



All Party Urban Development Group
promoting sustainable development and urban renewal

PRESS RELEASE

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Infrastructure funding gap stifling our cities

The All-Party Urban Development Group (UDG) will hear tomorrow (Monday 20th November) how the growth of Britain's cities and towns is being held back by the lack of high-quality infrastructure.

At its inaugural inquiry in the House of Commons, the UDG will receive evidence from a range of expert witnesses from local government and property development – before considering ways to improve private investment in transport and other infrastructure.

This inquiry comes ahead of the Pre-Budget Report and a range of independent reviews – including the Eddington Review of Transport, Barker Review of Planning and Lyons Inquiry into Local Government.

Initial research conducted for the inquiry suggests that Britain suffers from a massive infrastructure funding gap. Over the past 30 years, the UK has systematically underinvested in transport, spending between 10-20 per cent less per head than France and Germany.

Chaired by Clive Betts MP, the inquiry will identify the key barriers to private investment – centralised decision-making, multiple government agencies, complex funding streams and the lack of local financial autonomy. The inquiry will then highlight the powers and resources that Britain's cities and towns need to fill the infrastructure gap and deliver high-quality transport.

The Urban Development Group will then publish its first inquiry report in January, setting out cross-party recommendations for change.

Clive Betts MP, chair of the Urban Development Group, said:

“Our cities and towns need to invest more in infrastructure. There are clear concerns that the funding of transport and other infrastructure is too centralised – with too many decisions taken in Whitehall and money wasted on abandoned schemes like Merseytram and Leeds Supertram.

“Central government needs to prioritise transport funding, and devolve more of it to our cities and towns. Local councils also need more freedom to part-finance infrastructure, alongside the private sector.

“Now is the time to act. Britain's future economic success depends on it.”

More information on the All-Party Urban Development Group is available at www.allparty-urbandevelopment.org.uk.

Notes to Editors

1. The Local Government White Paper (published 26 October) proposed greater devolved powers for cities and towns – including fewer national targets, City Development Companies, Multi-Area Agreements and directly-elected council leaders.
2. The All-Party Urban Development Group was set up in July to provide a forum for MPs and peers from all political parties to promote urban renewal and sustainable development. The British Property Federation, together with the Centre for Cities at ippr, provides the secretariat for the Group.
3. The Group is chaired by Clive Betts MP (Labour, Sheffield Attercliffe). The vice-chairs are James Brokenshire MP (Con, Hornchurch), Baroness Scott of Needham Market (Lib Dem), and Lord Richard Best (cross-bench, chief executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation).
4. The inquiry on Monday 20th November will take place in the House of Commons, Committee Room 12, from 2pm to 3.30pm. Clive Betts MP, the chair of the Urban Development Group, will be available for comment prior to the inquiry on Friday 17th November. The Group will hold further inquiries throughout 2007.
5. Witnesses appearing before the inquiry include:
 - Sir Robin Wales (Mayor, Newham LBC)
 - David Wechsler (Chief Executive, Croydon Council)
 - Tony Travers (Director, Greater London Group, LSE)
 - Ken Dytor (Managing Director, Regeneration Investments Ltd)
 - Peter Miller (Director of Development, Westfield Group)
 - Lesley Chalmers (Chief Executive, English Cities Fund)
 - Heneage Stevenson (Bee Bee Developments Ltd)
 - Chris Leslie (Director, New Local Government Network)
 - James O'Shaughnessy (Head of Research, Policy Exchange)
 - Adam Marshall (Senior Researcher, Centre for Cities at ippr)
6. A formal report – including a range of cross-party recommendations for change – will be issued by the Group in January 2007.

Contacts

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