



Annual Conference 2011 | Liverpool | 25 - 29 September

Labour



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- Event:** **The Smith Institute and London and Quadrant Housing Association:**
Housing Associations and Local Government: Partnerships for Change
- Present:** Chair: Paul Hackett, Director – The Smith Institute
Speakers: Alison Seabeck MP (Shadow Minister for Housing), David Montague,
(Chief Executive L&Q), Cllr Julian Bell, (Leader, London Borough of Ealing)
- Venue:** BT Convention Centre, Marquee 1A
- Date:** Monday 26th September 2011
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Alison Seabeck MP (AS) the Shadow Housing Minister was speaking at a fringe event organised by The Smith Institute, a non-aligned progressive think tank founded in memory of the late Labour leader John Smith. Joining her on the panel was David Montague (DM) from the London and Quadrant Housing Association, who have over 61,000 homes across London and the South East, and Leader of Labour-controlled Ealing Council, Councillor Julian Bell (JB).

- AS admitted that the Labour Party had “huge concerns” over the NPPF, stating that it was a “deeply flawed” document which she predicted to be heavily amended by the government when the consultation period closes in mid-October.
- The shadow minister criticised the Government's planning policy, saying it would create “chaos and mayhem”.

“It’s a genuine problem. This Government is not tackling it in the right way; the left hand doesn’t seem to know what the right hand is doing. The planning policies are going to create absolute chaos and mayhem and actually just lead to planning lawyers doing very well out of it and very few homes being built.”

- London and Quadrant’s Chief Executive DM, meanwhile, stated that his company “welcomed” the NPPF and the flexibility it allowed. There were concerns that there was no mention of affordable housing contained within the document, and that L&Q had to conduct extensive research in order to ascertain the likely impact of the legislation on their sector. 70% of L&Q’s tenants earned under £15,000, Mr Montague said, and that coupled with the government’s commitment to reform housing benefits left the sector, and its investors, uneasy.
- Cllr Julian Bell (JB) argued that there remained serious questions over the New Homes Bonus, questioning if it could be used for council services – or merely to plug gaps in budgets that all councils were now being forced to cut. In the London Borough of Ealing, 71% of tenants are considered unable to rent, with 73% unable to buy a home. The subsidised housing sector does itself need to be subsidised, and with central government spending being cut and political willpower simply not there, the provision of affordable homes would continue to be a major problem.