Dear Greg

# Unlock 🛭 Campaigning to implement the Sustainable Communities Act

Another project of

# Sustainable Communities Act Regulations: Two Problems - Two Solutions

We write regarding the regulations that are soon to be laid before Parliament for the Sustainable Communities Act. The regulations provide the opportunity to deal with two problems with the 'bottom-up' process established by the Act.

## **Delays**

It took seventeen months for people who submitted ideas in the first round to receive a response. Delays like this cause disillusionment and disengagement in the Act amongst communities and councils. Our concern is that if there are delays again it will be ever harder to inspire people to get involved.

The way forward: The regulations should put a time limit on how long it will be before a submitted proposal is fully dealt with. If people knew it would be, say, no more than six months (with, perhaps, provision for exceptional circumstances) before they received a response to their proposal this would deal with the frustrations people have had. We are flexible on how long the time period should be, but there needs to be a time limit for responding to proposals.

## **Watering Down**

The fundamental difference of the Act is the right it gives communities to participate. This came through the duty on councils to not just consult, but to also try to reach agreement with their communities when submitting proposals. This duty was deliberated on at great length by MPs when the Act was going through Parliament in 2007 and received support by all parties and the LGA.

If the regulations do not retain the duty on councils to try to reach agreement with their communities then citizens will not have the rights under it that they had under the previous government.

In the first round our members and others felt that what their council did to engage them was different and was something much more inspiring and meaningful than just consultation. Many councils ran excellent examples of processes that were a dialogue with citizens and a genuine attempt to decide together on what proposals to put forward. This happened because of the duty to try to reach agreement.

The way forward: The regulations should retain the duty on councils to "try to reach agreement" with their communities about the proposals they will put forward when using the Act. (NB we accept that the regulations should not prescribe how councils do this – just that they should).

We ask that you please ensure these provisions are contained in the regulations. Thank you.

Yours sincerely



Mervyn Kohler, Special Adviser Age UK



Ruth Bond, Chair National Federation of Women's Institutes



Stuart Etherington, Chief Executive National Council of Voluntary Organisations National Trust



Ben Cowell, Assistant Director



John Walker, National Chairman Federation of Small Businesses



Sue Holden, Chief Executive Woodland Trust



Mike Benner, Chief Executive CAMRA - the Campaign for Real Ale



Paul Foote, Managing Director Conservative Environment Network



Lesley-Anne Alexander, Chief Executive Royal National Institute for the Blind



Phil Orford, Chief Executive Forum of Private Business



Kenneth Parsons, Chief Executive Rural Shops Alliance



Stephen Fishwick, Head of External Communication National Pharmacy Association



Ruth Scott, Head of Policy Scope



Peter Brooker, Head of Corporate Affairs Pay Point



Kieran McDonell, National President National Pensioners Convention National Federation of Retail Newsagents



David Tyler, National Director Community Matters - National Federation of Community Organisations



Farooq Murad, Secretary General Muslim Council of Britain



Malcolm Shepherd, Chief Executive Sustrans



George Thomson, General Secretary National Federation of SubPostmasters



Citizens UK



Andy Atkins, Executive Director Friends of the Earth

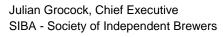


38 Degrees

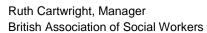














Katie Ghose, Chief Executive **Electoral Reform Society** 



Judy Ling-Wong, President Black Environment Network



James Cathcart, Chief Executive **British Youth Council** 



Stephen Joseph, Director Campaign for Better Transport



National Association for Voluntary and Community Action











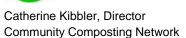




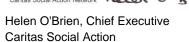
Urban Forum



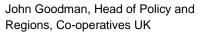














Richard Mehmed, Managing Director National Wood Recycling Project

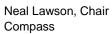














Elaine Brooks, Education Co-ordinator Gaia Partnership



Dave Sowden, Chief Executive Micropower Council



Dr Keith Tyrell, Director Pesticide Action Network UK



**Environmental Law Foundation** 





cc: Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP, Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP, Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP