



Partnership for Urban South Hampshire

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Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP
Secretary of State for Communities and
Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

5 July 2007

Dear Ms Blears

First, may I congratulate you on your appointment as Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairman of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), which comprises the city councils of Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester, the borough councils of Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Test Valley, the district councils of East Hampshire and New Forest and Hampshire County Council. PUSH is leading the delivery of a sub-regional strategy for sustainable economic growth. It is one of CLG's New Growth Point partners and is identified as one of eight 'Diamonds for Investment and Growth' in the South East of England Development Agency's Regional Economic Strategy.

PUSH's sub-regional strategy, which has been adopted into the draft South East Plan on which the Panel of Inspectors will be reporting shortly, aims for economic growth measured an increase in annual Gross Value Added (GVA) from about 2.7% currently to 3.5% by 2021-26. South Hampshire is currently under-performing compared with the rest of the South East and a step change is needed to match the regional average and for South Hampshire to contribute as it should to the UK's competitiveness in global markets. This ambitious target, which means adding over £13 billion to the South Hampshire economy, will involve creating 59,000 new jobs, particularly in knowledge-led sectors, and significant improvements in productivity and skills. At the same time, we need to address the significant pockets of multiple deprivation so that all our residents benefit from a better quality of life.

To support economic growth, including the capacity to bring people into the sub-region with the skills businesses need, we will build 80,000 new homes between 2006-26. Successful delivery depends upon securing the necessary infrastructure – particularly transport, community and environmental – to support sustainable growth. Our strategy is therefore one of managed, conditional growth, which has been

acknowledged in the selection of PUSH as a New Growth Point partnership for Growth with Government.

Clearly, as one of CLG's New Growth Points, we are keen to establish a close relationship with you and your Ministerial team, building on the very positive links we have had with outgoing Ministers. In particular, we had a very constructive meeting with Phil Woolas earlier this year to discuss MOD's review of the Portsmouth Naval Base. I am enclosing for your information a copy of the briefing documents we sent to your predecessor, Ruth Kelly, and to Phil Woolas, explaining the vital need for MOD's review to be informed by policy considerations from across Whitehall. It remains as critical as ever that the full economic and social consequences of minimisation or closure of the Portsmouth Naval Base are taken into account. An adverse decision for Portsmouth would have damaging consequences for the whole economy of South Hampshire, and would potentially set back PUSH's growth strategy by many years.

I would very much welcome the opportunity to brief you face to face on the challenges and enormous potential we have in South Hampshire. Shortly before his move to Defra, Phil Woolas accepted an invitation to visit PUSH and I do hope that you and/or one of your Ministerial team will be able to honour that commitment. I should like to extend a similar invitation to the new Minister for the South East, Jonathan Shaw MP, and I will be writing to him accordingly.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seán Woodward". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Seán Woodward
Chairman

cc Leaders of PUSH Authorities