

2011 NEW ZEALAND PLANNING INSTITUTE CONFERENCE REPORT BACK

1. Purpose of Report

To update the Strategy and Policy Committee on attendance at the New Zealand Planning Institute conference on 29th March – 1st April 2011.

2. Executive Summary

Overall, I found it a useful conference with some stimulating speakers. I note that conference organisers did a survey of attendees organised by EnviroState and found generally that other participants also found the conference of use.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1 Receive the information*

4. Background

The New Zealand Planning Institute Conference was held in Wellington from the 29th March-1st April 2011.

Thank you to officers for attending the conference and to those on the organising committee which included Wellington City Council staff members.

The ratings from the EnviroState survey of attendees were as follows:

- On average 84% rated the International keynoters as Good/Excellent
- On average 65% rated the National keynoters as Good/Excellent
- On average 90% rated the Field Trips as Good/Excellent
- 66% rated the parallel sessions quality as Good/Excellent
- 83% rated the Conference overall as Good/Excellent
- Only 1.8% rated the Conference overall as Below Average

In Appendix One, I have included summaries from officers of some of the many workshop sessions that were held. Given I could only attend three of the nineteen sessions; I thought it might be useful for members of the committee to have access to this information as reference material given relevance of the topics covered to Council.

5. Discussion

5.1 Pre-conference workshop

Prior to the conference opening, I chaired a session for elected members on issues facing commissioners on resource consent hearings. I was ably supported by Sally Baber (a former regional councillor), John Maassen (a lawyer) and Robert Schofield (a planner).

There were only 8 participants which was a little disappointing, but this may have been down to a few factors including poor publicity, competition from other workshops, the topic being of insufficient interest to members (chosen by the Organising Committee) and low numbers of elected members actually attending the conference. Nevertheless, we had a useful discussion covering a number of issues.

The panel and I did a considerable amount of preparation to prepare for the workshop. The workshop was structured in a number of parts: one member of the panel made a DVD interviewing an experienced commissioner about some of the issues that he had faced; John Maassen updated participants on changes to the RMA since 2003 and Sally Baber led a discussion on particular issues facing elected members.

John focused on changes to the Act which now has a greater focus on efficient process than in the past. He noted that participants in the resource consent process are now starting to use their best arguments at the resource consent stage rather than waiting until the Environment Court hearing. He also talked about how commissioners now need to be accredited and the need to make informed value judgements which the Court must take into account if well-reasoned.

There was some discussion about whether commissioners should be paid more than currently. As the Committee will be aware, commissioners are only paid for the site visit, hearing and deliberations. It was felt that a lot of work is done that is not recognised like preparing for the hearing.

Sally talked about the need to leave your political hats at home. The issue of bias was well canvassed as was the difference between pre-disposition and pre-determination. Panel members stressed the need to do justice and to be transparent about the process being used. There was also some discussion around what councillors bring to the resource consent process and there was some consensus that there was no evidence to show that councillors are making bad decisions compared to independent commissioners.

The Ministry for the Environment then ran a session on whether elected members would be prepared to look at doing some training around urban

design. There was some support for this idea but questions were raised around who would pay for this training.

After the session, participants attended the Welcome reception at the Wharewaka which was a very appropriate venue for this event. There was acknowledgement of the impact that the earthquake had had on Canterbury.

5.2 Keynote speakers

There were a significant number of keynote speakers who made a number of interesting points.

5.2.1 Wellington Mayor Celia Wade-Brown

Mayor Wade-Brown opened the conference emphasising that the theme of the conference *Winds of Change* was appropriate given the challenges facing us. She emphasised the need to create a vibrant and sustainable city. She talked about the more measured response in Wellington City to earthquake strengthening since the 1980s and the success of the pre 1930s heritage demolition rules. She also stressed the need for transport choice and briefed participants on some of the new initiatives that the Council is leading on including free Wi-Fi, the Great Harbour Way and Wellington 2040.

5.2.2 Minister for the Environment the Hon Nick Smith

Minister Nick Smith also emphasised the appropriateness of the title of the conference giving the challenges presented by the Christchurch earthquake, reform of local government in Auckland with the first spatial plan and the third phase of RMA reforms. The Minister noted that the rebuilding of Christchurch will cost many billions over a number of years and acknowledged the tensions in developing the city in terms of allowing consultation vs. progress and getting right balance between heritage and public safety.

The Minister then went on to talk about the third stage of the RMA reforms which will see the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency. He also said that the Government also wanted to develop more National Policy Statements including one of Freshwater, Renewable energy and Biodiversity which has just been consulted on. He said the government would be calling for stronger leadership on emergency and hazard management, pointing out that we know a lot about liquefaction for example but haven't seen much action on this issue in the past.

The Minister also talked about the work that is being done around the document *Building Competitive Cities* but noted some that some of this work will be put aside whilst dealing with issues arising from Christchurch. He said that there was strong support for simplifying the planning process but realises that there are complexities around achieving this goal.

The Minister then had time to answer one question in relation to housing affordability. He argued that the last ten years had seen house prices at their lowest affordable level and that there was a clash between urban densification and housing affordability. If New Zealand and Australia are to be competitive

he argued, the section price needs to be competitive with Australia and local government needs to ensure a “sufficient land supply from Government”. Given the Government’s fiscal pressures, the Minister said they will not commit to build tens of thousands of homes; the solution is to make housing more affordable and to raise incomes. He said it was a core government ambition to improve housing affordability for the “average Kiwi family”.

5.2.3 Professor Leonie Sandercock

Professor Sandercock of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, discussed using multimedia tools in urban planning. She particularly focused on film as such a tool, especially its use with first peoples. She argued that in the past there has been an emphasis on expert knowledge, a change to media like film means we rely on other kinds of knowledge. She also argued that we need an expanded language for planners and planners need to have creative skills. She asked how we work inclusively with our communities but said that we are still working this out and that we need to move away from a linear mode of thinking.

She talked about the value of stories, the most ancient form of knowledge as a way of making difficult conversations possible in deeply divided communities, a way of building public policy dialogue and as a means of creating social change.

As an example, she looked at a community that she had studied called Burns Lake in Canada where there were very difficult relations between the First Peoples and Settlers who couldn’t see the effects of colonialism. She talked about how film can open up dialogue and then lead to specific actions. The film told the stories of the first peoples there. Afterwards, there was a process for people to watch the film and enter into dialogue to see how a way could be found to move forward. She ended up by saying that she wasn’t sure how effective as yet film was in terms of mobilising people and that other tools might be necessary such as visioning to make progress within a given community.

This was a useful discussion in terms of thinking about how we engage with our various communities.

5.2.4 Robert Liberty

Mr Liberty who is currently the Executive Director of the University of Oregon’s Sustainable Cities Initiative talked about the role in citizens in integrated planning. He noted that he thought that Wellington proved that you could be urbane without being big. He discussed a campaign to stop a highway through forest lands in Oregon. 1000 Friends of Oregon took the case to court and won in the State Supreme Court. Part of their campaign focused around the development of an alternative \$3m plan to the highway. He pointed out that citizen action had worked in this case. He also spoke about how Portland, Maryland and Florida had come up with plans to reduce sprawl, decrease infrastructure costs and preserve their natural environments. Portland was the most successful in achieving these aims whilst the other two saw more sprawl. Portland saw a significant decrease in CO² emissions, single family residential lots and more economic integration of communities through effective planning.

He also discussed how citizens can have a role in enforcing the law through attending proceedings, taking cases and so on. He argued that the most effective way to ensure citizen participation and certainty for developers whilst decreasing costs is to have specialised tribunals with deadlines.

5.2.5 President of the New Zealand Planning Institute address – Jane Douglas

Ms Douglas emphasised the need for planners to explain what planning is and for planners to do planning work rather than other professionals. She also stressed the need for planners to be suitably qualified.

5.2.6 Awards Ceremony

Awards were then given to various Territorial Authorities for projects carried out over the past year. Wellington City weren't awarded any this year, but I am sure next year will be different!

5.2.7 Kaiwhakahaere Mark Solomon – Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu

Mr Solomon talked about the Ngai Tahu response to the Christchurch earthquake and the role of iwi in a post settlement age. This assistance has been very wide ranging including providing volunteers to assist communities (including nurses, doctors and labourers), distributing goods and donating sizable amounts of money.

As Christchurch rebuilds, Mr Solomon sees that Ngai Tahu's role will be significant:

- Provide overall leadership in terms of the recovery effort
- Play a key role in the redesign of Christchurch as they own a lot of property there
- Help with commercial recovery by getting businesses on their feet
- Assist with environmental remediation – the multiple bottom line will be important

Mr Solomon then went on to talk about the role of iwi in the planning area in the post settlement era. He spoke about the wealth Ngai Tahu now holds (\$750 million) and that the Maori economy is now worth about \$33b. He pointed out that planners will need to get further used to dealing with Maori. He spoke about the need for public/private partnerships such as the development of a Christchurch Civic Building between Ngai Tahu and the Council which is a green building. These partnerships must be underpinned by multiple bottom lines. This means taking a holistic view of things, not putting them in compartments like Pakeha tend to do.

He talked about the future issues facing New Zealand and that the demographics show that by 2050, half of the population will be Māori, Pacific Island or of Asian extraction. He pointed out the low educational levels of some in these demographic groups and stressed the need to improve our educational standards for the benefit of all.

5.2.8 Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, the Hon Chris Finlayson

The Minister looked at the issue of co-governance in Treaty settlements. He asked whether natural resource management has to be tied to settlements and thought that this type of governance arrangement should be implemented irrespective of settlements. He pointed out that some Councils have put in place co-governance arrangements and gave the example of Greater Wellington Regional Council's Natural Resources Committee which has equal numbers of Pakeha and Maori.

The Minister then went on to say however that he was finding it of use to establish co-governance arrangements as part of the settlement process. He further argued that planning professionals need to ensure co-governance arrangements work in well with the LGA and RMA.

He said that there needed to be some general principles around governance of natural resources:

- Local Government needs to maintain sovereignty over processes governing natural resources
- Arrangements only work where Local Government supports plans and policies
- In new settlements, guidelines must be considered that will enable durable and just settlements
- Co-governance – no one size fits all model.

In response to questions, Minister Finlayson said that you need to try and meet the aspirations of iwi and can't be too rigid about the model used when asked if he had looked at what overseas models had worked in terms of settlement processes.

In terms of water allocation, Minister Finlayson referred the questioner onto Minister Smith but did say that there would be no financial assistance from central government to local government to manage these issues.

5.2.9 George Monbiot

This session attracted a great deal of interest. Mr Monbiot spoke to us by video conference in the UK where he is based due to his concerns about the impact of flying to the conference. Mr Monbiot looked at the future of energy sources and allowed time for an extensive Q&A session.

Mr Monbiot acknowledged the tragedy in Japan but still argued that if we have to choose between coal and nuclear power that we should choose the latter given the catastrophic impacts of climate change. However, this did not mean that he thought nuclear power unproblematic.

Mr Monbiot then looked at the future of renewables which he is fully committed to. He acknowledged their problems however saying that they were intermittent, had significant visual impacts and that large amounts of storage capacity are needed. The question is then where to build such capacity. None

of these renewable options are simple or cheap. He argued that we need less consumption. He noted that he would like to see more off-shore wind farms but seemed to say that climate change does not give us the luxury of time and that we might have to curtail democratic rights to get the change we need.

In terms of climate change, he argued that people are prone to denial which is why the deniers get traction in the media and that climate change was hard to deal with as we won't face the consequences immediately.

Mr Monbiot then took a large number of questions. He said firstly that he was critical of emission trading schemes as they allow rich countries to think that they can pay for their sins by paying for credits from poorer countries. He argued that poorer countries will be hit hardest and first by climate change.

He was critical of air travel as it is so energy intensive and cancels out energy savings we might make at home.

He was also critical of local power generation seeing that a large national grid is preferable given the efficiencies of scale. He argued that there wouldn't be much shortage of fossil fuels in the future. Bad fossil fuels are potentially plentiful in supply, for example coal sands and bitumen which make petrol look good by comparison. He lamented that there was so much roading expansion planned for this country and thought we needed many more coaches for long distances and video conferencing for even longer distances. He also believes that potential nuclear technologies will be a lot safer in the future.

He stressed the need for dense urban form to reduce the need to travel and that to look at reducing consumption on the demand side; we need to look at a steady state economy as advocated by Herman Daly and co instead of a capitalist system which relies on continual growth.

5.2.10 Professor Ed Blakely

Mr Blakely came with some impressive credentials in terms of emergency management. He is currently Professor of Urban Policy at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney but before that ran the recovery operation in New Orleans after Katrina amongst others. Professor Blakely noted that the biggest lesson to learn from his experience in New Orleans was to prepare for a disaster, those who don't suffer the most. He argued that we will have more disasters and that they will be bigger and deeper in the Pacific, particularly with the effects of climate change. Professor Blakely pointed out that we used to build away from rivers and harbours but 200 years of benign climate had mean that we now build right up to the edge of them.

Professor Blakeley warned against moving too fast after a disaster, moving carefully is more important as well as thinking about a new future. He said that governments often argued that we should rebuild on the existing site where the disaster occurred, but he questioned whether this was the right approach. He also said that the worst damage was done immediately post disaster. Professor Blakely disagreed with George Monbiot that centralised services are the best, decentralised ones are better from an emergency preparedness he said.

Professor Blakeley stressed the need to repair ecosystems as well after a disaster. He also said that his key learning from New Orleans was not to repopulate all at once but in stages. He also talked about how small businesses are the backbone of the economy and that these businesses have short and long term needs which need to be met such as access to capital, centralised information and new investment.

He also talked about the need to build a new economy, seeing tourism as a weak basis for economic growth as people will move on, other areas like universities or health services generate more wealth as people use them for longer. He talked about needing new models of financing such as TIF and integrated facilities to improve a sense of community, safe buildings are not enough, we need safe neighbourhoods and safe communities.

Roger Blakeley from Auckland City Council gave the final keynote speech on the rebuilding of Christchurch. I was unfortunately not able to be present given I had committed to a meeting with the mayor and people external to Council some months before.

5.3 Workshops

There were three workshop sessions throughout the conference. I attended three sessions out of the 19. Summaries of content of the other workshops have been kindly provided by officers for reference by councillors if interested in a particular topic.

5.3.1 Session A- Urban Planning

There were two speakers for this session looking at urban design and funding models for urban development.

Ian Munro (Urbanism Plus) and Lee Beattie (University of Auckland) argued that on the face of it, urban design is in a good place. The Urban Design Protocol has been successful, the discipline is taken seriously in court, a number of universities offer it at post-graduate level and many projects have benefited from experts in the field contributing to them.

There are some problems however. More people than ever are claiming to be urban designers and there is no consistent methodology or approach that these professionals use. They argued that there has been a shift away from clear outcomes to process for its own sake for example, the development of frameworks. They emphasised that for urban design to be taken seriously it needs to be made clear who is an urban designer and who isn't. Regulators need specific rules; not high level statements of what urban design is. They then gave a brief history of planning and asked where have the skills of city making gone? Have the architects and surveyors taken over? They noted the need for designers to take a longer term focus – say 100 years, much longer than currently.

They argued that we need to find a common language between professions and whose skills are the most important in a given project. We also need to think

about what a NZ urbanism is, rather than relying on a American/European model.

Joe Langley from Sinclair Knight Mertz Sydney talked about funding strategies for urban renewal, in particular TIF (Tax Increment Funding). He argued that we need a more mature model than that has been used before, the old funding sources are inadequate and that they are subject to political cycles.

He explained that TIF is a value capture method where the value of the tax base is estimated and any increase in rates as a result of development and investment are captured as bonds to pay for infrastructure. He pointed out that TIF requires long term planning, that you need to have a defined district, that you must plan projects with private developers, that the district revenue increases pay for improvements and only for pre-determined improvements. You also need to have a TIF District Plan. The funds can be used for studies, professional services, site acquisition, rehabilitation of buildings and so on.

Mr Langley showed how Chicago had used TIF to fund developments like Millennium Park, the Theatre District and had seen impressive increases in revenue of around \$1b. He pointed out that New Orleans had used TIF as a disaster recovery method as well.

He then looked at some of the strengths and weaknesses of the TIF model:

Strengths

- Improved co-ordination between public and private sector
- Ability to spread costs over time and improve intergenerational equity
- Locally controlled funding source

Weaknesses

- Risk of moving investment from one area to another
- Complex model
- Encourages communities to take on more debt
- Requires legal changes to establish bond market

Mr Langley concluded that the positives of this model outweighed the negatives by a significant margin.

5.3.2 Session B - Natural Hazards and Climate Change

This session had four parts and was of a technical nature but was still useful.

Kim Wright (GNS Science) and Stefan Reese (NIWA) posed some interesting questions about where we should build and intensify. They stressed the need for policy makers to make robust decisions based on scientific data before deciding on plans and resource consent applications.

They outlined the benefits of Riskscape, a tool free to TAs and government agencies run jointly by GNS Science and NIWA. The model combines assets

like buildings and infrastructure with models which give information about vulnerability and hazards. This model then can give further information about risks associated with various events including earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and so on with the aim of mitigating the effects of these events. Information can be shared in a number of ways including maps, Google earth projections, PDF reports and so on. Results can be revealed in mesh blocks, suburbs or areas defined by the organisation. A great deal of work has been put into this model and they are now at the developing of a prototype stage. Below is a table showing how it works:



In the future, the model will be able to evaluate information around climate change and its potential for damage, as well as landslide and coastal erosion hazards. This is an interesting tool which will hopefully be further refined to give us even better information.

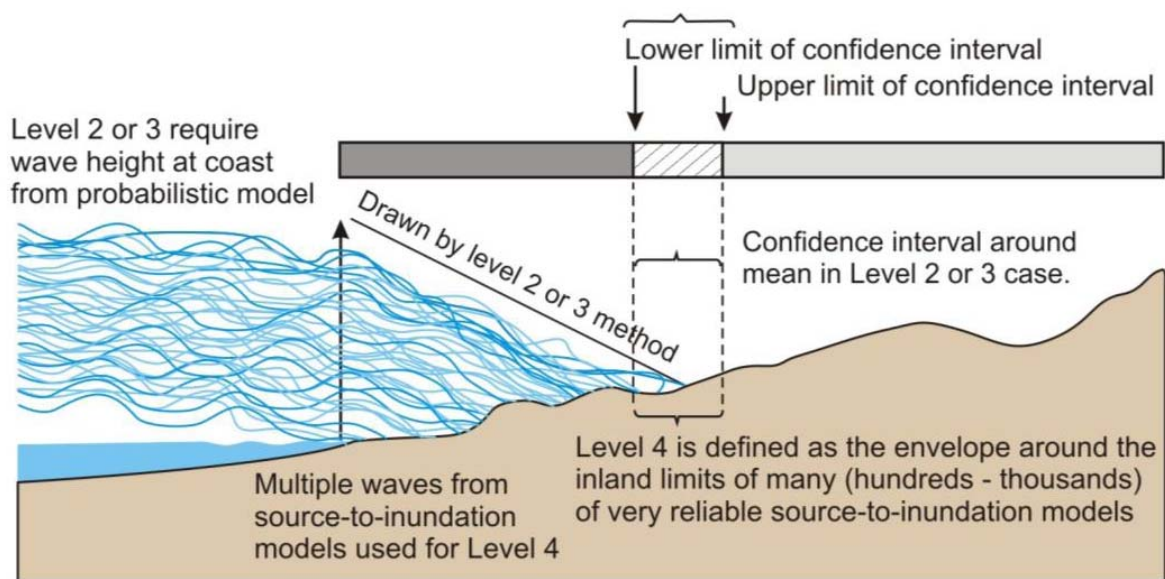
Drs Abigail Harding and Felicity Powell from Opus looked at pedestrian traffic as an indicator of urban recovery, in this case after the Christchurch earthquake. There weren't any surprising facts from their research. It showed a significant decrease in pedestrian counts between the 2010 September earthquake and February 2011 one. They tried both using automatic counters and people and found each method had its advantages and disadvantages. The automatic counters cost around \$1500 + installation and maintenance costs. The disadvantages are that there is no context to the count and that external factors like the weather are not taken into account. On the other hand, this method is quick, simple and cheap.

Wendy Saunders from GNS Science spoke next. She spoke about the development of a guideline which will have no statutory standing but hopes to inform how to better integrate tsunami inundation into land use planning to

reduce risks. Wendy argued that in the past there has been a focus on emergency management rather than risk reduction. However tragic events over the past few years have raised awareness around the risks tsunamis pose to this country.

Then Ms Saunders outlined the elements of the guideline. These include a decision making tree for planners on how to evaluate tsunami risk when making land use decisions. The process involves modelling, risk assessment, evaluation of the data and then inclusion into relevant documentation including district plans and LIMs.

Ms Saunders also discussed different tsunami modelling levels from very simple ones to more complex ones for identifying tsunami risk areas. Then she went on to explain how you can map uncertainty into planning. This is commonly done for other hazards but not tsunamis as yet. She gave some graphic examples of how this could be done:



Wendy finished off her presentation looking at some of the regulatory and non-regulatory approaches for dealing with tsunami risk. Most of these were common sense measures including avoiding new development in risky areas and ensuring that information about risk is included on LIMs, restoring natural barriers like dunes, wetlands and so on.

Barbara Bedeschi from AECOM rounded off the discussion by analysing how there is a need to direct investment to protect buildings and infrastructure against climate change. Knowledge of adaption methods is critical. She argued that in the past TAs have tended to concentrate on protecting against flooding and identifying climate change risk but not how to adapt. Ms Bedeschi persuasively argued that if we are to effectively guard against climate change that we must boost our capacity at a Council level to meet these challenges.

Ms Bedeschi discussed a particular case study using stochastic modelling methodology. This is a methodology which uses a random variable for evaluating the probability of certain outcomes in particular times. AECOM was employed by the Australian Department of Climate Change to do an economic

analysis of the effects of climate change on the Narrabeen Lagoon in Sydney. The focus on the study was willingness to pay rather than the method of cost avoidance which is generally used. Given the huge uncertainties around climate change probability methods were used to evaluate these impacts. The advantage of this approach was that it gave more accurate costs of adaptation (cost avoidance methods have been found to underestimate costs). Extreme value analysis was used to more accurately predict the more extreme weather events predicted. There were also attempts to model the best time to implement measures over a particular time frame.

Ms Bedeschi acknowledged the difficulties in quantifying the benefits of adapting to climate change. She then went on to look at how such a model could be applied to Wellington City. Examples were estimating the damage done to infrastructure from rising sea levels. She concluded by saying that adaptation measures were beneficial, even if climate change was not taken into account.

5.3.3 Session C - Natural Hazards – Christchurch Earthquake (sponsored by WCC)

This session featured 3 speakers looking at the recovery process in Christchurch. These were all useful background sessions, although some of the information was not so relevant to Wellington.

Shannon Richardson (Tonkin & Taylor) focused on the known risk of liquefaction in Canterbury prior to the two earthquakes and the damage done to the region. He then took us through the considerable work programme done after the September quake but before the February one. The interesting part was looking at some of the challenges presented which included the obvious scale of the job involving a large area with a number of parties, working with various stakeholders which included the City Council, Environment Canterbury, HPT, EQC, Doc and others, balancing public vs. private rights and speed of work done vs. the amount of public participation possible.

In his view, important lessons learned were how to manage liquefaction risk better and to build communities that were more resilient. The Royal Commission of Enquiry into why some buildings collapsed will also be an important learning opportunity. He also argued that there would be many opportunities with the re-development of the city centre and suburbs and that a new approach to urban design was needed.

Dr Jenkins (Environment Canterbury) pointed out that the risk of liquefaction shouldn't have been new to the public; much work had been done around the region's susceptibility. He discussed four main ways to reduce the risk of the effects of liquefaction which include obviously not building on sites susceptible to it, stabilising the ground, designing the foundations better or building buildings so that they could resist ground movement more effectively. He ended by talking about the opportunities that the quake had given us to learn about how to manage earthquakes better from an engineering and planning perspective.

He posed questions about whether there were areas that should not be built on or remediated? He pointed out that liquefaction is not included in many codes and that it was a major challenge for the planning profession to deal with this issue.

The final speaker (Heike Lulay, Waimakariri District Council) looked at the experience of Kaiapoi which has severely impacted by the Christchurch quake, especially the one in September. Liquefaction, lateral spread and subsidence all had a significant impact on buildings, the transport network and public spaces. She talked about the New Foundations programme instituted after the September quake to look at how to rebuild the town. They have had a Town Centre Plan since 2008 but decided that they needed to move more quickly to implement it even if it wasn't perfect. They moved into wide public consultation after the September event.

Lessons learned were to keep everyone informed and get buy in early on, dedicated staff were necessary to run the project and that ensuring decision making processes were robust and transparent was critical. Finally, Ms Lulay emphasised that there was need to be flexible and adaptable and that team work is also very important.

5.4 Day trip and conference dinner

I was unfortunately not able to attend the site visit but did go to the conference dinner which was a useful chance for people to network and to thank all those who had contributed to making the conference a success.

6. Conclusion

I appreciate the Council giving me the opportunity to attend this conference. It was useful to have the opportunity to listen to the international keynote speakers who provided a number of thought provoking insights into significant planning issues.

I take this opportunity to once again thank the organising committee and Council staff that made the summary notes.

(Report prepared by Councillor Iona Pannett)