

CROSS BOUNDARY COOPERATION ON STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR LONDON AND THE WIDER METROPOLITAN AREA

A discussion paper

Draft response by South East England Aggregates Working Party (SEEAWP)

SEEAWP

Aggregate Working Parties, including SEEAWP, have been an example of cooperation between Mineral Planning Authorities* (MPAs), the aggregates industry and a number of other bodies for some 40 years. SEEAWP comprises representatives from 20 MPAs, industry (nominated by the Mineral Products Association and the British Aggregates Association), The Crown Estate, Port of London Authority, the Marine Management Organisation and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

In order to assist cross boundary cooperation, the Chairman of the London Aggregates Working Party and the Secretary of the East of England Aggregates Working Party receive SEEAWP papers and are invited to SEEAWP meetings. This is reciprocated by the other Working Parties.

The principle role of AWP's has been to undertake an Annual Monitoring Survey, gathering data on sales, permissions and reserves in their area, to report on the findings and to provide technical advice to government, MPAs and industry on trends in provision of aggregates, and measures to secure the maintenance of a steady and adequate supply.

To this end SEEAWP has initiated reports on the character and capacity of its wharves to handle a growth in marine aggregates, the reasons for the decline in permitted aggregate reserves (which was then taken up at the national level) and the relationship between land allocated or identified as an area of search in a Minerals Plan with the submission and determination of applications for land-won extraction.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports maintaining AWP's and increases their role in requiring MPAs to consult the AWP on their draft Local Aggregate Assessments and to take the views of the AWP into account in the preparation of their LDF/DPDs. This enables cooperation across boundaries and the AWP to respond on behalf of both local authorities and industry.

The NPPF also supports maintaining a National Aggregate Coordinating Group (NACG). The structure for cooperation across boundaries therefore exists at both the local, sub national and national level for aggregates.

**Berkshire (including Bracknell Forest, Reading, Slough, West Berkshire, Windsor & Maidenhead, and Wokingham), Buckinghamshire, East Sussex (including Brighton and Hove), Hampshire (including Portsmouth, Southampton and New Forest National Park), Isle of Wight, Kent, Medway, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Surrey, and West Sussex*

The Discussion Paper

The discussion paper suggests that where existing forums are working well they should be encouraged to continue and engagement built upon rather than create new structures. This recognises the contribution of established forums and the resource constraints which apply to both London and the authorities in the wider metropolitan area. SEEAWP strongly endorses this approach:

London is already heavily dependent upon imports for its primary aggregate supply as land-won working in London only produces 10% of consumption. As production diminishes from the limited land resource, that dependence will further increase.

The cross boundary movement of aggregates between adjoining authorities and London is well established in AWP reports, notably for SEEAWP the substantial (some 0.5Mt) transport of aggregates from downstream Thames ports in Kent and Medway.

The established contacts between SEEAWP, London AWP and East of England AWP provide a mechanism for coordination as to how imports/exports between London and the wider metropolitan area can best be managed. The contacts at sub national level and NACG will enable coordination on cross boundary issues concerning distant aggregate supply sources, for example regarding the substantial crushed rock imports to rail depots in London and the South East from the South West and East Midlands.

SEEAWP supports the proposals for greater engagement, and would wish to contribute through information technology to an 'on-line' forum if established.

SEEAWP would also wish to be invited to take part in seminars and meetings with GLA officers when the subject matter concerns the supply of aggregates within and to London and the wider metropolitan area - including quarries, wharves, rail depots and the infrastructure to serve them.

The Government has not issued guidance to MPAs on the 'duty to cooperate' required in the Localism Act, and it is noted that the Panel appointed to review planning guidance will 'consider the scope to encourage the planning sector to produce appropriate guidance'. It may well therefore be appropriate to develop a cooperation strategy as suggested in the discussion paper.

For aggregates, joint monitoring already takes place in three AWP's that cover London and the wider metropolitan area, and a common core to aggregates monitoring is operated by all AWP's throughout England as approved by the National Coordinating Group in 2007. Prior to 2000 and the establishment of regional bodies, London was part of a wider South East England AWP. There may be scope to return to that pattern.