

Conservative Party Conference Update – Day 4 - Putting Britain First Wednesday 6th October

In his speech to the Conservative Party Conference this afternoon, the Prime Minister issued a call to arms to people everywhere. He called for everyone across the county to stand up and seize opportunities to change their local communities, to start up their own businesses, schools and local services and to collectively create the Big Society. The Prime Minister was clear that he believes this to be in the national interest and that the Big Society is the key to sorting out the economy and addressing the deficit.

Key points :

- He summarised the past thirteen years by saying “we should remember where we have come from” they called us “a dead parrot” but we were “only resting” and “we are back serving our country together in the national interest.”
- He believes that the coalition was the right way forward as “the voters wanted us to respond responsibly and to do the right thing.”
- He made a firm commitment to Trident and promised to “take no risks with British security.”
- He spoke of a “spirit of activism” with local people changing their own neighbourhoods.
- The Coalition Government will build a “nation of doers and go-getters.”
- On the economy he said that the responsible way forward is to slash spending now and to make deep cuts.
- He said that programmes will be cut and jobs will be lost. The average Government Department will have its budget cut by twenty-five percent over four years.
- Those on higher incomes will be asked to shoulder more of the cuts that those on lower incomes – it is fair that those with broader shoulders should bear more of the burden.
- The Government will recognise marriage in the tax system and make sure that going to work pays. Those who can work but won’t work will not be allowed to live off the hard work of others.
- £1 billion regional growth fund to stimulate economic growth.
- Banks must repay the favour of tax payers bailing them out by lending to small businesses.
- There will be a radical shift of power away from Government including giving everyone the power to plan the look, feel and shape of your local area.
- He congratulated the Rt Hon Eric Pickles, MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, on “hitting the ground sprinting” and all his work to date to abolish unnecessary quangos.
- Launch of an international citizens service.

Royal Town Planning Institute: Giving People A Voice In Planning – Fringe Event – 12.30pm Jurys Inn (Broad Street)

Speakers: Richard Summers, Senior Vice President of RTPI (Chair), Bob Neill MP, Local Government and Planning Minister, Councillor Michael Chater, Chairman of National Association of Local Councils, Sue Manns, Planning Aid.

Bob Neill MP, Local Government and Planning Minister made a number of interesting points:

- The existing planning system is “simply not delivering.”

- Under the current system “Planning is done to you, not for you.”
- Going forward it is essential that local plans are created from the bottom up and the starting point should be Wards and Local Parishes.
- He explained that the proposed Neighbourhood Development Orders would be granted by Local Authorities and will enable local development to happen more quickly.
- The Department of Communities and Local Government is still putting the “flesh on the bones” of the Community Right to Build.
- He expects details of National Policy Framework and the updates to the PPSs to happen concurrently with the publishing of the Decentralisation and Localism Bill.
- The Community Right to Build Scheme might involve local communities placing certain covenants on the housing such as affordability.
- In the pre-application process Local Councillors will no longer be “locked out” but instead they should be actively involved, almost acting as brokers between the local community and housebuilders.
- The use of technology to assist in engaging the local community must become more prevalent.

Sue Percy, Director of Membership, Education and Lifelong Learning at the RTPI began with the following points:

- The RTPI welcomes the principle of Localism, however, the concepts of urban and rural engagement are very different and must be addressed.
- Throughout the process of engaging it is essential to build up “social capital” although in some communities this “will be difficult.”
- Giving people a voice in planning requires the proper processes to be in place and necessary resources dedicated to consultation and engagement.

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