



## INTRODUCTION

The LES Partnership Board arranged to work with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) on a series of co-hosted half day Low Emissions Strategies Workshops: Provisional locations were identified as:

- Manchester (with RTPI North West);
- London (with RTPI London);
- Leicester (with RTPI East Midlands)
- Bristol (with RTPI South West) and;
- Newcastle (with RTPI North East).

The workshops were to be aimed primarily at planners and to cover air quality and climate change drivers, the fundamentals of low emission strategies, discussion of key policy issues, presentation of case studies (e.g. typical agreements, use of standard charging formulas, deployment of Section 106 Agreement funds and current technology options) and a review of options for wider integration (e.g. links to delivery of national indicators).

The actual programme of RTPI seminars follows closely the original with events held as follows:

- Manchester 4th November 2009;
- Leicester 24th February 2010;
- RTPI Planning Convention (London) 30th June 2010;
- Sussex-air 13th December 2010;
- Newcastle 19th January 2011;

There is one further seminar arranged for 7th March in York with another to be confirmed in Tiverton (Devon) on 22nd March.

In addition presentations were made at Events arranged by LACORS in the West Midlands on 15th March and East Midlands on 16th March 2010 and at an RTPI Scotland organised seminar in Edinburgh on 18th November 2010. The Edinburgh event was organised because of the interest shown by colleagues north of the border, although this was not part of the LESP programme, as Scotland is beyond the remit of the LESP.

## SEMINARS

### (i) Manchester 4th November 2009

Being the first event this seminar was very much part of the learning curve and was the first time a seminar was arranged for primarily Planners. Previous seminars had been essentially (though not specifically) to an audience of environmental health officers with some planners, highway engineers and consultants from various disciplines also attending. 24 people attended the day in Manchester with planners from York, Bury, Wigan, and the local area and a number of consultants. The Planners from York had hired a minibus and clearly had covered the greatest distance. All delegates were very keen to hear about the LES approach. The programme included presentations from Andrew Whittles, Tanya Murat and Steve Merryfield on air quality management, planning and delivering clean air and the role of planning policies. LES Board Member Paul Cartmell attended the day and gave an account of the work carried out by Wigan Council on preparation of its Local Development Framework on Development and Air Quality. This together

with the session on case studies gave delegates a direct insight to the positive work local authorities are involved with. There followed discussion groups and questions.

The discussion/questions and answer session showed there was much interest in following the example of other authorities and using the planning system to improve air quality and to develop policies to assist achieving this. The event was well received with a positive feedback from the attendees. The RTPI was also convinced that the seminar was positively received and that the programme should continue.

**(ii) Leicester 24th February 2010**

Held at De Montfort University in Leicester this was another well attended event with some 25 attendees from the East Midlands area. The format was similar to that of Manchester with a repeat of the previous presentations (amended and updated) and introduction of case studies. The afternoon started following a buffet lunch, which afforded the opportunity for networking and pre-seminar discussions.

The presentations generated much interest with many direct questions immediately after to each of the presenters. The discussion/question and answer session was extensive and it was clear that there was much interest in the use of Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and how important it was to have effective and relevant planning policies. Many stayed on to have one to one discussions with the presenters. Follow up emails and research was a direct result of the interest this event generated.

**(iii) Planning Convention – London 30th June 2010**

The Low Emission Strategies Workshop took place on the second day of the Convention. Over the two days there were 18 workshops and ours was number 13!

In total six workshops took place at the same time so we faced competition. However we attracted 34 delegates to attend the workshop. It seemed to be very positively received with a considerable number of questions, such that we ran out of time when lunch beckoned the delegates. A feedback questionnaire was given out from which we did extremely well to have over 30 percent returned. Only one respondent thought the workshop to be of average interest the majority gave it high marks with one writing 'excellent' in the margin.

The impression was that the workshop was regarded as being positive, interesting and valuable. The questions were wide ranging and did raise issues, which could help future development of the LES message e.g. seeking changes to the GPDO (General Permitted Development Order). Given the effect of the spending review on the future there was an encouraging attitude towards our presentation and Low Emission Strategies. It would seem that despite pressure from delivering planning applications according to specific targets, in the main Planners remain focused on the importance of climate change and the impact of development on the environment and air quality.

**(iv) Sussex-air 13th December 2010**

Successful in becoming part of the Regional Groups Initiative (RGI) Sussex-air arranged this seminar at the Gatwick Hilton Hotel in conjunction with the RTPI, LESP and the IESE (Improvement and Efficiency South East). The Sussex Air Quality Partnership (Sussex-air) is a partnership of Sussex local and county authorities, the Environment Agency and Health Protection Agency, concerned with the promotion and delivery of air quality improvements and low emissions initiatives.

The event "Creating Low Emission Transport Options from Development Planning" had presentations from Nigel Jenkins (Project Manager Sussex Air Quality Partnership) Andrew Whittles and Steve Merryfield and an introduction to the IESE from David Greenfield its Director.

The presentations were followed by three 20 minute session workshop break-out groups, led by LESP representatives: Andrew Whittles (Evidence), Katherine Stanger (Delivery) and Steve Merryfield (Policy).

There was the opportunity for questions as the morning progressed but a feedback and formal question and answer session concluded the event's proceedings.

From an original list of 63 delegates 59 attended the event, which is an excellent percentage attendance and resulted in making this the best attended of all RTPI events. Delegates comprised a good mixture of Environmental Officers and Planners including many private sector consultants. There was very good interaction from facilitators and delegates during the workshops and a wide range of questions to presenters.

It is clear from the feedback that participants found it a really successful event and that those attending want to find out more about the topics covered. In particular the majority are keen to know more about the Low Emissions Strategy Partnership.

Sussex-air held its annual air seminar 'Planning for Better Air' in March 2010 and following the success of this latest event is keen to hold similar events in the future.

**(v) Newcastle 19th January 2011**

This was an all day seminar, which had very good attendance with 42 delegates of which 90% were planners. It did appear as though the efforts of the local RTPI representative had helped to generate a high level of interest and participation. There is an extensive programme of RTPI events in the North East throughout the year, which helps. However the subject matter was clearly of significance in the area and delegates were keen to take on board the matters raised in the presentations.

In addition to the presentation from Tanya Murat, Andrew Whittles and Steve Merryfield, Sally Herbert (Sustainable Travel Officer, Newcastle City Council) gave a presentation on Electric Vehicles. This together with that part of Andrew's presentation on alternative fuel technology was of particular interest to the delegates.

The lunch break again gave the opportunity for networking and the chance to discuss specific aspects of the presentations. In the afternoon session Tanya introduced Low Emission Strategies in the context of Local Planning policies comparing policies from Greenwich Council, the Greater London Authority and the local area. The delegates split into groups representing, Planners, Highway Engineers, Environmental Officers and the Planning Inspectorate (arranged specifically to suit some delegates). They were asked to consider the different policies of each authority and comment on how effective they might be (or not as the case may be). The presenters sat in on the group discussions. Feedback was detailed and positive and highlighted many issues for future consideration. There were so many questions that it stretched the time available to the limit. The seminar went extremely well with positive participation and feedback from the delegates.

## **ADDITIONAL SEMINARS/PRESENTATIONS**

**(i) LACORS – West Midlands 15th March and Melton Mowbray 16th March 2010.**

15th March:

Held at the Motorcycle Museum near Coventry this was an all day event organised by LACORS for local authorities in the West Midlands on bringing together environmental protection and planning services in order to improve liaison and understanding between the two professions. The afternoon session aimed specifically at bringing together Environmental Protection and planning professionals at all levels to focus on a couple of specific areas of their work where together they can really make a difference to protecting the environment and public health whilst also meeting local planning aims. Andrew Whittles and Steve Merryfield were invited to speak in the afternoon on low emission strategies essentially to help give EP and planning officers in the individual authorities inspiration and advice.

There was good attendance with approximately 70 EP and planning officers from the West Midlands area. From the feedback the LESP presentations were the most popular of the day and the consensus was that it was very useful to look at low emission strategies. There was again much interest in what other authorities had achieved and how Section 106 Agreements had been used, as well as alternative fuels especially electric vehicles.

**16th March:**

Held at the Methodist Centre, Melton Mowbray the day after the West Midlands event this was the second of the LACORS all day seminars but this time essentially for authorities in the East Midlands. Also aimed at Environmental Protection officers and planners this was another very well attended event with some 80 delegates. Andrew Whittles and Gary Mahoney attended this event and both gave presentations. From the feedback it was without doubt that Andrew's and Gary's sessions were the most popular with all responses on the positive side of the ratings scale.

**(ii) RTPI Edinburgh 18th November 2010**

This took place in the city centre and was attended by 32 delegates from all over Scotland. Andrew Whittles and Steve Merryfield had half hour presentation slots with a short presentation by Gavin Martin from Edinburgh City Council. These presentations were followed by a question and answer session and then a discussion period. The planning system in Scotland depends upon different legislation from England and Wales so not all policies are the same though many are similar. There is no CIL north of the Border! However there are many similarities with Planning Obligations (Section 75) and other relevant planning policies.

There was much interest in Andrew's presentation particularly in respect of alternative fuels and vehicle procurement. Many delegates were keen to know more about case studies and not just how Greenwich had secured wide ranging benefits but the progress with schemes and monitoring.

The workshops seemed to raise an awareness in the delegates and there was so much interest and discussion that the morning session overran by 30 minutes. The opportunity to visit and discuss air quality and low emission strategies with our Scottish colleagues was extremely valuable. Not only were we able to discover the issues facing Edinburgh and other major Scottish cities but we were able to explain how things are done south of the border and the LESP experience.

Being in Scotland this event fell outside the remit of the Low Emission Strategies Partnership so although organisation was carried out by RTPI Scotland, the services and expenses of Andrew and Steve were self financed. The RTPI is active in Scotland and appears keen to learn more about progress in England. It is to be hoped that holding this seminar will result in more interaction between the parties, particularly on exchanging experiences. Perhaps this might be first of many discussions and meetings with the RTPI in Scotland.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Early in the process of developing low emission strategies and holding seminars and workshops around the country it was clear that while Environmental Officers appreciated the implications of poor air quality from transport based emissions, planners were either not fully aware of this or considered they had neither the ability or time available to do anything about it! However it has always been the case that Planners do appreciate the importance of good air quality, climate change and the impact of development on the environment. Through this series of workshops delivered by the LESP in conjunction with the RTPI (and others) the message is getting through and there is now a much wider appreciation of the benefits from using the Best Practice Guidance and having appropriate planning policies in place. Relevant and positive policies are particularly important given the need for a good evidence base. Many Planners can see the benefits from wider use of Section 106 Agreements and that these need not be the burden and delaying factor previously considered to be.

These seminars have afforded the opportunity for LESP representatives to meet and discuss issues concerning Low Emission Strategies and the benefits of sound planning policies (good evidence base) with those attending. Being able to get planners, both in local authorities and private consultancies, together with Environmental protection Officers and Consultants to appreciate the approach of the LESP and how using the Best Practice Guidance can make a difference, has been so worthwhile.