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Localism Bill and planning

Date of statement 10 November 2010

Type Written

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr Eric Pickles):

On 6 July 2010, the Coalition Government revoked all regional strategies under section 79(6) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. This action was challenged in the High Court by developer Cala Homes, and the decision today concluded that Section 79 powers could not be used to revoke all Regional Strategies in their entirety.

Whilst respecting the court's decision this ruling changes very little. Later this month, the Coalition Government will be introducing the Localism Bill to Parliament, which will sweep away the last Government's controversial regional strategies. It is clear that top-down targets do not build homes - they have just led to the lowest peacetime house building rates since 1924, and have fuelled resentment in the planning process that has slowed everything down.

On 27 May 2010, the Government wrote to local planning authorities and to the Planning Inspectorate informing them of the Coalition Government's intention to rapidly abolish regional strategies and setting out its expectation that the letter should be taken into account as a material planning consideration in any decisions they were currently taking. That advice still stands.

Today, the Government's Chief Planner has written to all local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate confirming that they should have regard to this material consideration in any decisions they are currently taking.

Moreover, to illustrate the clear policy direction of the Coalition Government, the proposed clause of the Localism Bill that will enact our commitment to abolish regional strategies is being placed in the Library. The Bill is expected to begin its passage through Parliament before Christmas.

We are determined to return decision-making powers in housing and planning to local authorities and the communities they serve, alongside powerful incentives so that people see the benefits of building. We will very shortly provide more details about one of the most important such incentives - the New Homes Bonus Scheme, which will come into effect from April. This means that new homes delivered now will be rewarded under the

scheme.


The Coalition Government remains firmly resolved to scrap the last Government's imposition of confusing and bureaucratic red tape. This was a clear commitment made in the Coalition Agreement and in the general election manifestoes of both Coalition parties. We intend to deliver on it.

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