



Partnership for Urban South Hampshire

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The Rt Hon John Healey MP
Minister for Housing and Planning
Eland House
Bressenden Place
LONDON
SW1E 5DU

31 July 2009

Dear Mr Healey

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairman of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) which comprises of 11 Local Authorities in South Hampshire; it includes the borough councils of Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Test Valley, the district councils of East Hampshire, New Forest and Winchester, the unitary councils of Portsmouth and Southampton and Hampshire County Council. PUSH is leading the delivery of a sub-regional strategy for sustainable economic growth.

The Partnership is concerned and very disappointed to receive your letter proposing a 43% cut in our Growth Fund Capital Allocation for 2010/11. This is very difficult to understand in the context of our MAA signed only 12 months previously by the Secretary of State, which committed the Government and its Agencies to work with PUSH to deliver the South Hampshire Strategy, and contained a specific 'informal duty to co-operate' with PUSH to this effect. We acknowledge that projects in South Hampshire have subsequently benefited from Kick-Start funding award announcements and we very much welcome this. However these are very specific allocations for particular projects with no flexibility for wider use, and are not in the spirit of devolution or delivery of common objectives set out in the MAA.

Growth Points were required to prepare and submit, at some expense to meet the prescriptive requirements set out by your Department, a Programme of Delivery to justify the Growth Funding we sought. The imposition of an arbitrary, uniform cut in everyones programmes rather suggests that this was a futile exercise at the taxpayers' expense.

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PUSH has used its Growth Fund allocations to support delivery of housing and growth through helping to pump prime schemes, funding feasibility and initial design work, and helping to prepare bids for programmes such as CIF, which then provide the capital funding for projects which bring forward housing and economic development. This short sighted decision to propose swingeing cuts in the Growth Fund will therefore significantly undermine Housing Delivery in the medium term.

The flexibility and ability to determine investment priorities locally has been a key part of the success of the Growth Fund. With the proposed cuts we will have to review our priorities and programme for 2010/11, and it may well be that funding for housing projects will have to be removed from our much reduced programme.

Whilst we are aware of the state of the public finances, to impose cuts in locally led, long term investment programmes is a profound mistake and I urge you to rethink this at least for the MAA areas like South Hampshire.

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 of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire

cc Grant Shapps MP, Shadow Housing Minister, House of Commons, London
Sarah Teather MP, Shadow Housing Minister, House of Commons, London
Leaders of PUSH Authorities