

The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils

The Beacon Council Scheme consultation
on themes for future rounds



*Excellence in
Local Government*

The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils is an independent advisory panel set up by Government to provide advice to Ministers on the Beacon Council Scheme. The Panel advises Ministers on the selection of beacon themes and on the criteria for selecting Beacons and we make formal recommendations to Ministers on which councils should be awarded beacon status.

The Panel consists of a chair and nine permanent members (listed at Annex A) who have been nominated by a selection of bodies to serve on the panel for three years. In addition to the core membership, specialised members with expertise in each of the themes are appointed for one year.

INTRODUCTION

The Beacon Council Scheme, launched in 1999, has been a real success. The scheme was introduced to help recognise excellence and to encourage the spread of best practice. Over two thirds of councils have now applied for beacon status and in the first two rounds of the scheme 76 beacon awards have been made in 18 service themes.

The Round 2 beacon councils are currently working in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to disseminate information and promote best practice in a range of areas, including accessible services, foster care, maintaining a quality environment and town centre regeneration. Through the scheme nearly all English councils have attended learning events that have given them opportunities to meet and learn from their peers.

Round 3 of the Beacon Council Scheme is well underway. Applications for Round 3 beacon status are currently being assessed and the successful applicants will be awarded beacon status in April 2002. In the meantime we are beginning to look ahead to Round 4 and future rounds.

Each year around 10 themes are selected that are important to local people. The selection of these themes is central to the success of the scheme. When recommending themes to Ministers, we listen to people and organisations who are interested in local service provision. We seek suggestions on areas where improved services would create tangible benefits for local people, and where councils can display innovations that will be of value to other councils.

The Panel also welcomes feedback from councils on how to develop the scheme. In the light of some of the feedback from last year's consultation, the beacon conference and research undertaken by the Local Government Unit at Warwick University, the Government is considering introducing a rolling programme of themes for the Beacon Council Scheme. This rolling programme will mean councils will know beacon themes in advance, making it easier for councils to co-ordinate the Beacon Council Scheme with Best Value Reviews and involvement in Local Public Service Agreements.

In this consultation we are seeking suggestions for Round 4 as well as for the future rounds of the scheme. We want to recommend to Ministers a set of themes that will offer a well-balanced programme with plenty of opportunities for all types of authority to submit applications and to learn best practice. The themes should focus on issues which directly affect the quality of life for those living and working in local communities, and where the Beacon Council Scheme can create tangible benefits.

We ask you to make your suggestions and comments which we will consider in the autumn and make recommendations to Ministers. Ministers will make the final decisions about themes and we expect an announcement early next year. **We would therefore welcome proposals on themes which would be suitable for future rounds of the Beacon Council Scheme by Monday 19 November 2001.**

Any general comments on the Beacon Council Scheme would also be welcome.

Please send contributions to The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils, c/o Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 5/A3, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU or by email to beaconpanel@dtlr.gsi.gov.uk. You can also fax a reply to us on 020 7944 4109 please mark it "For Attention of the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils: Theme Consultation".

Themes

PRINCIPLES BEHIND BEACON THEMES

Local authorities have a key role in ensuring that local people have the best possible quality of life. Everything councils do impacts on the people living within their areas, from collecting rubbish to looking after the more vulnerable members of society. If local authorities fail to deliver excellent services it can affect the lives of every member of the community. The goal for all councils must therefore be to provide the best possible services for everybody. Improving the standards of service that councils provide is consistent with the Government's strategy for reforming and modernising public services.

There are many examples of excellent, imaginative, inclusive service delivery in local government. The Beacon Council Scheme was set up to help all councils achieve this high standard across the full range of services. The Beacon Council Scheme aims to raise standards by promoting best practice. To this end the Beacon Scheme focuses on issues of importance for local people; on the services which impact directly on their quality of life. As in previous rounds of the scheme, specific themes should concentrate on:

- Issues which local people consider important;
- Tangible benefits for local people and local communities;
- Services where councils can display innovations that will be of value to other councils;
- Areas where the beacon scheme can deliver real improvements.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SUGGESTING THEMES

The themes chosen for the beacon scheme are vital to the success of the programme. In previous rounds themes were chosen where there is clear evidence that councils have had an impact on people's lives in ways that matter to them. Key points to consider when suggesting themes are:

- Is this an area where you would like to learn from others or have best practice to share?
- Would it be beneficial to repeat a previous theme? Repeating a theme could be helpful if best practice has significantly developed since the theme was first run;
- The diversity of councils. We need to ensure that there are themes suitable for all types of council (small, large, urban, rural, county, district and unitary) and for joint applications from councils;
- Could the Beacon Council Scheme reinforce other current or recent initiatives?

We have produced a number of reports that may be of help to you when considering beacon themes. These reports and other publications are listed at Annex B.

The themes chosen in Rounds 1,2 and 3 are listed in Boxes A, B and C respectively.

Box A: Beacon Themes in Round 1

Dealing with Waste
Helping Care Leavers
Helping to Raise Standards by Tackling School Failure
Improving Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration
Improving Housing Maintenance
Preventing Local Shopping and Town Centre Crime and Disorder
Streamlining Planning Decisions for Business

Box B: Beacon Themes in Round 2

Accessible Services
Competitiveness and Enterprise
Foster Care
Independent Living for Older People
Local Health Strategies
Maintaining a Quality Environment
Regenerating through Culture, Sport & Tourism
Raising Attainment in Education
Tackling Vehicle Crime
Tackling Youth Drug Misuse
Town Centre Regeneration

Box C: Beacon Themes in Round 3

Adoption
Better Access and Mobility
Community Legal Services
Crime Reduction in Rural Areas
Fostering Business Growth
Improving Urban Green Spaces
Libraries as a Community Resource
Neighbourhood Renewal (In Urban and Rural Areas)
Promoting Racial Equality
Tackling Fuel Poverty
Transition in Education

AREAS TO CONSIDER AS POSSIBLE THEMES FOR ROUND 4

In our report *Recommendations to Ministers on Themes for Year 3* we recommended 14 themes as being suitable for inclusion in Round 3. It was not possible to include them all and Ministers agreed that the themes should be considered again for Round 4 together with other themes that had emerged from the consultation process. Themes that could be considered for Round 4 are listed in Box D on the opposite page. **However, we are not tied to these themes and would welcome other suggestions for themes.**

Box D: Themes to consider for Round 4

Anti-Social Behaviour³ – *a wide spread problem that destroys lives and shatters communities.*

Delivering Effective Social Services³ – *that provide care and support to a wide variety of people, helping them to live better and more fulfilling lives.*

Encouraging Healthy and Safe Living¹/Promoting Healthy Communities³ – *local authorities are in a key position to influence the wider determinants of ill health and the causes of health inequalities.*

Housing Renewal in the Private Sector¹ – *most unfit and poor condition housing in England is privately owned, local authorities have an important role to play in improving conditions in this sector.*

ICT & Social Exclusion² – *lack of access to ICTs leads to or reinforces disadvantage at a number of levels.*

Lifelong Learning¹ – *is the key to prosperity for individuals, businesses and the nation, helping to promote a fair society, active citizenship and economic growth.*

Mental Health² – *a key health priority requiring a multi—agency approach.*

Reducing the Impact of Street Works¹ – *surveys by the People’s Panel have identified the disruption caused by serial excavation of street and pavements by various agencies is an issue with which the public is most dissatisfied.*

Services for Older People³ – *local authorities need to respond to the needs of older people by providing services directly working in partnership with other organisations and listening to older people.*

¹ Put forward by the Advisory Panel last year as suitable for Round 3

² Put forward by the Advisory Panel last year as suitable for Round 4

³ Put forward by the Ministers in February 2001 as suitable for consideration for Round 4

How to reply

You can reply to us in a number of ways. We can be contacted by email on beaconpanel@dtlr.gsi.gov.uk. You can send your comments by fax on 020 7944 4109, clearly marked “For Attention of the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils: Theme Consultation”. Alternatively you can write to us at:

The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils
c/o DTLR
5/A3 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

**The deadline for suggestions and comments is 5pm Monday
19 November 2001**

Contact Details

If you have any queries regarding the Beacon Council Scheme please contact the Secretariat to the Panel. Contact details are listed in Box E.

Box E: Contact details	
Hannah Cromarty Secretariat Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils 5/A3 Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU Tel: 020 7944 4093 Fax: 020 7944 4109 hannah.cromarty@dtlr.gsi.gov.uk	Naomi Hunt Secretariat Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils 5/A3 Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU Tel: 020 7944 5158 Fax: 020 7944 4109 naomi.hunt@dtlr.gsi.gov.uk

ANNEX A

CORE PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Acting Chair:

Bob Clarke¹

Managing Director, Babbie Group Ltd

Nominated by the Confederation of British Industry

Permanent Members:

Melvyn Carlowe OBE

Former Chief Executive, Jewish Care

Nominated by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Professor Michael Clarke CBE

Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Birmingham

Nominated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Jack Dromey

National Organiser, Transport and General Workers Union

Nominated by the Trades Union Congress

Peter Heginbotham

Senior Partner, Davis Blank Furniss

Nominated by the British Chambers of Commerce

Professor George Jones OBE

Professor of Government,

London School of Economics and Political Science

Nominated by the National Consumer Council

Councillor Sir Harry Jones CBE

Leader, Newport County Borough Council

Nominated by the Local Government Association

Councillor Sir Peter Soulsby

Leicester City Council

Nominated by the Audit Commission

Vivienne Sugar

Chief Executive, City and County of Swansea

Nominated by the Local Government Association

¹ Lord Filkin, the previous chair, stood down from this role on June 2001 on his acceptance of a government post. Bob Clarke, previously the Deputy Chair, will act as Chair until a permanent appointment is made.

ANNEX B

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following reading list suggests other printed documents that may be helpful:

The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils Publications

DETR (2001)

Report of the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils
Recommendations to Ministers on Beacon Councils for Round 2
(<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/beacon/rd3/index4.htm>)

DETR (2000)

Report of the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils
Recommendations to Ministers on Themes for Round 3
(<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/beacon/rd3/index4.htm>)

DETR (2000)

Report of the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils
Recommendations to Ministers on Themes for Round 2
(<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/beacon/rd3/index4.htm>)

DTLR PUBLICATIONS

DTLR (2001)

The Beacon Council Scheme
How to Apply, Application Brochure 2001
(<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/beacon/broc2001/application/index.htm>)

DETR (2001)

The Beacon Council Scheme: Where to go and what to see
Programme of events 2001-2002
(<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/beacon/whereto/index.htm>)

DETR (1999)

The Beacon Council Scheme: How will it work? Prospectus
(<http://www.local-regions.dtlr.gov.uk/beacon/prospect/index.htm>)

Copies of all the above brochures can be obtained free of charge from:

DTLR Free Literature

PO Box 236

Wetherby

West Yorkshire

LS23 7NB

Tel: 0870 1226 236

Fax: 0870 1226 237

Textphone: 0870 1207 405

E-mail: dtlr@twoten.press.net

Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Telephone 020 7944 3000
Internet service www.dtlr.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2001.

Copyright in the typographical arrangement and design rests with the Crown.

This publication (excluding the Royal Arms and logos) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright with the title and source of the publication specified.

Further copies of this report are available from:

Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
PO Box 236
Wetherby
West Yorkshire
LS23 7NB
Tel: 0870 1226 236
Fax: 0870 1226 237
Textphone: 0870 1207 405
E-mail: dtlr@twoten.press.net

This document is also available on the DTLR website: www.dtlr.gov.uk/consult.htm

Published by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. Printed in the UK, October 2001 on material containing 75% post-consumer waste and 25% ECF pulp.

Product code 01LG0827