Skills and principles of the reflective practitioner
- Neighbourhood targets and devolved decision making

View the Resident Involvement conference flyer
<http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Page/Events/ResidentInvolvement2007.aspx>

NHC CONFERENCE FINDINGS

- **Energy Efficiency – Implications for Housing Organisations 2007**
“Future Energy, the Real Challenge – Positive Action”

The Northern Housing Consortium's event 'Energy Efficiency – Implications for Housing Organisations', which took place on the 6th March, was well attended and well timed, given that the environment and climate change have never been higher up the Government's agenda nor in the media spotlight as much as they are today.

The day covered a range of issues including renewable energy, building standards, sustainable housing developments and how to change the culture of an organisation to become 'greener'.

Delegate feedback at this event revealed there is a belief that there is a lack of joined-up thinking from central government and that a number of conflicting messages are being given. There is a disparity between the standards for private and public sector developers and this needs to be resolved. The event also highlighted a significant gap in terms of those who are aware of and interested in the environment and saving energy and those who do not feel that it is an issue that impacts upon them.

There is a challenge for NHC members in addressing this gap and increasing customer awareness through the provision of suitable information. Changes in services will be driven by cultural changes from within the organisation.

- **“Stepping Out” : New ventures for housing organisations**

On the 22nd March the Northern Housing Consortium held their first event on the theme of business diversification for housing organisations entitled “Stepping Out”. This event was based on a case study report published by the NHC last year that explored some of the new ventures housing organisations were undertaking that went beyond the traditional remit as that of a social landlord. Delegates at the conference had the opportunity to hear about some of these innovative ventures first hand from organisations that were already enjoying success in diversifying their businesses.

John McHale, Head of Regulation Account Management from the Housing Corporation and Paul Clarke, Lead Housing Inspector (North West) from the Audit Commission set out the respective regulatory view points on business diversification. John explained to delegates that while the Housing Corporation does not look specifically at diverse activity, they do accept the need for more housing association involvement in work outside core housing provision. The key message from both speakers was that any housing organisations considering diversifying need to ensure that it is done in the context of their wider strategic priorities and that in anything they undertake, it has got to come back to the core business of housing. Paul emphasised the need for a clear

To order a copy
of Stepping Out
email:
jennifer.stevenson@northern-consortium.org.uk

rationale and business case behind diversifying for both the organisation and customers.

Workshops were streamed into income generating activities and social and community investment activities, giving delegates an awareness of the full range of business diversification opportunities available to them and their organisations. The event was very well attended and highly successful for both delegates and speakers alike, with many gaining leads and ideas to take back to their own organisations.

BRIEFINGS AND REPORTS

▪ **Accommodating a Greener Future: Making a difference to housing's carbon footprint**

The environment and climate change have never been higher up the Government's agenda nor in the media spot-light as much as they are today. It is widely accepted that we need to start taking action now, both as individuals and a nation, to combat the detrimental effects of carbon emissions on the environment.

The role social housing providers and developers have in the battle against climate change is paramount. Many housing organisations are already leading the way and doing their bit to start reducing housing's carbon footprint.

This new Northern Housing Consortium publication, due to be published at the end of April, brings together some of these initiatives into a good practice case study guide intended to give social housing providers ideas and inspiration for what they can do to protect the environment and prevent future climate change.

The document features a range of schemes being undertaken, from new build developments to refurbishment projects, through to involving tenants and staff in the energy efficiency drive. Featuring case studies on:

- Rural Eco-Homes Development – Greenoak Housing Association
- Solar Panels – Place for People Group
- Home Energy Checks – The Gateshead Housing Company
- Earth Sheltered Scheme – Flagship Housing Association
- Composting Scheme – Westlea Housing Association
- European SunCities Project – Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing
- Underground Heating Pumps – Harrogate Borough Council
- Energy Efficiency Team – Wakefield and District Housing
- Car Sharing Scheme – Catalyst Housing Group
- Insulating Properties – Sunderland Housing Group

To reserve a copy email: jennifer.stevenson@northern-consortium.org.uk

- **Mental Capacity Act 2005**

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 comes into effect in April 2007 introducing a major overhaul of the law relating to individuals who lack capacity in decision making, particularly around changes in accommodation. The Act introduces a legal obligation on health and social care commissioners to jointly commission advocacy services and will also have significant implications for the provision of supported housing, care and support services. The Northern Housing Consortium is preparing a briefing paper on the early implications for members, particularly those working with older people and people with disabilities. This will be available at our event “*Understanding the Mental Capacity Act: Implications for Housing Care and Support*” on 11th and 14th June, and afterwards on our website.

For further information please contact: sarah.mtango@northern-consortium.org.uk

CURRENT AND FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

- **Disabled Facilities Grant Programme: *The Government’s proposals to improve Programme Delivery***

The consultation paper is seeking views on the Government’s proposals to change the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme. It includes statements about short term action; proposals for change in the medium term, and indications of likely longer term, more fundamental reform, linked to the outcome of the Individual Budget Pilot Schemes. The Northern Housing Consortium has produced a briefing note on the key proposals in the consultation and is seeking contributions from members.

Send your response to: helen.kerridge@northern-consortium.org.uk

On the 3rd May 2007, the Northern Housing Consortium will be holding its 2nd Adaptations conference at York Racecourse. This event will provide early feedback on the outcomes of the Government’s proposed changes to the DFG programme.

Download the NHC briefing note <http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/assets/northern%20futures/briefs,reports,toolkits/briefing%20-%20dfg%20programme%20consultation%20070320071.doc>

- **Commissioning Framework for Health and Wellbeing**

The Commissioning Framework for Health and Wellbeing was launched on 6th March, by the Secretary of State for Health, Patricia Hewitt MP. This document has been long awaited and has far reaching implications for both Health and Local Government during the next few years. The framework outlines 8 steps to more effective commissioning and demonstrates how local commissioners can make a real difference by providing personalised services, proactively preventing ill health and promoting well-being, working in partnership and focussing on outcomes for the individual. The framework ultimately aims to give power to individuals and communities but requires a significant cultural shift for successful delivery.

Visit the consultation website <http://www.commissioning.csip.org.uk/>

Send your response to: sarah.mtango@northern-consortium.org.uk

The Northern Housing Consortium sees the Commissioning Framework for Health and Well-Being as a very positive step forward which supports our strategic approaches to delivering sustainable communities and

tackling social exclusion. We hope that the framework will have practical implications for those members who are commissioning and providing local services to work together to improve health, well-being and independence. The consultation period will run until 29th May 2007. Members can comment direct to the consultation website at www.commissioning.csip.org.uk. Alternatively please forward comments for the NHC consultation response to Sarah Mtango, Policy Services Manager. A policy briefing will be available on our website soon.

NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

▪ **“Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England” – The Hills Review**

On the 20th February, Professor John Hills published the findings of his independent review on the future of the social housing sector. As we reported in our Policy Digest for July to September 2006, the NHC submitted a response to this review and we are pleased to see that some of our recommendations were reflected in the “Ends and Means” report. The Hills Review is designed to spark off debate and discussion on the future of social housing in England.

According to Hills there are four directions where debate is urgently needed about the most effective ways in which policy could better achieve the underlying objectives of social housing and housing policy generally. We need to consider what can be done to:

- increase the attention given to the existing stock and current tenants;
- support more of an income mix within existing communities;
- address worklessness and support the livelihoods of tenants; and
- offer a wider range of choices to both prospective and existing tenants

In our response to the Hills Review we set out various policy challenges in delivering a social housing sector fit for the 21st century that reflect these four directions for debate, including:

- tackling the deep-seated stigmatisation of the sector and transforming the view of social housing into that of a tenure of choice to ensure it has a sustainable future;
- tackling social and spatial polarisation by breaking up mono-tenure and mono-type estates, creating mixed communities and encouraging community cohesion;
- developing more flexible tenure opportunities and making better use of the planning system for mixed communities;
- ensuring that mixed communities aren't just planned for but that they are managed too;
- addressing social exclusion and disincentives to work and empowering people to make their own choices; social housing should provide a safety net for the vulnerable and not create a poverty trap; and

Download the summary document and/or full report of “Ends and Means” from <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/news.asp>
<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/news.asp>

Read the NHC response to the Hills Review http://www.north-eastern-consortium.org.uk/assets/policy/consultations/nhc_response_to_hills_review.pdf

- enabling greater mobility in the sector by moving away from a needs based assessment towards greater choice, making social housing accessible to a more diverse range of citizens.

The report puts forward a menu of suggested reform options for the sector that are again open to debate, but include:

- giving tenants more of a say in how their housing is run;
- encouraging social landlords to sell or commercially rent out property in some areas, heavily dominated by social housing, and to use the proceeds to buy property elsewhere;
- ensuring that support for housing when people need it ties in better with support in getting jobs;
- making it easier for social tenants to move home and get nearer to work; and
- making more use of 'low cost home ownership' options for example by allowing tenants to build up a stake in the property in which they live.

Hills does make reference to the fact that “the same package is not necessarily appropriate for all those needing housing support in all parts of the country” and in our response we not only demonstrated the vital role of social housing in the North but emphasised the need for recognition that the North requires different solutions to the South as well as the need for a more sophisticated approach to delivery which allows interventions and approaches to be shaped by regional circumstances.

It is clear from Hills that social housing will continue to play a crucial role in the future but that in order to do this we need to help the sector realise its full potential. Hills has kick started the debate and it is now up to us and our members to drive it forward, ensuring that housing in the North gets the recognition and tools it needs to make social housing a thriving sector in the future.

■ **Communities England**

The Government announced its proposals for the launch of Communities England on 17th January 2007. This will be a new agency to deliver regeneration and housing in a major shake-up of the way the Government supports the delivery of new homes and develops mixed, sustainable communities in England. Communities England will bring together the functions of English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation and a range of work carried out by the Department of Communities and Local Government, including delivery in the areas of decent homes, housing market renewal, housing PFI, housing growth and urban regeneration.

The NHC welcomes the launch of Communities England; we see it as a positive move, bringing together skills from both agencies to promote more cohesive regeneration. We will be working closely with our members over the coming months to ensure that they are prepared for the launch of this new agency. Whilst we fully support Communities

England we hope that they regional structure will allow for flexibility in delivery.

- **Unlocking the door: Delivering more homes from the comprehensive spending review 2007**

This paper, published by the Housing Corporation in February, looks at how the application of new approaches to investment, together with greater flexibility in the financial capacity of the Corporation's housing association partners will help to fund more quality homes over the 2008-11 spending review period.

Download
"Unlocking the
door" from
http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/Unlocking_the_door.pdf

The Housing Corporation has a long track record in the successful delivery of affordable homes; however a further transformation in delivery is needed, pre-empting CSR07. The paper examines how much further the costs of new supply can be reduced and how much further the balance of private finance versus government subsidy can be shifted during CSR07.

It is expected (and generally accepted) that housing will not be getting any additional monies under CSR07; therefore the housing sector will need to look for alternative ways of funding new supply. The Housing Corporation are recommending, in this paper, that better use needs to be made of the money and tools already available to the sector, such as; improved use of Section 106 agreements, better partnership approaches, greater efficiency through procurement, the alignment of financial and development strategies, taking on additional debt, and making more use of private finance and borrowing.

However, there are implications that CSR07 may have on the northern regions that stand out from this paper. The North West is the only region to have experienced an increase in low cost home ownership grant rates between 2003-04 and 2006-08 and, in terms of social rent grant rates all three northern regions have experienced an increase between the same years. This is significant because it is highly unlikely that grant rates will increase under CSR07 and this will have repercussions for the North's ability to build new homes. Also in this paper, the Housing Corporation examined what additional financial capacity housing associations in the various regions would have. While the majority of capacity lies within London and the South East, a significant amount of additional capacity lies within associations in the North West. The other two northern regions fare the worst in terms of additional capacity, with the North East having the least additional capacity excluding sales and Yorkshire and the Humber having the least additional capacity including sales.

This paints a rather bleak picture however; there are alternative options available for housing in the North to increase its capacity. There is a huge financial capacity in the social housing sector and because of this capacity, private lenders are ready, waiting and able to lend very large amounts of money. The figures in Unlocking the Door show that the North has a greater dependency on grants but CSR07 will mean that this can not continue. The challenge for our members is to move from a

system of dependency and start finding more innovative ways to deliver affordable homes.

CSR07 will be financially restrictive on housing in general but more notably so for the northern regions. “Unlocking the door” goes some way to demonstrating how the housing sector should be able to continue supplying more homes through transformations in delivery. The challenge for housing, especially in the North, is to start making these transformations a reality.

- **Improving efficiency and delivery of affordable housing in the North**
The three projects outlined below aim to improve the efficiency and delivery of affordable housing investment in the North, and its engagement with Government programmes. The ethos of the projects fit well within the Northern Housing Consortium’s new business plan, which is to be launched in April 2007, and will form part of our mainstream service offering ensuring that comprehensive analysis and learning is provided to members and the wider housing sector.

For more information contact: charlotte.hows@northern-consortium.org.uk

1) Northern Housing Challenge

The Housing Corporation announced in February the 17 schemes which have been short listed for the “Northern Housing Challenge”, which aims to enhance affordable housing’s contribution to the North’s economic revitalisation. The Challenge which will promote new housing-led projects will help to shrink the North’s annual £30 billion output shortfall compared to the South, stimulate creative thinking and generate innovation. Key objectives include:

- developing new and replicable approaches to the provision of affordable housing that will support the economic growth of the North;
- demonstrating how investment in housing can produce wider additional socio-economic benefits.

The short listed schemes are from RSL’s, maturing LSVT’s, ALMO’s, private developers and joint venture companies. Altogether the schemes propose to provide homes for over 10,500 people, and include:

- new homes to halt migration of young talent from regions in the North,
- regeneration projects to bring large HMO’s into sustainable use,
- community interest and flexible equity models;
- mixed tenure developments aimed at attracting digital and creative professionals; and
- schemes linking access to training and employment opportunities.

The final decision will be made as part of the National Affordable Housing Programme in early 2008.

2) Northern Enterprise

The “Northern Enterprise” project, which was launched by the Housing Corporation in February 2007, seeks to identify solutions and delivery mechanisms which will help the North to adopt a more entrepreneurial attitude to the provision of affordable housing and deliver ‘more for less’. The three northern regions are facing a tough challenge in light of CSR07, and whilst the national programme is likely to be maintained, it is by no means certain that the North will retain their share of resources. Indeed the Housing Corporation, who is expected to deliver 18% efficiency gains in CSR07, has recently raised concerns that schemes in the North are ‘surprisingly expensive’.

The Northern Housing Consortium is a member of the “Northern Enterprise” project steering group, which will gather the evidence of best practice; explore barriers and solutions to delivery and report on new innovations which can be adopted by a range of stakeholders to ensure that better value for grant, more homes and added value are delivered by the North. The three key themes are:

1. Solutions through the planning process
2. Solutions through optimising asset strength and capacity
3. Solutions through land assembly

There is no doubt that there is the capacity and the innovation in the North to meet this challenge, and many of our members are thinking ‘beyond the comfort zone’ and delivering more homes for less grant. The Northern Housing Consortium is contributing to theme 3 – solutions through land assembly. The group will consider issues around :

- Incentives and disincentives for landowners
- Sophisticated approaches to land acquisition
- Long term partnerships and joint venture companies
- Equity models including community land trusts
- Alternative vehicles which overcome barriers to land assembly

“Northern Enterprise” findings and recommendations will be published in September 2007.

3) Leveraging Capacity into the Delivery of Affordable Housing

In our pan Northern submission to CSR07, the Northern Housing Consortium set out our understanding of the tightening fiscal climate and explored how the sector in the North could be more efficient and effective in delivery of affordable housing. Building upon the issues explored in the submission, the Northern Housing Consortium is awaiting the outcome of its bid to the Housing Corporations Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) Grant to deliver the project “Leveraging Capacity into the Delivery of Affordable Housing”.

Delivery of affordable homes will be more efficient and cost effective if we can better manage land resources, as analysis indicates this is a considerable barrier especially for the North. There is an appetite across the North to improve our approach to delivering affordable housing through better understanding of land availability, the exploration of means of maximising throughput and improvement of site assembly approaches.

The Northern Housing Consortium has put forward a strong Northern submission, which will test:

- Barriers to cost effective land availability
- Means to facilitate land availability

The research project aims to explore these issues through a series of six Northern demonstrator sites. This holistic approach, which will provide replicable models which practitioners can adopt, will provide a good mix of outcomes, a wealth of innovative best practice and ultimately deliver new housing in a more efficient manner. The project, which will run parallel to “Northern Enterprise”, will be directed by a steering group consisting of policy and practitioner experts from across the North, and will drive forward a range of policy agendas.

The outcome of the bid will be announced in April 2007.

- Next Issue: July 2007

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March 2007**

POLICY DIGEST QUESTIONNAIRE

We have recently redesigned and reformatted the quarterly Policy Digest and would like to get some feedback from our readers on this. We would be very grateful if you could take your time to fill in this brief questionnaire and return it to us either by fax, email or post. Thank you for your help.

Q.1. How useful do you find the quarterly policy digest?

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Very useful | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Somewhat useful | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Not useful | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |

Q.2. How would you rate this quarter's digest in terms of content?

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Very good | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Good | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Neither good nor poor | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| Poor | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Very poor | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

Q.3. How would you rate the appearance and layout of the digest?

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Very good | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Good | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Neither good nor poor | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| Poor | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Very poor | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

Q.4. Do you think the issues covered in the policy digest are relevant and timely?

- | | |
|-----|----------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |

Q.5. Please use this space to add any other comments you may have regarding the quarterly policy digest and tell us what you think:

Email to: jennifer.stevenson@northern-consortium.org.uk

Fax to: 0191 566 1001 (FAO: Jennifer Stevenson)

Post to: Northern Housing Consortium, Webster's Ropery, Ropery Road, Deptford Terrace, Deptford, Sunderland, SR4 6DJ