



House of Commons
Communities and Local
Government Committee

Coastal Towns

Second Report of Session 2006–07

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Second Report of Session 2006–07

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Summary

The Government has no specific policy or initiatives for coastal towns, based upon the premise that coastal towns are too diverse to warrant such an approach. The diversity of coastal towns is evident if you contrast an area such as Brighton, with its buoyant and diverse economy, with Margate, marked by its physical isolation and relative deprivation. Our analysis has identified that a 'one size fits all' approach to coastal towns would be inappropriate given this diversity, however, we believe there are specific areas where Government needs to act to ensure that coastal towns are not neglected.

Our analysis has identified a number of common characteristics shared by many coastal towns. These include: their physical isolation, deprivation levels, the inward migration of older people, the high levels of transience, the outward migration of young people, poor quality housing and the nature of the coastal economy. Excluding their physical location, none of these characteristics are unique to coastal towns. The combination of these characteristics, however, with the environmental challenges that coastal towns face, does lead to a conclusion that they are in need of focused, specific Government attention.

We were particularly struck by the demography of many coastal towns, where there is a combination of trends occurring, including the outward movement of young people and the inward migration of older people. One of the impacts of this phenomenon is that there tends to be a high proportion of elderly in coastal towns, many of whom have moved away from family support resulting in a significant financial burden on the local public sector in these areas.

During our visit to Margate, we learnt about the challenges public services faced in providing adequate support for vulnerable adults and children who had been placed in the area by other authorities. Witnesses suggested there was insufficient communication from placing authorities and stressed the difficulties that this caused. The Government needs to take action to reduce the number of out of area placements and to ensure that when children are placed out of their local area there is improved communication between authorities.

Housing in many coastal towns appears to be characterised by a dual economy, with high house prices, often fuelled by inward migration and second homes, alongside a large, low-quality private rented sector. A large proportion of the accommodation in the private rented sector is composed of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Large numbers of HMOs can present difficulties for the regeneration of an area, as their poor physical condition can put off investors. Many people that live in HMOs often stay on a short-term basis, which can make it difficult to get resident support for local regeneration projects. Actions to reduce the volume and improve the quality of HMOs are therefore often necessary in areas where there are large numbers.

A number of coastal towns suffer from deprivation and their economic regeneration is of critical importance. Tourism continues to be an important industry in many areas, especially in traditional seaside resorts. The Government needs to adopt a national approach to promote and support seaside tourism. The economies of coastal towns can not, however, rely on tourism alone to be economically successful; and there is a role for economic diversification strategies to provide opportunities for local people to work in a range of industries.

The Government has conducted no research into the situation of coastal towns in recent

years, nor did we receive any evidence demonstrating that there was any action or liaison between departments specifically on coastal towns. There is a need for Government departments to develop an understanding of the situation of coastal towns and work together to address the broad range of common challenges that these towns face.

1 Introduction

National policy context

1. No settlement in England is more than 70 miles from the coast.¹ The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (see figure 1) show that many coastal areas suffer from high levels of deprivation, and that this is not a phenomenon limited to inner-city areas. Many coastal towns also face specific environmental challenges arising from coastal erosion and climate change.

2. Our task in this inquiry has been to examine current Government policy affecting English coastal towns. There is no specific national strategy or policy framework for coastal towns or coastal communities. Coastal towns are affected by a range of policies administered by many Government departments.

3. The Government has stated that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) “leads on coastal policy”.² That, apparently, is a reference to DEFRA’s responsibilities for flood and coastal erosion risk in England.³ DEFRA also has departmental responsibility for implementing the Government’s policy on the spatial planning system for the sea and coast. The Government intends, through the introduction of a Marine Bill, to rationalise the spatial planning system, as currently there are a number of different policies and decision-making structures for coastal areas.⁴

4. In its evidence, the Government also outlined a range of policies and legislation within the remit of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that affect coastal towns (though not specific to coastal towns). These included:

- neighbourhood renewal;
- the Housing Act 2004, and
- the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative.⁵

5. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has lead responsibility for tourism and heritage; areas significant to many coastal towns, particularly in traditional seaside resorts where tourism is the dominant industry.

6. Other central Government departments with policy remits relevant to coastal towns include:

- the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), which has lead policy responsibility for the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs); these in turn are responsible for economic development and regeneration within their regions, including for coastal towns;

¹ Ev 22, *Coastal Town: Written Evidence*, HC 1023-II of Session 2005-06 (hereafter HC 1023-II)

² Ev 167, HC 1023-II

³ See www.defra.gov.uk Flood and Coastal Risk Management

⁴ Ev 168, HC 1023-II

⁵ Ev 169, HC 1023-II

- the Department of Health (DoH), in relation to the demographic profile of many coastal towns;
- the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), in relation to skills and attainment levels, and
- the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), with its responsibilities for the benefit system.

Our inquiry

7. We published our terms of reference and issued a call for evidence in December 2005. We received 66 memoranda and held five oral evidence sessions between June and October 2006. We thank all those who contributed to our inquiry by providing evidence or more informally during our visits to the coastal towns of Exmouth, Whitstable, Margate and Hastings. We are particularly grateful to our two specialist advisers for this inquiry, Helen Hayes, Joint Managing Director at a specialist urban regeneration and planning consultancy, Urban Practitioners, and Professor Fred Robinson of Durham University.

8. Throughout our report the term ‘coastal towns’ refers to English coastal towns, unless otherwise stated. There is no standard definition of English coastal towns for either policy-makers or practitioners: within the evidence we received, different bodies, including Government departments, use a variety of definitions.⁶ The implications of this are discussed in paragraph 104. Our inquiry has sought to consider coastal towns in the broadest sense, including both small and large scale urban settlements on the coast. The adoption of a limited definition at the start of our inquiry could have risked excluding relevant evidence. We have, however, deliberately excluded consideration of the Government’s ports policy as this has recently been examined by the House of Commons Transport Committee in its inquiry – *The Ports Industry in England and Wales*.⁷

⁶ Ev 166, HC 1023-II

⁷ Transport Committee, Second Report of Session 2006-07, *The Ports Industry in England and Wales*, HC 61-I

**Figure 1: England – Average Score District Level
Summary of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004**

2 The characteristics of coastal towns

The diversity and commonality of coastal towns

9. The size and characteristics of settlements on the coast vary considerably: there are small rural towns and villages, traditional ‘seaside resorts’, and sites of industrial activity. Many witnesses commented on the risks inherent in any generalisation about coastal towns, given their differing social and economic profiles. Professor Fothergill stated that “there is clearly a huge difference between [...] a Great Yarmouth or a Skegness or a Thanet, where there is clear evidence of labour market difficulty, and, on the other hand [...] Bournemouth [...], where there is evidence of the strength of the labour market”.⁸ The economic diversity of coastal towns can be seen in the variety of levels of deprivation experienced. For example, Blackpool is ranked as the 24th most deprived out of 354 local authority areas nationwide while the relatively prosperous coastal town of Bognor Regis is ranked 279th.⁹ The Government and the RDAs both recognise this diversity.¹⁰ The Government argued that there are many differences between coastal towns, including their “size, the impact of regional and historic contexts and different patterns of economic development. It is therefore difficult to generalise about places ranging from Bournemouth and Brighton to Skegness and St Ives.”¹¹

10. Nevertheless, there tend “to be some common features shared by coastal towns”.¹² Economic diversity does not negate the fact that coastal towns account for a disproportionately high percentage of England’s deprived areas. As the Government told us, “twenty-one of the 88 most deprived authorities are in coastal areas”.¹³ The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) reports that nine out of ten of the South East’s most deprived wards are in coastal towns or cities.¹⁴ Our evidence has also highlighted other commonalities including:

- physical and social isolation;¹⁵
- high proportions of older people together with higher levels of outward migration among young people;¹⁶
- low-wage, low-skill economies and seasonality of employment;¹⁷
- frequent dependency on a single industry, and¹⁸

⁸ Q 103

⁹ Ev 175, HC 1023-II

¹⁰ Ev 166, 15, HC 1023-II

¹¹ Ev 166, HC 1023-II

¹² Ev 15, HC 1023-II

¹³ Ev 166, HC 1023-II

¹⁴ Ev 25, HC 1023-II

¹⁵ Ev 166 and 14 respectively, HC 1023-II. See for example Q 46, 139

¹⁶ Ev 14, 47, 98, HC 1023-II. See for example Q 16, 138

¹⁷ Ev 96, HC 1023-II

¹⁸ Ev 14, HC 1023-II. See also Beatty, Christina, Fothergill, Stephen, *The Seaside Economy, the final report of the seaside towns research project* Sheffield Hallam University, June 2003, p. 105, (hereafter the *Seaside Economy*)

- a high incidence of poor housing conditions and a high proportion of private rented homes.¹⁹

Physical isolation

11. One obvious feature of all coastal towns is that they are next to the sea. This can be an asset, providing economic and social opportunities such as employment in fishing, shipping and ports. Several witnesses, however, commented on the detrimental consequences of physical isolation and that this is often a barrier to economic growth. Three interrelated issues were raised regarding physical isolation: poor transport infrastructure, the 180-degree hinterland and the difficult topography found in many coastal towns, often characterised by steep hills and river estuaries.

12. The New Economics Foundation (NEF) argued that poor transport infrastructure “hinders businesses that are dependent on efficient logistics to access [...] markets.”²⁰ Others suggested that it is a handicap for tourism in particular.²¹ Thanet District Council, for instance, pointed out that from London it takes the same length of time to get to York by rail as to Ramsgate, despite York being three times as far away.²² Devon County Council argued that by making it harder for people to access jobs or medical help or to see family and friends, poor transport infrastructure acted as a barrier to economic and social inclusion.²³ In contrast, the British Resorts and Destinations Association (BRADA) provided an example of good transport links promoting economic growth. It argued, for instance, “the thing [...] driving Brighton is the fact that it has a fast rail link”.²⁴ Secondly, the 180-degree hinterland effectively halves the catchment area for businesses in coastal towns compared to that of businesses located inland, thus reducing their natural customer base.²⁵ Thirdly, some witnesses, including Devon County Council pointed out that as coastal towns were often situated on river estuaries and surrounded on either side by steep hills, their local topography limited the amount of land suitable for development and as such put land prices at a premium.²⁶ It was also noted that the fact that many coastal towns included or had nearby areas of land protected for reasons of ecological or historical significance could increase the difficulties associated with development.²⁷ Development constraints in coastal towns were also recognised by the English RDAs.²⁸ **The physical isolation of many coastal towns is often a significant barrier to economic growth, development and regeneration.**

Coastal management

13. Several witnesses drew attention to the risks to which coastal communities are exposed as a consequence of climate change - rising sea levels, more frequent and more

¹⁹ Ev 97, HC 1023-II

²⁰ Ev 23, HC 1023-II

²¹ Q 172, Ev 39, HC 1023-II

²² Ev 46, HC 1023-II. See also Ev 23, 40, 60, 61, 68, 102, 114, 118, and 152, HC 1023-II. See also Annex D

²³ Ev 104, HC 1023-II. See also Ev 9, HC 1023-II

²⁴ Q 139

²⁵ Q 172

²⁶ Ev 102, HC 1023-II

²⁷ Q 3, Ev 10, HC 1023-II

²⁸ Ev 14, HC 1023-II

severe flooding, coastline erosion and increased frequency and intensity of storms.²⁹ According to the Environment Agency “by 2080 the UK could be facing major flood events once every three years compared to every one hundred years in the past”, putting one million people in coastal communities and £120 billions worth of infrastructure at risk.³⁰

14. The severity of these risks is not uniform around the coastline. Some areas face significant levels of risk: the Environment Agency told us that areas such as “the Humber or at Happisburgh or around the Essex coast” would be “in the frontline of the impacts of climate change”.³¹ It also stated that flood risk will rise by at least 30% around our southern and eastern coasts.³²

15. Risk exposure to coastal flooding and erosion can be mitigated by sea defences, but the quality of flood defences varies: in London, for instance, there is a one in a 1000 year risk of flooding overcoming flood defences but along other parts of the coast that may have a naturally lower level of risk, the risk might be one in 50 because of the poorer flood defences.³³

16. In some areas however, as the Environment Agency pointed out, it simply may “not be viable to provide coastal protection, either due to engineering limits or cost” and that “retreating to historic coastlines even in developed areas will in some places be the only sustainable option”.³⁴ The result is that in some areas residents face the loss of their homes. The Government has recognised the increasing risks of flooding and coastline erosion which threaten some coastal communities and acknowledged the considerable concern that has been expressed on the fairness of decisions to defend some coastal communities, using public funds, and not to defend others.³⁵ In some areas, particularly those areas subject to aggressive coastal erosion, the Environment Agency highlighted the need for long-term, possibly innovative, adaptation solutions. It told us “what preys heavily on people is compensation for their property”, and that “there may be a case for recognising the current generation’s special needs in grants and social support where individuals are affected”.³⁶

17. The Government has already taken some steps to address the increased risk exposure of coastal communities resulting from climate change. The Environment Agency is considering a range of options to manage the relocation of coastal communities where coastal defence may not be viable; these include innovative solutions, such as “creating local housing trusts or facilitating local planning authorities to buy up freeholds to endangered property and allow residents to rent them back at a reduced market rate until they must be relocated”.³⁷ In January 2007, the Government announced funding for six pilot projects responding to flood and coastal erosion risk.³⁸ DEFRA is planning to launch

²⁹ Ev 10, 30, 53, 83, 84, 106, 137, 167, HC 1023-II

³⁰ Ev 156, HC 1023-II, based on Future Flooding, Foresight Programme, DTI, 2004 and Q 389

³¹ Q 388

³² Ev 156, HC 1023-II

³³ Q 389

³⁴ Ev 118 and Ev 158, HC 1023-II respectively

³⁵ Shoreline Management Plans, www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/policy/smp.htm

³⁶ Q 391 and Ev 118

³⁷ Ev 118

³⁸ *New pilots announced to push policy on flooding and coastal erosion*, DEFRA News Release 3/07, 4 January 2007 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/070104a.htm>

an “adaptation toolkit” in late 2007.³⁹ **Some coastal communities face significant and increasing risks from coastal erosion and flooding. We welcome the Government’s consideration of adaptation measures and the launch of pilot projects. We are concerned, however, that the pace of Government action is too slow to meet the needs of those coastal communities where coastal erosion is at its most aggressive and that delay can only increase social injustice and uncertainty for those communities. We recommend that the Government, as a matter of urgency, put in place a fair and transparent national approach to coastal adaptation for communities threatened by the consequences of climate change.**

18. The Environment Agency called for improvements in the planning system to reduce and manage the risk of coastal flooding and erosion for existing settlements and new coastal developments, in particular commenting on Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs).⁴⁰ SMPs are non-statutory plans that provide a “strategic assessment of the threat to the coast and coastal towns from flooding and erosion”, now over a 100-year horizon, and include recommendations for managing this risk, including the option not to defend parts of the coast if they are not viable.⁴¹

19. SMPs are drawn up by area-specific coastal groups, covering a number of local authority areas, and are composed of maritime district local authorities and other bodies.⁴² While the Environment Agency acknowledged that in practice many local planning authorities incorporated SMPs into their strategic development plans, it pointed to instances where this had not been the case, such as in North Norfolk, where the local district council has opposed adoption of the plan owing to local opposition.⁴³ It is understandably politically difficult for any individual local council to adopt a plan that acknowledges that it is not viable to maintain comprehensive coastal protection and that some people will lose their homes. The Environment Agency told us that SMPs should therefore be made statutory, giving them “equal weighting in development planning with other statutory plans”.⁴⁴ The impact of this would be to assist coastal authorities to take the strategic, long-term planning decisions that are needed, as there would be a statutory obligation for the authorities to take the SMPs into account. We conclude that SMPs should be made statutory to enable difficult but vitally necessary decisions to be made. **We welcome the use of Shoreline Management Plans which are a useful tool for managing development and coastal flooding and erosion risk. The Government should make Shoreline Management Plans statutory to strengthen their use in the planning process. This will ensure that adequate account is taken of coastal flooding and erosion risk.**

20. Since the Environment Agency presented its evidence, the Government has published a new Planning Policy Statement (PPS25) on ‘Development and Flood Risk’.⁴⁵ The Government stated that this “strengthens and clarifies policy that flood risk should be taken

³⁹ *Making space for water, Developing a Broader Portfolio of Options to Deliver Flooding and Coastal Solutions*, DEFRA: Making Space for Water Programme. www.defra.gov.uk/enviro/fcd/policy/strategy/sd2.htm

⁴⁰ Ev 116

⁴¹ Ev 156, HC 1023-II

⁴² Ev 156, HC 1023-II

⁴³ Ev 116

⁴⁴ Ev 116

⁴⁵ *Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk*, Department for Communities and Local Government. Published on 7 December 2006, alongside the new Town and Country Planning (Flooding) (England) Direction 2007 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1504640>

into account at all stages of the planning process.”⁴⁶ PPS25 specifies the Environment Agency as a statutory consultee on all relevant planning applications and introduces further scrutiny arrangements for major developments.⁴⁷ PPS25 also enshrines a “sequential test” to avoid the development of land at risk of flooding.⁴⁸ **We welcome the measures within the Planning Policy Statement 25 that give greater weight to consideration of flood risk in the planning process.**

21. The British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) argued that it is important to ensure that investment in sea defences is linked to the wider regeneration of the area to ensure that economic and social benefits are maximised. This might involve effective sequencing of work, for example by carrying out sea defence work prior to significant investment in public realm infrastructure projects. BURA suggested that such integrated planning had not always been the case and that previously there had been a tendency for the Environment Agency to think “in terms of engineering for flood defences”, although there does now seem to be a more strategic approach on the part of the Environment Agency.⁴⁹ The Environment Agency confirmed that regeneration was one factor in decisions regarding sea defence investment and it stressed that deriving “multiple benefits” was its “guiding principle”.⁵⁰ Indeed, its cost benefit analyses included consideration of social and environmental outcomes. **It is important that investment in sea defences is linked to the regeneration of coastal areas, and we welcome the steps now taken by the Environment Agency to ensure that the social and economic implications of sea defences works are considered at the outset and that the work contributes to the improvement of the public realm. We urge the Department for Communities and Local Government to work more closely with the Environment Agency and other bodies to ensure that opportunities for regeneration of coastal towns, afforded by investment in sea defences, are realised.**

22. The Environment Agency also called for better information to be provided to future generations wanting to live in existing coastal settlements. It called for potential homeowners to be made aware of the risks associated with climate change, including the possibility that their tenure may only be temporary, at the point at which local authority searches are carried out on new purchases.⁵¹ The Environment Agency has been tasked by the Government to produce coastal erosion risk maps and make them available in the public domain in the same way that flood risk maps already are. This is due to take place by the end of 2008.⁵² Homebuyers will then be able to make an informed choice about purchasing a property. **We agree with the Environment Agency that the information provided to those considering purchasing a property in a coastal area must draw attention to the risks arising from flooding and coastal erosion, and therefore welcome the Government’s intention for coastal erosion risk maps to be available in the public domain in 2008 on a similar basis to existing flood risk maps.**

⁴⁶ *Ensuring Appropriate Development in Flood Risk Areas*, Department for Communities and Local Government News Release, 2006/0164, 7 December 2006. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2310>

⁴⁷ Introduced on 1 October 2006. Environment Agency, Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS 25), www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/pps25_1657913.pdf

⁴⁸ Environment Agency, Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS 25), www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/pps25_1657913.pdf

⁴⁹ Q 279

⁵⁰ Q 384

⁵¹ Ev 118

⁵² *Making Space for Water Risk Mapping: Coastal Erosion*, DEFRA ; <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/policy/strategy/ha4b.htm>

Demographics

23. Several witnesses drew attention to a range of demographic trends in coastal towns. These include: the inward migration of older people and those of working age, high levels of transient and vulnerable people, and the outward migration of young people. The net impact of these individual demographic trends is to leave many coastal towns with a higher than average older population and lower proportion of their population in the first half of their working age. Statistics provided by the Government showed that 29 out of the 31 coastal towns sampled had a lower proportion of their population aged 16-44 years than the English average.⁵³

Inward migration

24. Several witnesses highlighted the large number of older people who move to the coast to retire. This phenomenon can bring benefits to these communities. As Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone pointed out, retired older people can make a positive contribution to their new communities. It also indicated that there were opportunities to design high-quality services that meet their needs, for example the use of state of the art technology to enhance independent living.⁵⁴

25. As BRADA explained, however, the issue for public services is not the number of retired people *per se* but “the fact that they are creating, down the line, a much greater elderly population”.⁵⁵ It argued that elderly people in coastal towns may place additional pressures on services, beyond those that might be expected had those people remained in their original area of residency, because they have moved away from family support networks.⁵⁶ Several witnesses supported this and argued that the elderly population in coastal towns consequently place particular additional demands on health and social services, for instance, upon the local residential care sector though their greater dependency upon care home provision.⁵⁷ **The inward migration of older people to coastal towns can bring benefits but it also places significant additional demands on public services, particularly in the areas of health and social care.**

26. It is not simply retired people who are moving to the coast. In their report on the *Seaside Economy*, Professor Fothergill and Christina Beatty found that in the 43 principal seaside towns, the average growth in the working age population had been in excess of 20 per cent between 1971 and 2001. Their analysis also indicates that this growth is attributable to inward migration rather than an increase in the indigenous population.⁵⁸ Professor Fothergill also highlighted “an inflow particularly of people [...] in the second half of their working lives – from 35, 40 upwards”.⁵⁹ He told us that this inward migration results in a situation where “the balance between the available supply of labour and the supply of jobs is still seriously out of kilter”.⁶⁰ This is because people tend to move to the

⁵³ Ev 175, HC 1023-II. The Mid-Year Population Estimates 2003, by Broad Age Band 16-44 years, showed that the English average was 40.4.

⁵⁴ National Coastal Futures Symposium: The Report, 18th – 19th July 2006, Royal Renaissance Hotel Skegness, October 2006. Unprinted paper from the Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone

⁵⁵ Q 138

⁵⁶ Q 138

⁵⁷ Ev 1, 30, 37, 47, 98, 145, 149, HC 1023-II.

⁵⁸ Q 60

⁵⁹ Q 92

⁶⁰ Q 91

seaside because they want to live there rather than because of specific employment opportunities, so it can be a contributory factor to high unemployment levels.⁶¹ The *Seaside Economy* report suggests that a proportion of the inward migration population will be on benefits and be drawn to the area by the “stock of suitable housing” (see para 43).⁶² A proportion of the working age migrants will also however be in employment elsewhere and commute, drawn by the desire to live by the sea. For example, in Exmouth we heard from stakeholders that a number of local residents commuted to Exeter to work.⁶³

Transient Populations

27. Some witnesses highlighted the high level of transience in the population of some coastal towns.⁶⁴ The term ‘transience’ can be applied to people who move on a frequent basis. In coastal towns, the transient population can be identified in broadest terms to be composed of UK adults of working age (who may move with their children) and overseas migrant workers. Blackpool Council told us “only inner London has higher levels of transience than Blackpool [...] 11% of the Borough’s population could be classified as transient” and that “within the first six months of settlement, 55% are [...] likely to move again within the Borough”.⁶⁵

28. Lancaster City Council stated that in Morecambe it was “not uncommon for primary schools to experience 30–40% turnover of pupils in a single year”.⁶⁶ Frequent relocation can have a negative impact on a child’s welfare and educational attainment.⁶⁷ Torbay Council also argued that the arrival of new children during the school year can cause educational disruption to the other children in the class.⁶⁸ In addition, Blackpool Council suggested that high pupil turnover can put significant pressures on teaching staff and the overall school system.⁶⁹

29. Thanet District Council argued that high levels of transience can cause other problems, for instance, working with an established population is a key factor in traditional regeneration but that with transient populations “lasting impact is much harder to achieve”.⁷⁰

30. We asked whether migrants from overseas contributed significantly to the transience within many coastal communities. Jobcentre Plus told us there was no proven statistical link between coastal towns and overseas migrants, who are still predominantly attracted to centres like London, despite a recent trend for their greater dispersal across the UK.⁷¹ We received some evidence which suggested that overseas migrant workers can be a particular presence in areas around ports or in places where there is a predominance of low-wage,

⁶¹ *The Seaside Economy*, p 39

⁶² *The Seaside Economy*, p 39

⁶³ Annex A.

⁶⁴ Ev 98, 148, HC 1023-II

⁶⁵ Ev 141, HC 1023-II

⁶⁶ Ev 4, HC 1023-II

⁶⁷ Ev 141, HC 1023-II

⁶⁸ Ev 149, HC 1023-II

⁶⁹ Ev 141, HC 1023-II

⁷⁰ Ev 47, HC 1023-II. See also Annex B

⁷¹ Q 378

seasonal work, such as those coastal towns whose economy is dominated by tourism.⁷² Nevertheless, evidence regarding the proportion of overseas migrant workers in coastal towns is thin and insufficiently robust to provide a firm basis for conclusions. Indeed, the Audit Commission has made a number of recommendations that call for improvements to data and intelligence sharing on migrant workers.⁷³ In previous years, it has been suggested that coastal towns had a disproportionate number of asylum seekers and refugees owing to the availability of accommodation (often redundant hotels).⁷⁴ Support for, and the dispersal of, asylum seekers is now co-ordinated on a national basis and this has alleviated this particular pressure on coastal towns, particularly in the South East.⁷⁵

Vulnerable Adults and Children

31. Some witnesses suggested that many coastal towns have particularly high numbers of vulnerable adults and children who move into the area. The term ‘vulnerable’ is often used to refer to people who are unable to meet their own everyday needs owing to a physical or mental health condition or who are vulnerable because of their situation, such as homelessness.⁷⁶ Vulnerable people either receive or are in need of community care services, requiring support from service providers such as mental health, housing, and social services. Vulnerable people may move to coastal towns voluntarily; however, they may also be placed there by other authorities to identified suitable accommodation.

32. Lancaster City Council told us houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) are often used to cater for vulnerable people.⁷⁷ In many coastal resorts there is a ready supply of HMOs and care homes that have been converted from hotels and guesthouses (see para 39). This supply of HMOs and care homes can result in vulnerable people from other areas being placed in coastal areas. Thanet District Council said that “many boroughs, particularly those in London, actively promote relocation to Thanet to people on their housing and care lists”.⁷⁸ It argued that the problem was exacerbated by the failure of those placing vulnerable people in its area to inform the local authority, even though there is no formal obligation on them to do so.⁷⁹ Thanet District Council called for formal tracking for all placements of vulnerable adults and children.⁸⁰

33. There is a significant financial cost to providing support services for vulnerable people, and their movement to coastal towns consequently puts financial pressure on a range of public services. Kent County Council referred to the placement of vulnerable adults and children, in particular by London boroughs, in its coastal towns as ‘social dumping’, and indeed, it can be seen as this.⁸¹

⁷² Ev 33,140, HC 1023-II

⁷³ *Crossing Borders – responding to the local challenges of migrant workers*, Audit Commission, January 2007

⁷⁴ Ev 46, HC 1023-II

⁷⁵ Ev 170, HC 1023-II

⁷⁶ Ev 4, 47, 73, 80, 93, HC 1023-II. See also www.phel.gov.uk/glossary

⁷⁷ Ev 4, HC 1023-II. See also para 26

⁷⁸ Ev 47, HC 1023-II

⁷⁹ *Report of the Kent Child Protection Committee Inquiry into the general concerns expressed by officers and politicians in the Thanet Area regarding Child and Public Protection Issues*, Kent Child Protection Committee, June 2005. p. 23 (hereafter *Thanet Inquiry*)

⁸⁰ *Thanet Inquiry*, p. 23 and p. 69

⁸¹ Ev 67, HC 1023-II

34. The same authority highlighted the issue of high concentrations of looked-after children within its district, particularly as a consequence of placements from other local authorities (out of area placements). Its evidence showed that the majority of looked-after children within the Thanet area were there as a result of out of area placements and there were “nearly eight times [...] more than in the Kent district of Tunbridge Wells.”⁸² The Government indicated in its Green Paper, *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care*, that London boroughs have particularly high rates of out of area placements, with London children being twice as likely to be placed out of authority compared to other parts of the country.⁸³

35. Thanet District Council stated that children placed by other authorities have highly complex needs “requiring input from a number of services and are likely to be further disadvantaged as part of a population in transition.”⁸⁴ The Government stated in its Green Paper that most children wanted to remain in an area that is familiar to them and that those placed elsewhere are less likely to succeed in education than looked-after children placed near their home.⁸⁵ The LGA stated that despite the drawbacks to placing children out of their authority area, the most important factor to consider is what is right and appropriate for the child, and in some circumstances, it can be both beneficial and necessary.⁸⁶ It also stated that in these circumstances it is important that placing and host authorities communicate as far in advance of the placement as possible.⁸⁷

36. The Government states that the shortage of foster carers is a significant causal factor for out of area placements.⁸⁸ Its Green Paper contains proposals to increase the supply of foster carers and improve commissioning arrangements for the placement of children. The Government intends that commissioning arrangements will be supported through the development of regional and sub-regional approaches to commissioning, to increase the choice of placement and the purchasing power of local authorities, and these proposals have been welcomed by the Association of Directors of Social Services.⁸⁹

37. The LGA told us that there is a significant financial impact on coastal authorities that receive out of area placements, for instance, there is no additional funding to support the education of the child.⁹⁰ The LGA also stated that in one coastal authority an estimated 25% of its Youth Offending Team’s work was with young people from out of area placements.⁹¹ On our visit to Margate, the police stated that high levels of looked-after children in the area placed additional demands on its services, such as an increased level of investigations into runaways and criminal offences.⁹² It also argued that these additional

⁸² *Thanet inquiry*, p. 36. See also Ev 147, HC 1023-II.

⁸³ *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care*, Department for Education and Skills Green Paper, 9 October 2006. p. 50

⁸⁴ *Thanet Inquiry*, p. 24

⁸⁵ *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care*, Department for Education and Skills Green Paper, 9 October 2006 p. 44

⁸⁶ Ev 122

⁸⁷ Ev 122

⁸⁸ *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care*, Department for Education and Skills Green Paper, 9 October 2006. p. 50

⁸⁹ *Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care*, Department for Education and Skills Green Paper, 9 October 2006. p. 45. See also Response from the Association of Directors of Social services (ADSS), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Confederation of Children’s Services Managers (Confed), <http://www.adss.org.uk/publications/consresp/2007/transforming.pdf>

⁹⁰ Ev 122

⁹¹ Ev 122

⁹² Annex B. See also *Thanet Inquiry*, p. 45

demands were not recognised in its funding allocations from Government.⁹³ The LGA stated it was aware that in some circumstances the placing and host authorities come to an agreement about specific funding for the child, but noted that these arrangements are ‘ad hoc’ and therefore often not satisfactory.⁹⁴

38. There can be significant drawbacks from placing vulnerable adults and especially children in care away from their home area; we accept that there are times when it may be necessary in the best interests of the individual but it should not be done simply to reduce costs of the placing authority. Placing authorities should ensure that they communicate as far in advance as possible with host authorities about all aspects of the placement of vulnerable children and adults. Placing authorities should also consider the impact of placements on the receiving community and host authority, and they should take responsibility for the financial impact of those placements.

Outward migration

39. Significant levels of outward migration by younger people are a characteristic of many coastal communities. Nevertheless, there are noticeable exceptions to this trend; some coastal towns, such as Brighton and Bournemouth, have been successful in retaining a large proportion of young people. Brighton and Hove City Council, for instance, told us that “one third of [its] population is between 25 and 44 [...] we have two universities which bring a large influx of students, many of whom we cannot get rid of. They love to stay and they do”.⁹⁵ A number of causal factors have been suggested for the outward migration of young people including: the shortage of employment opportunities, housing costs and the shortage of services and facilities for young people.⁹⁶ The Foyer Federation suggested that it was related to the high proportion of older people in coastal towns because public services are geared towards the needs of older people rather than young people.⁹⁷ Some witnesses argued that it was the higher-skilled young people in particular who moved away. Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone identified this pattern of migration as a “contributing factor to the low-skill levels in the labour market”.⁹⁸ During our visit to Margate we heard from a group of local young people who commented that most of their contemporaries in the area intended to move away when they were older in search of better employment opportunities.⁹⁹ They also argued that a shortage of facilities and activities for young people in the Margate area was a contributing factor.¹⁰⁰ **Many coastal towns have higher than average levels of outward migration of young people which can contribute to a skewed demographic profile.**

Housing

40. Housing in many coastal towns, especially seaside resorts, often appears to be characterised by a dual economy, with high house prices alongside a large, low-quality

⁹³ Annex B

⁹⁴ Ev 122

⁹⁵ Q 34

⁹⁶ See for example District of Easington Council, Q16

⁹⁷ Q 9, Q 326. See also Annex A.

⁹⁸ Ev 123, HC 1023-II

⁹⁹ Annex B. See also Annex D.

¹⁰⁰ Annex B

private rental sector.¹⁰¹ We received extensive evidence regarding the shortage of affordable housing, in particular in coastal towns, and it has been suggested that high house prices was one factor which motivated young people to leave the area.¹⁰² Bournemouth Churches Housing Association, for example, told us “something like 80% of people within households aged from 20 to 39 cannot afford to buy the cheapest houses”.¹⁰³ Similarly the Market and Coastal Towns Association said that while there was no clear relationship between house prices and coastal location, “in general the highest price rises have tended to be on the coast”.¹⁰⁴ We discussed the issue of affordable housing in a nationwide context in our report, *Affordability and the Supply of Housing*, in which we included recommendations designed to increase affordability, particularly through housing schemes such as low-cost home ownership.¹⁰⁵ A number of witnesses also commented on the high incidence of second home ownership in coastal areas contributing to increased house prices.¹⁰⁶ **The shortage of affordable housing is not unique to coastal towns but can be exacerbated by the high level of inward migration and the purchase of second homes. Greater provision of affordable homes is a key priority in many coastal towns and could be an important factor in retaining young people in the area.**

41. The difficulties resulting from insufficient affordable housing can be exacerbated by poor quality within the existing housing stock. Some witnesses indicated that poor quality was particularly widespread within the private rented sector, drawing attention in particular to the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and care homes in many coastal towns resulting from their legacy of a large supply of former hotels, boarding houses and large Victorian houses.¹⁰⁷ The relatively high numbers of care homes in some coastal towns can contribute to growth in the numbers of elderly moving into the area and place additional burdens on health and social care services. BRADA argued that an inadequate supply of affordable housing can “inadvertently support the viability of the very worst quality HMOs” as the demand levels are consequently high.¹⁰⁸ Many HMOs are in a poor state of repair. The Government recognises that the “physical legacy of guesthouses and high-density housing [...] has led to particular housing problems”.¹⁰⁹ Its own analysis has shown that poor quality housing is of greater significance in coastal towns and “virtually half of all stock in these resorts was non-decent (compared to 33% elsewhere).”¹¹⁰ This analysis also shows that there is much greater reliance on private renting in coastal resort areas.

42. Witnesses identified some of the problems that high levels of HMOs can cause. BRADA stated that this can “blight the locality [making it an] unattractive proposition for

¹⁰¹ Q 291

¹⁰² Ev 17, 18, 19, 29, 32, 37, 52, 77, 102, 119, 160, HC 1023-II.

¹⁰³ Q 296. See also Q153

¹⁰⁴ Ev 30, HC 1023-II

¹⁰⁵ ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Third Report of the Session 2005-06, *Affordability and the Supply of Housing*, HC 703-I

¹⁰⁶ Ev 17, 84, 102, 125, 159, HC 1023-II

¹⁰⁷ Ev 97, HC 1023-II

¹⁰⁸ Ev 97

¹⁰⁹ Ev 169, HC 1023-II. See also Q 511

¹¹⁰ Ev 169, HC 1023-II. See also Q 511

redevelopment”.¹¹¹ The New Economics Foundation stated “neighbourhoods can take on the characteristics of slums”.¹¹²

43. It has been suggested that there is a link between HMOs and a transient and vulnerable population “drawn by the easy availability of cheap rented and flatted accommodation”.¹¹³ Blackpool City Council said that HMOs “have become magnets for dependent individuals and families across the country” and that some landlords in their area advertise in other UK towns and cities to attract tenants.¹¹⁴ Bournemouth Churches Housing Association stated that in its view most of the people staying in HMOs in coastal towns were transient and attracted by the accommodation.¹¹⁵ The difficulties related to transient populations have been discussed previously (see paras 27 to 29). **It is clear that many coastal towns suffer disproportionately from poor-quality housing and in particular have high numbers of care homes and HMOs, many of which have been converted from redundant hotels. We recognise the availability of HMOs can attract a transient population into an area, which can bring particular challenges, particularly increasing the difficulty in gaining community involvement in local regeneration.**

44. A range of existing controls are available to local authorities to manage HMOs including planning policy tools, such as Local Development Frameworks, Compulsory Purchase Powers and a new licensing regime, introduced in the Housing Act 2004.¹¹⁶

45. The licensing regime covering HMOs is designed to “help drive up standards in the private rented sector”.¹¹⁷ Since April 2006, under this regime, all HMOs have been required to be licensed by their local authority and to meet minimum physical standards, with the onus being on the landlord to apply for a license.¹¹⁸ HMOs are defined under this Act as properties comprising of three or more storeys and which are occupied by five or more persons forming two or more households. Local housing authorities can also choose to introduce additional licensing requirements for HMOs which do not fall within the criteria set in the Housing Act 2004 and which therefore are not subject to mandatory licensing. The Act also enables local housing authorities to introduce selective licensing in areas of low housing demand or with significant anti-social behaviour problems.¹¹⁹ Although these new licensing powers were intended to improve the quality of housing stock, some have suggested that they have also resulted in a decline in ‘rogue’ landlords who wish to avoid the licensing standards.¹²⁰

46. Some local authorities are tackling the problems associated with high proportions of HMOs in their area through the use of existing powers, for instance by applying specific planning policies.¹²¹ Others are using the new licensing regime for the same purposes.

¹¹¹ Ev 97, HC 1023-II

¹¹² Ev 23, HC 1023-II

¹¹³ Q 51, See also *The Seaside Economy*, p. 39

¹¹⁴ Ev 143, HC 1023-II

¹¹⁵ Q 321-324

¹¹⁶ Ev 143, HC 1023-II

¹¹⁷ Ev 169, HC 1023-II

¹¹⁸ *Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs): Frequently Asked Questions*, Department for Communities and Local Government website - www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163883&cat=100027#acat

¹¹⁹ *Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs): Frequently Asked Questions*, Department for Communities and Local Government website - <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163883>

¹²⁰ *Landlords sell to avoid property license*, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 25 September 2006, www.rics.org/Property/Landlordandtenant/Landlords_sell_25_09_06.htm

¹²¹ List of local authorities that have HMO plans, HMO Lobby Group, www.hmobby.org.uk/natlocalplans.htm

Blackpool City Council, for example, told us that that it was considering using additional and selective licensing on top of mandatory licensing to improve standards.¹²² Nevertheless, some witnesses argued that the existing powers were insufficient. Blackpool City Council suggested that “granting affected areas a special form of pathfinder status [...] to rebalance the housing stock” would be helpful.¹²³ BURA called for “stronger HMO licensing powers or, preferably, a change to the planning use classes order to differentiate HMOs from other residential use”.¹²⁴ Shelter said that the mandatory licensing regime was weak because it did not cover smaller HMOs and called for the definition of HMOs to be broadened when the Act is reviewed in 2007.¹²⁵ Local authorities are currently able to introduce additional licensing requirements that may cover smaller HMOs, however, we note that the level of use and effectiveness of these additional licensing powers has yet to be evaluated by Government. **We welcome the provisions within the Housing Act 2004 enabling local authorities to license Houses in Multiple Occupation. We recommend that the Government encourages local authorities to make full and effective use of the licensing and statutory planning powers available (including compulsory purchase) to manage HMOs. We recommend that the Government examines whether local authorities need additional powers to address the problems arising in areas with especially large numbers of HMOs.**

¹²² Ev 143, HC 1023-II

¹²³ Ev 143, HC 1023-II

¹²⁴ Ev 88

¹²⁵ *The Supply of Rented Housing: Written Evidence*, Communities and Local Government Committee, HC47-II of Session 2006-07, Ev 120.

3 Coastal economies

Overall employment levels

47. Some witnesses drew parallels between a perceived economic decline in many coastal towns to the circumstances surrounding old industrial areas, such as coalfield communities.¹²⁶ In marked contrast, it was argued in the *Seaside Economy* report that “there has actually been strong employment growth in seaside towns. Between 1971 and 2001, total employment in seaside towns grew by around 320,000, more than 20 per cent over that 30-year period; so this not a situation like the old coalfields”.¹²⁷ Indeed, Professor Fothergill told us that this was “a very different scenario to that which you find in some of the old industrial areas”.¹²⁸ Statistics provided by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) indicate that, overall, employment levels in coastal and non-coastal areas are broadly comparable.¹²⁹ In 2003-04, the employment rate in English coastal towns was 74.6% compared to the English average of 75.1%.¹³⁰ Jobcentre Plus stated that unemployment levels in coastal towns are “not particularly different from other parts of the country”.¹³¹ Such statistics are broadly consistent with the findings contained in the *Seaside Economy* report which indicate that the average employment and unemployment rates in coastal towns are similar to the average rates in non-coastal areas. There are a number of coastal towns, however, that have below average levels of employment; in Great Yarmouth the employment rate is 69.6% and in Blackpool it is 71.4%.¹³² **We note that there has been employment growth in many coastal towns and that there is little significant difference between coastal and non-coastal towns in terms of overall average employment levels. We note, however, that a number of coastal towns do still have significantly lower than average employment levels.**¹³³

Benefits

48. Witnesses commented on the high proportion of people living in coastal towns and claiming benefits, particularly incapacity benefit.¹³⁴ Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone Partnership told us “19.4% of the working age population are claiming Incapacity Benefit in some coastal areas of East Lindsey in comparison to the national average of 7%.”¹³⁵ The *Seaside Economy* report indicated that the growth in recorded permanent sickness “is a little higher” in seaside towns than in Great Britain as a whole, but that such growth is a national trend.¹³⁶ Government figures confirm that the proportion of the population in coastal towns claiming benefits is higher than the national average. The figures showed

¹²⁶ Ev 69, 117, HC 1023-II and Margate Visit Note, p2. See also *Coalfield Communities*, HC 44-I of Session 2003-04, Fourth Report of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee.

¹²⁷ *The Seaside Economy*, p. 5

¹²⁸ Q 89

¹²⁹ Ev 100. See Table 1: Employment Rates in Coastal Towns

¹³⁰ Ev 100. See Table 1: Employment Rates in Coastal Towns

¹³¹ Q 361

¹³² Ev 100. See Table 1: Employment Rates in Coastal Towns

¹³³ See also Ev 122, HC 1023-II

¹³⁴ Ev 47, 96, 100, HC 1023-II

¹³⁵ Ev 124, HC 1023-II

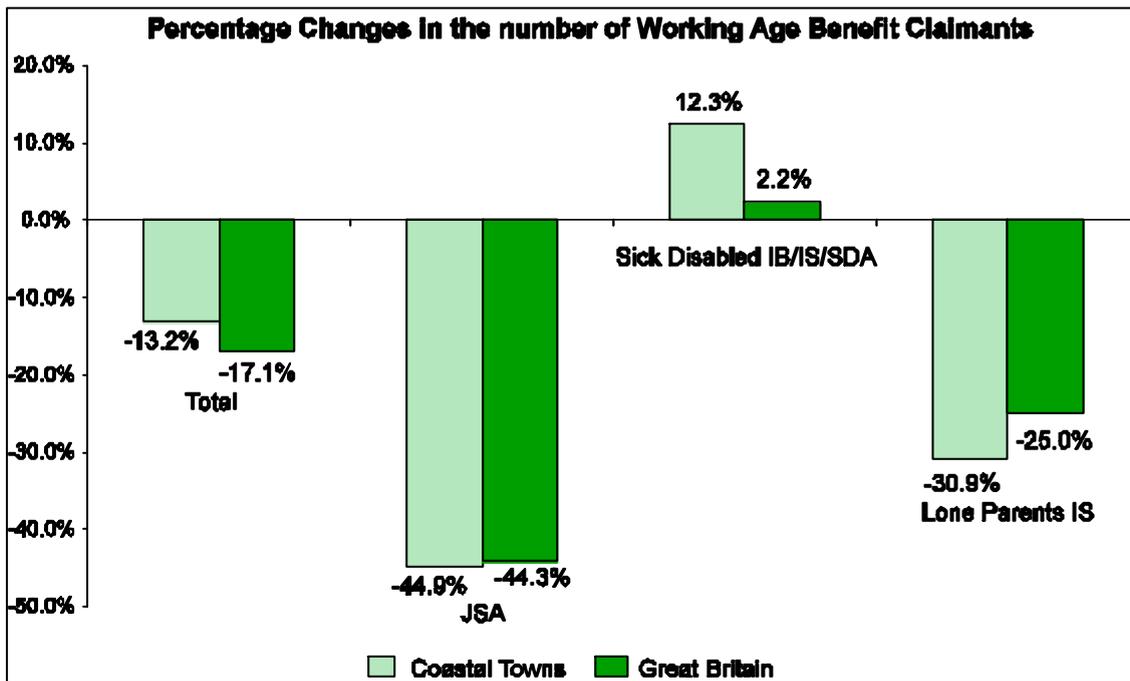
¹³⁶ *The Seaside Economy*, p. 42

that in 2006, 15.2% of the working age population in coastal towns were claiming benefits compared to 12.65% across Great Britain.¹³⁷

49. A more detailed examination of sickness and disability benefit claimant numbers shows that while overall average levels in coastal towns are higher than that in non-coastal areas there is an even greater difference in the rate of the rise. Official figures show that in Great Britain there has been a 2.2% increase in the number claiming incapacity benefit, special disability allowance or income support for disability claims since 1997 but that “there has been a 12.3% rise in the number of claimants in coastal towns” over the same period (see table one below).¹³⁸ These figures are in stark contrast to the impression given by earlier DWP evidence, which stated that there had only been a “slight rise” in the proportion of sick and disabled benefit claimants in coastal towns and that this trend was “similar to national trends”.¹³⁹

50. There is some noticeable variation between coastal towns. For example, in Blackpool there has been a 3.5% fall in the number of sickness and disability benefits claimants since 1997 while over the same time Great Yarmouth and Eastbourne have experienced rises of 33% and 30% respectively.¹⁴⁰

Table 1: Percentage changes in the number of Working Age Benefit Claimants between May 1997 and Feb 2006



Data Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Ev 123

51. We requested further information regarding the high growth rate in sickness and disability benefit in coastal towns in comparison to the average across Great Britain. The

¹³⁷ Ev 123. See Table 3: Percentage of Working Age Population on Benefit – May 97 & February 06

¹³⁸ Ev 123. See Table 2: Actual and Percentage Changes in Working Age Benefit Claimants between May 1997 and Feb 2006

¹³⁹ Ev 98

¹⁴⁰ Ev 123

DWP told us that it had not done any analysis which would reveal the causes of this difference, justifying its position by saying that coastal towns were only similar “for the most part, in that they are situated on the coast”.¹⁴¹ This seems inconsistent with its recognition of historically higher than average numbers of incapacity benefit claimants in some coastal towns. Even so DWP told us that it could not “say when the gap in coastal towns emerged or describe the labour market changes that caused it in those areas”.¹⁴²

52. A number of witnesses put forward possible reasons for the difference: some suggested that those claiming benefits are attracted to coastal towns specifically, perhaps by the availability of cheap rented accommodation or by the lure of a coastal lifestyle (see para 43).¹⁴³ For instance, Professor Fothergill highlighted, “evidence of a very specific process going on whereby some benefit claimants are drawn into seaside towns [...] because of the availability of [...] private, rented accommodation, often flats in former boarding houses”.¹⁴⁴ Yet the DWP stated that there was “no evidence to suggest any additional movement of incapacity benefit claimants to coastal towns than anywhere else in the UK”.¹⁴⁵ It supported this claim with statistics showing that only 3.9% of all incapacity benefit claimants in coastal towns had moved there in the last 12 months and were already claiming incapacity benefit where they previously lived.¹⁴⁶ We do not find the DWP’s argument convincing: analysis which looks only at movement of benefit claimants in the last 12 months reveals little about the overall proportion of those in receipt of incapacity benefit who made their first claim before they moved to the coast. Thus it remains true that inward migration of incapacity benefit claimants could account, at least partially, for the higher than average growth rate of incapacity benefit claimants in coastal towns. Given the priority that the Government has assigned to reducing the number of people on long-term incapacity benefits in recent years, it is both disappointing and surprising that the DWP should have overlooked analysis of this phenomenon.

53. It is unacceptable and extraordinary that the Government should have no knowledge of a potentially significant national trend in which coastal towns have experienced a disproportionately high rise in the number of people claiming sickness and disability benefit levels. It appears likely that the scale of inward migration of benefit claimants could be a contributory factor. We recommend that the Government investigates this trend with a view to identifying and addressing its causes.

Type and quality of employment

54. Historically economic activity within coastal towns has encompassed traditional industries that have declined, including manufacturing, ship-building, fishing and other maritime sector work, in addition to tourism.¹⁴⁷ Official statistics show that the economy of seaside towns is diverse and that the range and trends in job sectors are broadly in line with the national experience, but with some noticeable differences in specific sectors.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ Ev 123

¹⁴² Ev 123

¹⁴³ *The Seaside Economy*, p 39

¹⁴⁴ Q 100

¹⁴⁵ Ev 101

¹⁴⁶ Ev 101

¹⁴⁷ Q 288

¹⁴⁸ Ev 106-107. The four sectors with variables of more than 2% between coastal towns and the English average are; tourism, health and social care, real estate, renting, business activities, and manufacturing.

Professor Fothergill stated that recent employment growth has been “surprisingly broadbased”, indicating that the tourism sector is not the dominant industry in coastal towns to the extent that is commonly perceived, although it may be in some traditional seaside resorts.¹⁴⁹

Tourism

55. Tourism has long been important to a number of coastal towns commonly identified as ‘seaside resorts’. Seaside resorts became popular destinations during the Victorian era and, according to BRADA, tourism peaked “in terms of volume in 1973”.¹⁵⁰ Some witnesses argued that tourism has declined in seaside resorts as foreign holidays and short-haul flights have become more affordable and popular.¹⁵¹ BRADA stated that this is not the case and that the “coastal tourism sector has not collapsed, but changed dramatically [...] The simplistic views that everyone now goes abroad, therefore no one holidays at home misses the point. For the average UK resident, holiday no longer means just a week or a fortnight in the summer.”¹⁵² Its position is supported by official statistics which show that the proportion of tourism-related jobs in coastal towns is still higher than the English average: 11.7% compared to an English average of 8.2%.¹⁵³

56. Although tourism is only one of the employment sectors in coastal towns, for many traditional seaside resorts tourism is of significant economic importance. Domestic visitors to the English coast spent some £4.8 billion in 2005.¹⁵⁴ Data on domestic destinations shows that “Eight of the top 20 (40%) are beach destinations”.¹⁵⁵ Only 7% of domestic day trips, however, are to the coast and these trips appear to be concentrated in a relatively small number of seaside resorts.¹⁵⁶ In addition, “the average spend per visit for tourism day trips to the seaside or coast was £18.50, markedly lower than the average spend for tourism day visits to either cities or the countryside (£30.80 and £20.70 respectively)”.¹⁵⁷ This relatively low spend can be viewed as confirmation that a visit to the seaside is a ‘cheap day out’.

57. There is limited data on the numbers of visitors to the UK who travel to the coast or how much they spend during their visit. The main source of data on overseas visitors is the International Passenger Survey (IPS) which in 2006 introduced for the first time the option of listing a visit to the coastline/countryside.¹⁵⁸ It showed that Brighton was the only traditional seaside resort among the 20 most popular destinations for overnight stays on the part of overseas visitors.¹⁵⁹ This suggests that coastal resorts are less popular with overseas visitors than with visitors from other parts of the UK. The paucity of data relating

¹⁴⁹ Q 93

¹⁵⁰ Ev 93, HC 1023-II

¹⁵¹ Ev 147, 91, HC 1023-II

¹⁵² Ev 92, HC 1023-II

¹⁵³ Ev 106-107

¹⁵⁴ Ev 110

¹⁵⁵ VisitBritain Press Release VB42/06 p 1. These destinations are Blackpool, Scarborough, Isle of Wight, Skegness, Bournemouth, Great Yarmouth, Brighton and Hove, and Torquay.

¹⁵⁶ Ev 110-112

¹⁵⁷ Ev 110-112

¹⁵⁸ Ev 110-112

¹⁵⁹ Ev 110-112

to overseas travellers visiting the coast would make it difficult to determine the effectiveness of any efforts to encourage overseas visitors to the coast.¹⁶⁰

58. A number of witnesses commented on the need to improve the quality of the tourism offer to attract visitors to coastal towns in an increasingly competitive environment.¹⁶¹ The East Kent Partnership stated “more often than not in a lot of coastal towns, as a result of dilapidation and lack of investment over decades, the quality of the product is sadly lacking”.¹⁶² The Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone told us “coastal branding is weak and needs to be highlighted”.¹⁶³ While we accept the need to improve the quality of the tourism offer in some coastal towns, our evidence demonstrates that a number of coastal towns have already done so. Particular attention was drawn to examples of coastal towns where a greater number of visitors had been attracted through the development of niche markets. The Market and Coastal Towns Association highlighted Newquay and its focus on surfing, stating “they have almost invented a USP [unique selling point] for themselves”.¹⁶⁴ During our visit to Whitstable, we learnt about the regeneration of the area, in particular its successful tourism marketing based around oysters and seafood.¹⁶⁵ Further examples include Southport which has capitalised on golf tourism, Hull with its submariun, St Ives with the Tate gallery and many other seaside towns with their piers.¹⁶⁶ Coastal towns also have the opportunity to capitalise on the attractiveness of their national environment to draw visitors in. For instance, in Exmouth we heard about plans for a visitor centre to take advantage of the town’s position on the Jurassic coastline.¹⁶⁷ Other towns have the opportunity to develop in the increasingly popular eco-tourism market. Those towns that have been successful in their development of ‘niche’ markets and improving tourism tend to be ones where the local community has united behind a common vision for their area (see para 76).

59. The Minister for State for Sport, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Rt Hon. Richard Caborn MP, gave his support for such development of niche markets as a means of improving tourism in coastal towns. He referred to his department’s work to “drive the quality up” and acknowledged an historic lack of investment that has characterised the “Cinderella” industry of tourism.¹⁶⁸ We note, however, that neither the Government nor the lead national agency for tourism, VisitBritain, has a national strategy for coastal tourism. In contrast, the Welsh Assembly Government, has published a *Welsh Coastal Tourism Strategy*, stating that its intention is to establish a clear vision for the development of coastal tourism and realise the economic potential of the coastline.¹⁶⁹ Welsh coastal towns that rely on tourism will undoubtedly welcome this development, and the impact of the coastal tourism strategy may have lessons for tourism approaches in England.

¹⁶⁰ Ev 110-112

¹⁶¹ Q 185

¹⁶² Q 148

¹⁶³ *National Coastal Futures Symposium: The Report*, 18th – 19th July 2006, Royal Renaissance Hotel Skegness, October 2006. Background paper from the Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone, p 17

¹⁶⁴ Q 116, See also Q 187

¹⁶⁵ A Committee visit to Margate, Whitstable and Hastings took place on 18 October 2006.

¹⁶⁶ Q 192

¹⁶⁷ Annex A

¹⁶⁸ Q 485

¹⁶⁹ *Welsh Coastal Tourism Strategy: Draft Final Strategy*, Welsh Assembly Government, January 2006 (consultation period ends March 2007)
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038231141/403821124154/1156781/1156839/strategy.doc?lang=en>

60. **Tourism continues to be an economically important sector for many coastal towns, and it is important that the Government recognises this. We recommend that the Government conducts an immediate study on coastal tourism, including evaluating the levels and spend of domestic and inbound visitors to the coast in comparison to non-coastal areas. We urge the Government to ensure that action is taken at a national level to promote visiting the English seaside, and to consider the merits of introducing a national coastal tourism strategy, following the example of Wales.**

Other sectors

61. Many witnesses have also commented on the need for coastal towns to develop a diverse economy and to reduce dependency on tourism.¹⁷⁰ The Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone argued that economic strategies to support tourism and the diversification of industry do not have to be mutually exclusive but can be complementary.¹⁷¹ The rationale for diversification is particularly linked to the nature of the jobs within the tourism sector and the seasonality of work (see para 62). Professor Fothergill stated that Brighton was an example where diversification had been achieved successfully: “At the core there is clearly a seaside tourism industry [...] but Brighton is a town with a big commercial sector, with two universities [...] it is a commuting settlement for London”.¹⁷² The *Seaside Economy* report concludes that it would be advantageous to create jobs across a wide range of sectors in order to provide the greatest economic opportunities for seaside residents.¹⁷³ Local strategies to increase jobs in high-skilled growth areas, such as IT and creative industries may be attractive to employers as many coastal towns are desirable places for employees to live. Strategies that encourage people to live as well as work in the local area are likely to bring increased economic and social benefits to those existing communities. **Some coastal towns have successfully diversified their economies and reduced their dependency upon tourism. Many others would benefit from similar developments, particularly given the seasonal, low-skill and low-wage nature of employment in tourism. Economic diversification should be taken into account in regional and local regeneration strategies and development plans. We recommend that the Government encourages the sharing of best practice on economic diversification approaches for coastal towns.**

Seasonality

62. The seasonality of tourism in England is widely recognised. Tourism in coastal resorts is particularly limited to the summer months, given the preference of visitors for warmer weather for outdoor activities. BRADA stated in its publication *UK Seaside Resorts* that in 1996, for instance, “51% of all domestic holiday spending took place between July and September.”¹⁷⁴ A large number of our witnesses pointed out that such seasonality resulted in a high proportion of temporary and short-term employment in coastal towns.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ Ev 18, 6, 65, 103, 121, HC 1023-II

¹⁷¹ *National Coastal Futures Symposium: The Report*, 18th – 19th July 2006, Royal Renaissance Hotel Skegness, October 2006. Background paper from the Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone

¹⁷² Q 105

¹⁷³ *The Seaside Economy*, p. 107

¹⁷⁴ *UK seaside resorts: behind the façade*, BRADA (formerly the British Resorts Association), 2000.

¹⁷⁵ Ev 1, 4, 5, 11, 14, 16, 23, 30, 34, 36, 62, 67, 80, 90, 93, 140, 159, 160, 166, HC 1023-II

63. In contrast to the evidence provided by our witnesses on seasonality for coastal towns, Jobcentre Plus initially downplayed the significance of seasonality as an issue in coastal towns. It stated that seasonality was less significant than it had been in the past. It acknowledged that this was an issue in some coastal towns but stressed, “the vast bulk of employment tends not to be associated with tourism”.¹⁷⁶ The DWP did not comment specifically on the seasonality of employment in its original written submission. It did, however, comment on levels of temporary employment—a category that covers seasonal employment under this definition.¹⁷⁷ It stated that there was no marked difference between coastal and non-coastal areas in levels of temporary employment and that there was “little evidence that employment in coastal towns is particularly concentrated in temporary or self-employment” and “no prevalence of temporary employment in coastal towns”.¹⁷⁸

64. We were not satisfied with this response, which could be viewed as misleading, and therefore requested further details. DWP provided statistics subsequently demonstrating that seasonal work in coastal towns was more than double that found in non-coastal towns.¹⁷⁹ This data establishes that there is a significantly higher level of seasonal employment in coastal towns and that this characteristic is not solely historic but rather a significant feature of employment patterns in coastal towns today.¹⁸⁰ This conclusion, based upon the statistical evidence, appears to be at odds with the views expressed and impression left after receiving evidence from Jobcentre Plus and the original DWP evidence. **We find it surprising that the significance of seasonal work in coastal towns was not recognised by the Department of Work and Pensions, and only became apparent as a result of further investigation by the Committee.**

65. The seasonal nature of tourism has economic and social consequences, particularly for traditional seaside resorts. One of the suggested consequences is higher unemployment levels during the winter months. In the *Seaside Economy* report it was stated “it has long been known that there is a problem of seasonal unemployment in seaside towns”.¹⁸¹ Caradon District Council provided a clear example: it told us “there are still around twice as many claimants in Looe in the winter as there are in the summer”.¹⁸² Seasonal unemployment may also contribute to a sense of social isolation. The Foyer Federation argued that the winter closure of facilities and services used by young people had an adverse effect: “without anything to do, young people can get involved in negative behaviour—drug and alcohol misuse”.¹⁸³

66. Many witnesses commented on the low-skill, low-wage and often part-time nature of employment in many coastal towns. The part-time nature of employment is linked to the nature of the tourism sector: indeed, “approximately 40% of the hotels and restaurants sector workforce in the UK as a whole works part-time”.¹⁸⁴ Professor Fothergill stated that “the disproportionate share of the overall jobs in seaside towns are part-time, and that this obviously raises worries about what the implications are for household incomes and so

¹⁷⁶ Q 353

¹⁷⁷ Ev 100

¹⁷⁸ Ev 94

¹⁷⁹ Seasonal employment in coastal towns 2005 was 15% in comparison the English average of 6%.

¹⁸⁰ Q 353

¹⁸¹ *The Seaside Economy*, p 20

¹⁸² Ev 11, HC 1023-II

¹⁸³ Q 330. See also Annex B and Annex D

¹⁸⁴ *UK seaside resorts: behind the façade*, BRADA (formerly the British Resorts Association), 2000

on”.¹⁸⁵ The Minister for State, Industry and the Regions, Department for Trade and Industry, Rt Hon Margaret Hodge stated that “If you talk about a feature of a coastal town, the low-wage, low-income, low-skill, seasonal employment is a feature”.¹⁸⁶

67. The seasonality of the economy in coastal towns presents economic and social challenges that need to be considered by national and local policy-makers. The Department of Work and Pensions’ failure to highlight the significance of seasonality in its original evidence is suggestive of a wider lack of understanding in Government of the specific employment patterns in many coastal towns and the challenges associated with those patterns.

Education

68. Evidence highlighted the low levels of aspiration and educational attainment by young people in some coastal communities, but this is by no means a universal pattern, with some coastal towns showing high levels of educational achievement. For example, in Hastings the proportion of school leavers with GCSEs grades A to C in 2003-04 was 14.9% below the national average.¹⁸⁷ The Learning and Skills Council stated that the issue of low attainment levels and aspirations “certainly applies to coastal areas” but were no more prevalent than in inner cities or other areas with a high rate of deprivation”.¹⁸⁸

69. The educational profile of coastal towns is linked to the nature of their economy and environment. The Coastal Academy argued that many young people in coastal towns have low aspirations “by virtue of career and job opportunities not being available in their home area”.¹⁸⁹ The Foyer Federation stated that the poor provision and high cost of public transport acted as barriers to young people staying on in education and attending college in some coastal areas.¹⁹⁰ The Learning and Skills Council agreed that this was a factor and that “in any periphery area or rural area there is always an issue of access to education”.¹⁹¹ Some witnesses pointed out that those young people in coastal towns who did attain higher level qualifications often left to pursue higher education elsewhere and did not return, reinforcing the low-skill levels in coastal towns.¹⁹²

70. The New Economics Foundation argued that it was important to break the link between, on the one hand, low aspirations and low educational attainment and, on the other, a low-wage economy which currently serve to reinforce one another.¹⁹³ During our visit to Margate and Hastings local people stressed the importance of raising educational attainment levels to facilitate local regeneration. They argued that this would make the area more attractive to private sector investors and employers.¹⁹⁴ Others stressed the

¹⁸⁵ Q 99

¹⁸⁶ Q 447

¹⁸⁷ Ev 23, HC 1023-II

¹⁸⁸ Q 410-411

¹⁸⁹ Ev 1, HC 1023-II

¹⁹⁰ Ev 90

¹⁹¹ Q 405

¹⁹² Ev 17, 37, 131, 171, HC 1023-II. See also para 19

¹⁹³ Ev 23, HC 1023-II

¹⁹⁴ Annex B, Annex D

importance in building stronger links between the education and business sectors to promote the development of vocational education.¹⁹⁵

71. The evidence suggests that a high number of young people in some coastal communities have low educational attainment levels and low aspirations. While we accept that raising educational achievement and career aspirations is an important element in local regeneration, we have no evidence to convince us that the experience of coastal communities in this regard is significantly different from other areas, such as inner cities or areas of deprivation, where the aspirations of young people and their level of educational attainment are lower than the national average. Any national initiatives to increase educational attainment levels in targeted geographical areas, should ensure that coastal communities with low attainment levels are included.

¹⁹⁵ Ev 68, 131, HC 1023-II

4 Regeneration and funding

Successful regeneration

72. The regeneration challenges faced in many coastal towns are similar to those faced in non-coastal areas, except that many are physically isolated, often with poor transportation links.¹⁹⁶ The evidence has highlighted some common factors that can contribute to successful regeneration in coastal towns, though these factors are not exclusive to coastal areas. This includes location, the role of entrepreneurs and the private sector, the role of the local authorities, partnership working and buy-in from the local community to change.

73. The location of a coastal town can be of critical importance to its regeneration success, in terms of the regional economy. The *Seaside Economy* report indicates that seaside towns in the South West and to a lesser extent, those in the South East “have fared better in terms of employment” than those in other regions as they have prospered from the wider regional economy.¹⁹⁷

74. BRADA stressed the importance of communicating a vision for an area coupled with public sector investment, which it argued can be very successful in leveraging in private sector investment in the regeneration of coastal towns.¹⁹⁸ Shepway District Council provided an example where through a £10 million public investment it was able to successfully lever in “£22 million[...] from private, public and voluntary sources” to fund in excess of 50 regeneration projects in Folkestone.¹⁹⁹

75. Witnesses also highlighted the role of the private sector in regenerating coastal towns.²⁰⁰ Some drew particular attention to the important role of local entrepreneurship.²⁰¹ In Whitstable, for instance, one entrepreneurial family bought a local hotel and former Oyster Store, and now runs both as successful businesses which draw trade from London, contributing to local regeneration.²⁰² In Folkestone, local entrepreneurs played a significant role in the establishment of the town’s creative quarter, attracting artists and visitors into the area.²⁰³ It was particularly disappointing therefore to learn from Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone that overall levels of entrepreneurship in coastal towns were lower than those in non-coastal towns.²⁰⁴

76. The importance of different people and organisations working in partnership towards a shared vision was also stressed by some of our witnesses.²⁰⁵ This was also emphasised by local stakeholders during our visit to Margate and Hastings.²⁰⁶ One way of achieving such a unity of vision is through masterplanning—a spatial planning process that sets out a plan

¹⁹⁶ See para 11-12

¹⁹⁷ *The Seaside Economy*, p 7

¹⁹⁸ Q 135

¹⁹⁹ Ev 75, HC 1023-II

²⁰⁰ Ev 4, 14, 32, 55, HC 1023-II

²⁰¹ Ev 20, 75, HC 1023-II

²⁰² A Committee visit to Margate, Whitstable and Hastings took place on 18 October 2006.

²⁰³ Ev 75, HC 1023-II

²⁰⁴ Ev 117, HC 1023-II

²⁰⁵ Q 165

²⁰⁶ Annex B, Annex D

for the future development of an area. East Riding of Yorkshire Council argued “if one has a masterplan that is clear, crisp and understandable [...] One then has a prospectus in which the RDA and others can invest”.²⁰⁷ The price of not having a clear shared vision, by local people and organisations, for the development of an area can often be regeneration failure. This situation can occur where different groups within an area have competing regeneration strategies.

77. Local opposition to change can be seen as a barrier to regeneration. East Riding of Yorkshire Council, for instance, told us that it can be difficult to gain support for change from people who have moved to the area to retire: it stated “there is still a generation of people who do not want the town to change”.²⁰⁸ Devon County Council argued “sometimes tensions result from a strong NIMBY attitude from the older generation which can restrict development of opportunities for the younger members”.²⁰⁹ During our time in Exmouth we heard from local stakeholders about the difficulties they had encountered in trying to change the nature of the area.²¹⁰

78. Devon County Council argued that the peripheral location of coastal towns can result in them being “rather insular and inward looking, with a resistance to change, which prevents them in some instances from taking full advantage of new opportunities.”²¹¹

79. Differences of opinion over regeneration between different groups within the community can occur in any settlement. The demographic profile of many coastal towns, where a significant proportion of the community may have chosen to move to the area specifically because they like it the way it is, can exacerbate these tensions and represent a greater barrier to regeneration than may be experienced in some other areas.

80. BURA argued that the most appropriate economic development strategy for each coastal town will be different. It also argued that economic development strategies do not have to rely solely on inward private sector investment. Indeed, in some instances, where a coastal town is particularly isolated or has particularly poor transport links, it may not be possible to attract private investment from further afield. It told us that there was also scope for economic development based on domestic investment and highlighted the example of Hastings where a “home-grown enterprise” was developing.²¹² The New Economics Foundation supported this view. It stated that “large scale inward investment is not appropriate for many coastal towns” and that there is an important role for indigenous growth strategies.²¹³ Any successful economic development strategy must overcome any disadvantages of poor transportation links, through focusing on what industries and businesses will be able to be sustainable in coastal towns given these limitations.

81. Caradon District Council argued that regeneration is more costly in coastal towns: “to deliver any benefits [...] will always cost more than its counterpart in an inland town”.²¹⁴ It argued that a shortage of land, often arising from physical and geographical constraints,

²⁰⁷ Q 21

²⁰⁸ Q 14

²⁰⁹ Ev 105., HC 1023-II. See also Annex A. NIMBY is an acronym for the phrase ‘not in my back yard’.

²¹⁰ Annex A

²¹¹ Ev 104, HC 1023-II

²¹² Q 277

²¹³ Ev 23, HC 1023-II

²¹⁴ Q 18

coupled with the limited access to markets, meant that it was “costing more and more to deliver any given output in a coastal town compared to others”.²¹⁵ The South West Regional Development Agency disputed Caradon’s argument. It stated “the agency sees equally difficult cost-benefit analyses in some inner city areas. It is difficult to say that coastal towns have either a special or higher cost”.²¹⁶ **While we recognise that there are particular challenges in coastal towns, there is no substantive evidence to demonstrate that they generally experience lower cost-benefit ratios or higher costs in regeneration projects than other areas.**

82. The heritage of coastal towns, particularly in seaside resorts, can be seen as both an asset and a challenge. English Heritage stated that there are some “specific qualities and challenges” in coastal towns, in terms of their heritage, pointing out that the extreme climate and large number of public and listed buildings in seaside resorts can lead to higher maintenance costs.²¹⁷ It could equally be argued, however, that high numbers of listed buildings are also an asset for these towns. English Heritage also stated that a “significant proportion of funding” is put into coastal towns in response to these challenges: “around 20% of our regeneration funding since 1999 has gone into coastal towns; that is around £10 million”.²¹⁸ The Heritage Lottery Fund told us that it had “given over £230 million to more than 517 projects in [...] English coastal resorts” since 1994.²¹⁹ This level of funding represents only 7% of the total Heritage Lottery Fund spending over the same time period; however, these figures do not represent the whole picture as the figures for seaside resorts exclude a large number of coastal towns that are not resorts.²²⁰ It explained that the funding was not specifically targeted at seaside resorts, but that many had benefited due to the “combination of distinctive heritage needs combined with social and economic needs”.²²¹ For example in Great Yarmouth the Heritage Lottery Fund has invested £6 million in a range of schemes to revitalise the town.²²² Many coastal towns have an opportunity to capitalise upon the heritage of their towns, particularly seaside resorts, owing to their historic buildings and infrastructure, such intervention can contribute to the regeneration of their area, particularly in attracting tourists and investors.²²³

83. In the regeneration field, there are opportunities to share best practice across the UK. Practitioners and policy-makers involved in the regeneration of coastal towns participate alongside those involved in the regeneration of non-coastal areas. There has been little national linkage of coastal towns as a specific grouping at a policy or operational level although there are some signs that this is beginning to change. In 2006, for example, a national conference, *Coastal Futures*, was held in Skegness, hosted by the Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone; a Seaside Network was launched by BURA; and a number of further

²¹⁵ Q 19

²¹⁶ Q 66

²¹⁷ Q 236

²¹⁸ Q 236

²¹⁹ Q 236

²²⁰ Q 256-258. Ev 161, HC 1023-II.

²²¹ Q 236

²²² Q 252

²²³ Q 252-255

events are planned for 2007.²²⁴ ‘Coastal towns’ was the central theme of one of the Government’s 2006 city summits.²²⁵

84. BURA argued that coastal towns would benefit from learning about each other’s experiences as they may have more in common with each other than, for example, other towns within the same region.²²⁶ It also argued that the DCLG has a role to play in supporting the spread of best practice between coastal towns.²²⁷ The Minister of State, Industry and the Regions, Department for Trade and Industry, Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge said “I accept that clearly there is something to be gained from sharing the experiences” between coastal towns but she implied that that it was not appropriate for central Government to take the lead on this as she stressed the role of the regions and sub-regions.²²⁸ **Leaving responsibility for the sharing of best practice on coastal town regeneration with regions and sub-regions is not an adequate response, as coastal towns would benefit from the sharing of best practice and experiences at a national level. We welcome the recent events which have facilitated such exchanges but regret that these have been ad hoc. The Government has a role to play in supporting and encouraging coastal towns to share experiences and expertise. We recommend that the Government supports a permanent network to facilitate the spread of best practice in coastal town regeneration.**

Funding

85. There are no national or regional funding streams specifically targeted at coastal towns, but coastal local authorities are eligible to apply for funding from a large number of distinct sources. Two specific sources of regeneration funding that coastal local authorities have accessed and valued have been the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). Coastal local authorities have been allocated a total of £411.4 million from the NRF during 2001-08, equating to 14% of the total NRF allocations across England during this same time period, although the expenditure may not necessarily be specific to coastal towns.²²⁹ There have been six rounds of SRB funding with the last round allocations made in 2001; in this last round £230.690 million was allocated to projects in coastal towns. This equates to 19% of the total funding allocated.²³⁰

86. Many witnesses argued that there is inadequate funding for the regeneration of coastal towns.²³¹ The New Economics Foundation stated that “Coastal resorts received less than 5% of funding in SRB Rounds 1 to 3 and less than 3% in Round 4. Finally, in 1998, the criteria were broadened with coastal towns specifically targeted and 44 bids were awarded to regenerate coastal towns”.²³²

²²⁴ Including the Inaugural Conference of the Seaside Network, BURA, March 2007.

²²⁵ Held on 16 May 2006, Phil Woolas MP, Q 510. City summits were held to examine the challenges faced in cities and towns and what actions could lead to improvements.

²²⁶ Q 268

²²⁷ Q 268

²²⁸ Q 431

²²⁹ These figures are based on the 20 coastal authorities that have been allocated NRF funding during 2001-08, they exclude the city areas of Liverpool, Portsmouth, Southampton and Hull. See www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

²³⁰ 39 projects were specific to coastal towns (cities excluded) in round six, the total allocation was £1213.064 million across nine regions. See www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1128086

²³¹ Ev 4, 19, 25, 33, 108, HC 1023-II

²³² Ev 25

87. A number of coastal towns have benefited from funding sources such as neighbourhood renewal funding yet some witnesses argued that strict eligibility criteria had excluded many others. East Riding of Yorkshire Council, for instance, told us “Most of the [...] coastal local authorities eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) programmes featured because they cover major industrial towns/cities and therefore have strongly urban neighbourhoods. In contrast, individual, “stand-alone” coastal towns exhibit smaller, but particularly intense, pockets of deprivation.”²³³ Thanet District Council argued that its coastal towns (Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs) have high levels of deprivation yet still did not qualify for support from the NRF.²³⁴ The Channel Corridor Partnership stated that Folkestone was “in that worst of all positions; bad, but not quite bad enough” to qualify for regeneration funding.²³⁵

88. Many organisations supporting coastal towns expressed concern about the absence of any funding stream to replace the SRB, funding from which came to an end in March 2006.²³⁶ Shepway District Council argued that the end of SRB funding seriously compromises the ability of local partnerships to invest in regeneration projects and that 50 projects “are now under threat and, if lost, would be extremely difficult to resurrect in the future.”²³⁷ Kent County Council drew attention to the fact that other significant funding streams, such as ERDF Objective 2 funding, the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Seafront funding and the Townscape Heritage Initiative, were coming to an end.²³⁸ East Riding of Yorkshire Council argued that the loss of European funding in particular would make it, “more important for the coastal towns to identify their contribution [...] to the regional picture”, highlighting the increased importance of RDAs in providing regeneration funding for coastal towns.²³⁹ The Government appears to have recognised the difficulties that coastal towns may face in accessing regeneration funding. The Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge MP told us that she was aware that a number of coastal towns failed to meet the new criteria for EU funding, telling us “that is a problem which I am going to think about at a national level, how we can ensure that we have sufficient and appropriate resources in coastal towns”.²⁴⁰

89. Several witnesses commented on the difficulties resulting from the “cocktail of funding” available for organisations trying to regenerate coastal towns.²⁴¹ BRADA stated that even in places where significant regeneration was taking place, like Blackpool, funding tended to be provided for individual, small projects and therefore was often not sequenced effectively.²⁴² The Southport Partnership explained that when major schemes are funded from a number of different sources there is increased risk of failure because if one funding stream fails—as can happen if a partner’s priorities change, their funds are over-committed or timescales are altered, the “whole thing collapses or it will take another three years to put back together again”.²⁴³ Mr Miller, managing director of a theme park,

²³³ Ev 62. See also Ev 5 stated that the Exmouth was too small to qualify.

²³⁴ Ev 46

²³⁵ Ev 8, HC 1023-II. See also Ev 147, HC 1023-II

²³⁶ Ev 44, 61, 76, 101, HC 1023-II

²³⁷ Ev 75, HC 1023-II

²³⁸ Ev 69, HC 1023-II. See also Annex B

²³⁹ Q 20

²⁴⁰ Q 436

²⁴¹ Q 168. See also Ev 46, 56, 137, HC 1023-II

²⁴² Q 120

²⁴³ Q 168

Adventure Island, provided one example indicative of the fragmented nature of funding streams: in Southend, he argued, funding was being invested in different regeneration schemes despite the overarching need to maintain the cliff wall and protect people's homes.²⁴⁴ Some witnesses also highlighted the excessively bureaucratic burden imposed on local authorities by the need to enter a large number of competitive bidding processes to gain funding.²⁴⁵ The Isle of Wight Council argued that there are too many competing and conflicting schemes which "demand a high level of administrative activity up-front for limited return".²⁴⁶ We also heard numerous calls for longer-term funding streams for regeneration to ensure the sustainability of projects and programmes and to reduce uncertainty.²⁴⁷ The Dover Pride Regeneration Partnership explained that they can currently only deliver small intervention-based projects as its own funding is only guaranteed for three years, limiting its ability to deliver any long-term regeneration plans.²⁴⁸

90. Given these criticisms it is not surprising that a number of our witnesses called for a rationalisation of funding streams for regeneration. BRADA advocated a 'single pot' approach, arguing that this would result in investment that is more effective.²⁴⁹ It did not, however, advocate the creation of a new national funding stream specifically for coastal towns on the grounds that there would be the danger that funding would end up with only one or two coastal towns as "it would become competitive and there would be a whole host of losers".²⁵⁰ The Minister of State, Local Government and Community Cohesion, Department Phil Woolas MP stressed the importance of Local Area Agreements (LAAs). He explained that one of the objectives of LAAs is to bring together as many specific area-based grants as possible into a pooling arrangement, providing a greater level of local flexibility on expenditure.²⁵¹ We recognise that LAAs can contribute to greater local flexibility but note that LAAs do not provide a solution for the replacement of existing regeneration funding sources referred to by the witnesses.

91. Given the number and complexity of the funding streams available for regeneration in coastal towns, there is considerable scope for their simplification and integration. We are not persuaded, however, that a specific funding stream for coastal town regeneration is warranted. We recommend that the Government evaluates the impact of the termination of various funding streams on coastal town regeneration, with a view to addressing any funding gap.

Funding for local authorities

92. The demographic profile which defines so many of our coastal towns, the high percentage of the population which is elderly, transient or vulnerable, can impose higher than average costs on local authorities. In social care, for instance, Torbay Council argued that the shift in Government funding to general funding for local authorities, via a formulaic approach, means that funding is not transferred on a pound for pound basis.²⁵²

²⁴⁴ Q 225

²⁴⁵ Ev 57, 137, HC 1023-II

²⁴⁶ Ev 137, HC 1023-II

²⁴⁷ Ev 9, 42, 61, 64, 75, 116, 138, HC 1023-II

²⁴⁸ Ev 42, HC 1023-II

²⁴⁹ Q 120

²⁵⁰ Q 121

²⁵¹ Q 528

²⁵² Ev 147, HC 1023-II

This is suggested to be significant due to the higher levels of dependency on the state by the elderly in coastal towns, as many will have no local family support network.²⁵³ The Minister for Local Government, Phil Woolas MP, claimed that demographics were already adequately reflected within local authorities' Revenue Support Grant and added that he had "increased the weighting in that grant in this current two-year settlement to reflect the fact that significant numbers of people are living to 80 and beyond".²⁵⁴ This is an important development, not just for local authorities in coastal areas, but for all local authorities nationwide as they strive to provide support services for an ageing population but, nevertheless, it does not address the specific point made that the elderly in coastal towns may have higher levels of dependency upon state support than those in non-coastal areas owing to their lack of family support. **We agree with witnesses that it is important that the Revenue Support Grant calculations take into account the levels of elderly and transient populations in an area, and recognise the geographical variation in demands placed on services by these groups.**

93. As BRADA told us the public realm has a particularly significant role in those traditional seaside resorts which are dependent upon tourism, where "their very attractiveness relies on this grand public space".²⁵⁵ Many witnesses, however, drew attention to the poor condition of the public realm in seaside resorts.²⁵⁶ The Southport Partnership said that improving the condition of the public realm was the key element in coastal town regeneration.²⁵⁷ The East Kent Partnership said one could "forget the tourism product unless you improve your public realm locally".²⁵⁸ Supporting the public realm—the piers, parks, promenades, public shelters and bandstands that typify many coastal resorts developed on a grand scale in the 19th century—can also impose significant additional costs on the local authority, yet, as BRADA told us, doing so rarely generates a direct commercial return.²⁵⁹ Blackpool City Council argued that central government takes "little account of" of this additional burden.²⁶⁰

94. Further it argued that visitors can place additional pressures on "services such as street cleaning, waste collection and disposal, and public conveniences".²⁶¹ Day visitor numbers are taken into account within the revenue support grant funding formulae but as Blackpool City Council pointed out, a review of the indicators used on day visitor numbers in the revenue support grant funding formula, commissioned by the ODPM in 2005, "revealed that there was no acceptable way of updating the data based on currently available information". As a result, visitor figures remain, in Blackpool City Council's view, "crude in the extreme" as the data is disaggregated from national surveys to arrive at local authority figures.²⁶² Brighton & Hove City Council also criticised the methodology: first, it argued that "additional local authority costs arising from a day visit to the seaside are very much greater than those arising from a trip to a shopping complex or a private leisure

²⁵³ Ev 47, 98, 100, HC 1023-II. See also para 25.

²⁵⁴ Q 504

²⁵⁵ Q 135. The public realm is a term used to refer to those parts of a town that are available for everyone to use, for example streets, squares, parks and promenades.

²⁵⁶ Ev 18, 32, 69, 100, HC 1023-II

²⁵⁷ Q 148

²⁵⁸ Q 151. See also Ev 77, HC 1023-II.

²⁵⁹ Ev 15, 19, 44, 55, 75, 96, HC 1023-II

²⁶⁰ Ev 144, HC 1023-II

²⁶¹ Ev 144, HC 1023-II

²⁶² Ev 144, HC 1023-II

park”;²⁶³ secondly, it argued that the day visitor data is out of date as it is based on data from 1998 to 1991.²⁶⁴ The Minister of State for Local Government, in response to a question on the costs of the public realm, countered that “I have never met a council [...] which do not say they have higher than average costs maintaining the public realm” and that “the formula does take into account the number of estimated visitors.²⁶⁵ **We agree with witnesses that Government funding to local authorities should reflect the impact of day visitors on the costs associated with maintaining the public realm in the formula for funding allocations. We suspect that witnesses are correct in their assertions that the funding formula methodology needs to be improved and recommend that the Government ensures that the data on day visitor numbers is both localised and up to date.**

Regional Development Agencies’ role

95. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) “are the primary vehicle for delivering support for the economic development of coastal authorities”.²⁶⁶ They therefore have a significant role to play in the regeneration of coastal towns. Evidence has shown that all coastal RDAs have supported projects in coastal towns. Some witnesses have praised the work of RDAs in supporting the regeneration of coastal towns. BRADA stated that the creation of the RDAs has “helped focus attention on coastal towns and some, for example SEEDA, have targeted declining coastal towns through their Regional Economic Strategies”.²⁶⁷ Brighton & Hove City Council stated that its relationship with South East Regional Development Agency (SEEDA) “has been extremely positive [...] We even have a Sussex coastal towns strategy” and cited the seafront development initiative as an example of a successful intervention on the part of the RDA.²⁶⁸ The English Regional Development Agencies argued that RDAs offer a wide range of support to support coastal towns. Some examples are: the South West RDA, which supports a Market and Coastal Towns Initiative; the North East RDA which has focused on the visitor economy on the North East coast; and the East Midlands RDA which is supporting a Coastal Action Zone.²⁶⁹ Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge MP, the Minister responsible for RDAs, argued that all RDAs “had developed strategies to tackle the specific issues which face the coastal towns in their regions”.²⁷⁰

96. Nevertheless, other witnesses believed that RDAs were not best placed or equipped to address the needs of coastal towns. BURA stated “there is a basic problem for RDAs, which is that they will always argue that their region is the coherent unit—they have to argue for that—and they therefore do not [...] have any incentive to see the specific interests of the coast”.²⁷¹ East Riding of Yorkshire Council said it could be a challenge to gain RDA recognition for coastal towns. It stated, “our RDA is very much based on sub-regions which cut across the coastal strip”.²⁷² It also argued that, in its region, “because of

²⁶³ Ev 77, HC 1023-II

²⁶⁴ Ev 77, HC 1023-II

²⁶⁵ Q 508-509

²⁶⁶ Ev 171, HC 1023-II

²⁶⁷ Ev 25, HC 1023-II. See also Ev 7, HC 1023-II.

²⁶⁸ Q 47

²⁶⁹ Ev 15, HC 1023-II

²⁷⁰ Q 429

²⁷¹ Q 271

²⁷² Q 21. See also Ev 70, HC 1023-II.

the quite urban and rural split within the RDA, neither team [of officers within the RDA] fully understands the needs of a coastal town”.²⁷³

97. Witnesses also commented on the varying levels and types of support provided by RDAs. BRADA stated that some RDAs provide significant financial and policy support to coastal towns, such as the North West RDA, but that others do not.²⁷⁴ It called for all RDAs to have “special coastal initiatives [...] primarily to ensure that the specific coastal issues are properly identified and thus adequately addressed”.²⁷⁵

98. The Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge MP stressed that giving RDAs “maximum flexibility” over funding and regional policy decisions was part of the Government’s approach to devolving power, the implication being that this principle applies to policy and funding towards coastal towns.²⁷⁶ She also stated that there was a “huge amount” of collaboration between RDAs: she thought that SEEDA was “the lead among the RDAs on the issue around coastal towns” and assumed that it organised a forum for sharing best practice.²⁷⁷ No evidence however was received from any other witnesses, including the RDAs, to support the assertion that RDAs share best practice on coastal towns.

99. We note that RDAs have adopted a variety of approaches towards supporting coastal towns and that a number of these has been welcomed by local regeneration partners. We are not convinced that any mandatory requirement for RDAs to adopt a specific approach towards coastal towns would be beneficial. We do recommend, however, that one RDA (such as SEEDA, owing to its expertise) has lead responsibility for facilitating the sharing of best practice on coastal towns across regions, and that RDAs establish regional forums for coastal towns.

²⁷³ Q 21

²⁷⁴ Q 126

²⁷⁵ Ev 99, HC 1023-II

²⁷⁶ Q 431

²⁷⁷ Q 450

5 National policy and initiatives

Departmental action

100. No one Government department has specific responsibility for coastal towns and responsibility for policy areas affecting coastal towns is shared across a number of Government departments.

101. The Department for Trade and Industry has policy responsibility for the RDAs. RDAs are required to report on their inward investment levels and business growth levels, including disaggregating their output data on a rural/urban basis. The RDAs do not currently disaggregate their data by coastal towns. We requested that this be done but were told that it was not possible as the information was not available from RDA Management Information Systems.²⁷⁸ Without data collated at a regional or national level on coastal towns, an evaluation of the economic situation and the adoption of appropriate policy responses is difficult, as is any evaluation of the effectiveness of RDAs in meeting the needs of coastal towns. The Minister for Industry and the Regions told us that her Department was currently reviewing the evaluation and monitoring data on the performance of RDAs. She agreed that at present it was not possible to determine the performance of RDAs in meeting the needs of coastal towns and that in her view the department did not monitor coastal towns in sufficient detail.²⁷⁹ **Given that the Government does not collate or analyse data on the investment levels and business growth in coastal towns it is difficult to see the basis for any confidence that coastal RDAs are effectively meeting the economic needs of the coastal towns in their respective regions. We note that currently RDAs disaggregate their output data on a rural/urban basis. We urge the Government to require RDAs to disaggregate their data in relation to coastal areas in their region. This would enable the Government to evaluate the effectiveness of RDAs in developing the economies of coastal towns within their regions.**

102. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has policy responsibility for tourism. There are a large number of other bodies and partnerships with delegated responsibility for tourism. VisitBritain is the national tourism agency with responsibility for advising Government and the promotion of Britain worldwide. The RDAs have a strategic responsibility for tourism within their regions. BRADA stated that there is “a multitude of different regional and sub regional structures” for tourism, including 110 Destination Management Organisations nationally with responsibility for promoting their areas.²⁸⁰ It argued that the structures are confusing and asserted that “if tourism interests find it confusing what hope [is there] for the [Government] and others trying to deliver broader policies with tourism implications”.²⁸¹ The British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers & Attractions argued that at present there “is insufficient co-ordination in the development of many of the tourist destinations that we have around the UK, particularly on the coast” and that this “is causing some of the difficulties they are facing”.²⁸² VisitBritain agreed that there are “a lot of bodies that are involved that are not necessarily networked in the way that they should be, and one of the challenges for Partners for

²⁷⁸ Ev 109

²⁷⁹ Q 450

²⁸⁰ Ev 97, HC 1023-II

²⁸¹ Ev 97, HC 1023-II

²⁸² Q 174

England is to network them successfully.”²⁸³ The Minister for State for Sport, Rt Hon. Richard Caborn MP, agreed, “there are far too many bodies [...] and that really needs to be streamlined”.²⁸⁴ **Fragmentation within the tourism support sector is a national issue and not specific to coastal towns. Coastal towns, as well as other tourist areas, would benefit from a more coherent and streamlined national structure.**

103. Much of our evidence suggests insufficient appreciation on the part of Government of the experiences and needs of coastal towns.²⁸⁵ BURA stated that the Government had no understanding of the ways in which national policies on HMOs or the benefits system, for instance, impacted on coastal towns specifically.²⁸⁶ The Government recognises that there is a range of common characteristics found in many coastal towns but has admitted that in recent years it has not undertaken any large scale research on the problems facing coastal towns.²⁸⁷ Levels of understanding about the needs of coastal towns also appear to vary between Government departments. As discussed previously, the Department for Work and Pensions appeared to have little awareness of the continuing levels of seasonality of employment within coastal towns and any policy implications resulting from this (see para 42). In contrast, the Minister for Industry and the Regions accepted that seasonal employment was a feature of coastal towns.²⁸⁸ **The Minister for Local Government stated that, in his view, further research on the impact of policy would help the Government to understand fully the needs of coastal towns and inform policy-making.**²⁸⁹ **We agree.**

104. The Government told us it did not have a standard definition of coastal towns.²⁹⁰ This is reflected in the evidence provided from various Government departments. The DCLG’s evidence drew upon data from a sample group of 30 coastal towns, while the views expressed by the DWP appear to be based on evidence from 17 selected coastal towns.²⁹¹ Such variations have implications for policy development. It is difficult to see how a unified, Government-wide understanding of coastal towns can be developed without a common evidence base. **The Seaside Economy report states “Seaside towns are the least understood of Britain’s ‘problem’ areas”.**²⁹² **We concur with this view and believe the Government does not sufficiently appreciate the needs of coastal towns.**

105. A number of witnesses stated that they were unable to comment on the effectiveness of Government or specific departments, due to their lack of awareness of any Governmental action taken specifically on coastal towns.²⁹³ Where witnesses were able to comment on cross-departmental Government liaison, they often argued that a more joined-up approach was needed.²⁹⁴ The East Kent Partnership, for instance, told us that the onus is currently on local authorities to pursue different Government departments to support

²⁸³ Q 212

²⁸⁴ Q 494

²⁸⁵ See for example Ev 59, 62, HC 1023-II

²⁸⁶ Q 284

²⁸⁷ Ev 166, HC 1023-II

²⁸⁸ Ev 65, HC 1023-II

²⁸⁹ Q 522

²⁹⁰ Ev 166, HC 1023-II

²⁹¹ Ev 175, HC 1023-II. See also Ev 92.

²⁹² *The Seaside Economy*, p. 9

²⁹³ Ev 8, 41, HC 1023-II

²⁹⁴ Ev 68, 99, 116, 137, HC 1023-II

sustainable development strategies and projects, rather than one coherent Government approach to supporting local regeneration and that, this can be a barrier to successful regeneration.²⁹⁵

106. There is, nevertheless, some evidence which suggests that in a few specific policy areas that affect coastal towns, there is cross-departmental liaison. For example, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Environment and Food and Rural Affairs, Barry Gardiner MP told us that DEFRA has liaised closely with the DCLG on the development of recent policy planning statements and on rural housing issues.²⁹⁶ The DCMS, for example, has also worked with the DCLG to produce good practice planning guidance for tourism.²⁹⁷ All Government policies can be seen to affect the lives of residents in coastal towns in some way. Given this situation, and that generally cross-departmental liaison takes place on policies, it is arguably easy to demonstrate that cross-departmental liaison takes place on general policy areas that these affect coastal towns. It is less easy to demonstrate that there is liaison on a strategic level specifically on coastal towns.

107. The Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge MP explained that, at a ministerial level, no regular discussions currently take place on coastal towns specifically but she thought that it would be a “good idea” if they did.²⁹⁸ The DCLG did not provide any evidence of inter-departmental liaison specifically on coastal towns but provided examples of specific liaison on policy areas that affect coastal towns such as casino policy and coastal flooding.²⁹⁹ There is no evidence of any strategic interdepartmental co-operation taking place specifically on coastal towns.

108. The Government has accepted that there are some common features shared by many coastal towns and that they face particular challenges.³⁰⁰ Many of these challenges cannot be addressed successfully without inter-departmental liaison. Examples of issues that would benefit from greater cross-departmental liaison include:

- Addressing the high levels of deprivation in many coastal towns, through close liaison between DCLG and DTI, RDAS;
- Improving the transport links to many coastal towns, requiring the DCLG to work with the Department for Transport;
- Dealing with the policy implications of the high elderly and vulnerable population found in many coastal towns through joint working between DCLG and the Department of Health;
- Tackling the challenges of seasonality in coastal towns through close liaison between DCLG and the DTI, and
- Reducing levels and concentrations of benefit dependency in coastal towns through a joint approach between the DCLG and the DWP.

²⁹⁵ Ev 44, HC 1023-II

²⁹⁶ Q 469

²⁹⁷ Q 501

²⁹⁸ Ev 67, HC 1023-II

²⁹⁹ Ev 168, HC 1023-II

³⁰⁰ Ev 166, HC 1023-II

109. The lack of cross-departmental liaison on coastal towns is disappointing, indicating that there is a national policy vacuum on coastal towns. Given the common characteristics shared by many coastal towns and the cross-cutting nature of the common issues facing them, cross-departmental joint working must be put in place. This would be facilitated by greater understanding and transparency over the situation of coastal towns. The Government should establish a permanent cross-departmental working group on coastal towns led by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Its role should include monitoring and promoting cross-departmental understanding of the needs of coastal towns, consideration of the effect of Government policy on coastal towns and overview of any national initiatives for coastal towns.

A national strategy for coastal towns

110. The Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone called for a National Coastal Regeneration Strategy to address the needs of coastal towns.³⁰¹ It called for this to include a number of national initiatives such as: the establishment of a coastal enterprise zone; a housing-led regeneration scheme; the re-location of public sector employment to coastal areas and ‘coastal proofing’ of national policies.³⁰² It argued that such a national strategy was essential to address effectively the common issues affecting coastal towns.³⁰³ BURA also supported the principle of having a national strategy for coastal towns, stressing the need for shared learning, although it acknowledges some risk if the strategy were to be seen as imposed by central Government. BRADA commented that theoretically a single national approach to coastal towns, including funding, sounded desirable, yet was sceptical that this could be practically implemented.³⁰⁴ Professor Fothergill stated that a “one-size-fits-all approach is not necessarily appropriate” given the level of diversity among coastal towns.³⁰⁵ SEEDA argued that coastal towns were too diverse to have a meaningful national strategy but that greater national recognition of the common issues faced in coastal towns and appropriate interventions in response would be welcome.³⁰⁶ **Our analysis of the evidence has demonstrated that coastal towns are diverse but that many coastal towns do share some common features, including deprivation. We are convinced that there is a need for greater Governmental understanding and appreciation of the needs of coastal towns. The variety of the challenges and opportunities that exist for coastal towns, however, make it difficult to conceive of a national strategy that would both an effective tool for delivery and sufficiently localised to reflect the diversity of conditions and needs in coastal towns and on this basis we are not recommending the adoption of a national strategy solely for coastal communities.**

³⁰¹ Ev 116, HC 1023-II. See also Ev 53, HC 1023-II.

³⁰² Ev 119, HC 1203-II

³⁰³ Ev 116, C 1023-II

³⁰⁴ Q 132

³⁰⁵ Q 103

³⁰⁶ Q 69

Conclusions and recommendations

1. Government has neglected the needs of coastal towns for too long. A greater understanding and appreciation is needed of the challenges faced in coastal towns. A national strategy for coastal towns is not a solution to their needs as a 'one size fits all approach' is inappropriate, but there are a number of areas that are in need specific Government action.

National policy

2. The Seaside Economy report states "Seaside towns are the least understood of Britain's 'problem' areas". We concur with this view and believe the Government does not sufficiently appreciate the needs of coastal towns . (Paragraph 104)
3. The lack of cross-departmental liaison on coastal towns is disappointing, indicating that there is a national policy vacuum on coastal towns. Given the common characteristics shared by many coastal towns and the cross-cutting nature of the common issues facing them, cross-departmental joint working must be put in place. This would be facilitated by greater understanding and transparency over the situation of coastal towns. The Government should establish a permanent cross-departmental working group on coastal towns led by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Its role should include monitoring and promoting cross-departmental understanding of the needs of coastal towns, consideration of the effect of Government policy on coastal towns and overview of any national initiatives for coastal towns. (Paragraph 109)
4. Our analysis of the evidence has demonstrated that coastal towns are diverse but that many coastal towns do share some common features, including deprivation. We are convinced that there is a need for greater Governmental understanding and appreciation of the needs of coastal towns. The variety of the challenges and opportunities that exist for coastal towns, however, make it difficult to conceive of a national strategy that would both an effective tool for delivery and sufficiently localised to reflect the diversity of conditions and needs in coastal towns and on this basis we are not recommending the adoption of a national strategy solely for coastal communities. (Paragraph 110)

Vulnerable adults and children

5. There can be significant drawbacks from placing vulnerable adults and especially children in care away from their home area; we accept that there are times when it may be necessary in the best interests of the individual but it should not be done simply to reduce costs of the placing authority. Placing authorities should ensure that they communicate as far in advance as possible with host authorities about all aspects of the placement of vulnerable children and adults. Placing authorities should also consider the impact of placements on the receiving community and host authority, and they should take responsibility for the financial impact of those placements. (Paragraph 38)

Coastal economies

6. We note that there has been employment growth in many coastal towns and that there is little significant difference between coastal and non-coastal towns in terms of overall average employment levels. We note, however, that a number of coastal towns do still have significantly lower than average employment levels. (Paragraph 47)
7. It is unacceptable and extraordinary that the Government should have no knowledge of a potentially significant national trend in which coastal towns have experienced a disproportionately high rise in the number of people claiming sickness and disability benefit levels. It appears likely that the scale of inward migration of benefit claimants could be a contributory factor. We recommend that the Government investigates this trend with a view to identifying and addressing its causes. (Paragraph 53)
8. Tourism continues to be an economically important sector for many coastal towns, and it is important that the Government recognises this. We recommend that the Government conducts an immediate study on coastal tourism, including evaluating the levels and spend of domestic and inbound visitors to the coast in comparison to non-coastal areas. We urge the Government to ensure that action is taken at a national level to promote visiting the English seaside, and to consider the merits of introducing a national coastal tourism strategy, following the example of Wales. (Paragraph 60)
9. Some coastal towns have successfully diversified their economies and reduced their dependency upon tourism. Many others would benefit from similar developments, particularly given the seasonal, low-skill and low-wage nature of employment in tourism. Economic diversification should be taken into account in regional and local regeneration strategies and development plans. We recommend that the Government encourages the sharing of best practice on economic diversification approaches for coastal towns. (Paragraph 61)
10. We find it surprising that the significance of seasonal work in coastal towns was not recognised by the Department of Work and Pensions, and only became apparent as a result of further investigation by the Committee. (Paragraph 64)
11. The seasonality of the economy in coastal towns presents economic and social challenges that need to be considered by national and local policy-makers. The Department of Work and Pensions' failure to highlight the significance of seasonality in its original evidence is suggestive of a wider lack of understanding in Government of the specific employment patterns in many coastal towns and the challenges associated with those patterns. (Paragraph 67)

Housing

12. The shortage of affordable housing is not unique to coastal towns but can be exacerbated by the high level of inward migration and the purchase of second homes. Greater provision of affordable homes is a key priority in many coastal towns and could be an important factor in retaining young people in the area. (Paragraph 40)
13. It is clear that many coastal towns suffer disproportionately from poor-quality housing and in particular have high numbers of care homes and HMOs, many of

which have been converted from redundant hotels. We recognise the availability of HMOs can attract a transient population into an area, which can bring particular challenges, particularly increasing the difficulty in gaining community involvement in local regeneration. (Paragraph 43)

14. We welcome the provisions within the Housing Act 2004 enabling local authorities to license Houses in Multiple Occupation. We recommend that the Government encourages local authorities to make full and effective use of the licensing and statutory planning powers available (including compulsory purchase) to manage HMOs. We recommend that the Government examines whether local authorities need additional powers to address the problems arising in areas with especially large numbers of HMOs. (Paragraph 46)

Coastal management

15. Some coastal communities face significant and increasing risks from coastal erosion and flooding. We welcome the Government's consideration of adaptation measures and the launch of pilot projects. We are concerned, however, that the pace of Government action is too slow to meet the needs of those coastal communities where coastal erosion is at its most aggressive and that delay can only increase social injustice and uncertainty for those communities. We recommend that the Government, as a matter of urgency, put in place a fair and transparent national approach to coastal adaptation for communities threatened by the consequences of climate change. (Paragraph 17)
16. We welcome the use of Shoreline Management Plans which are a useful tool for managing development and coastal flooding and erosion risk. The Government should make Shoreline Management Plans statutory to strengthen their use in the planning process. This will ensure that adequate account is taken of coastal flooding and erosion risk. (Paragraph 19)
17. We welcome the measures within the Planning Policy Statement 25 that give greater weight to consideration of flood risk in the planning process. (Paragraph 20)
18. It is important that investment in sea defences is linked to the regeneration of coastal areas, and we welcome the steps now taken by the Environment Agency to ensure that the social and economic implications of sea defences works are considered at the outset and that the work contributes to the improvement of the public realm. We urge the Department for Communities and Local Government to work more closely with the Environment Agency and other bodies to ensure that opportunities for regeneration of coastal towns, afforded by investment in sea defences, are realised. (Paragraph 21)
19. We agree with the Environment Agency that the information provided to those considering purchasing a property in a coastal area must draw attention to the risks arising from flooding and coastal erosion, and therefore welcome the Government's intention for coastal erosion risk maps to be available in the public domain in 2008 on a similar basis to existing flood risk maps. (Paragraph 22)

Physical isolation

20. The physical isolation of many coastal towns is often a significant barrier to economic growth, development and regeneration. (Paragraph 12)

Demographics

21. The inward migration of older people to coastal towns can bring benefits but it also places significant additional demands on public services, particularly in the areas of health and social care. (Paragraph 25)
22. Many coastal towns have higher than average levels of outward migration of young people which can contribute to a skewed demographic profile. (Paragraph 39)

Regeneration

23. Differences of opinion over regeneration between different groups within the community can occur in any settlement. The demographic profile of many coastal towns, where a significant proportion of the community may have chosen to move to the area specifically because they like it the way it is, can exacerbate these tensions and represent a greater barrier to regeneration than may be experienced in some other areas. (Paragraph 79)
24. While we recognise that there are particular challenges in coastal towns, there is no substantive evidence to demonstrate that they generally experience lower cost-benefit ratios or higher costs in regeneration projects than other areas. (Paragraph 81)
25. Leaving responsibility for the sharing of best practice on coastal town regeneration with regions and sub-regions is not an adequate response, as coastal towns would benefit from the sharing of best practice and experiences at a national level. We welcome the recent events which have facilitated such exchanges but regret that these have been ad hoc. The Government has a role to play in supporting and encouraging coastal towns to share experiences and expertise. We recommend that the Government supports a permanent network to facilitate the spread of best practice in coastal town regeneration. (Paragraph 84)

Funding

26. Given the number and complexity of the funding streams available for regeneration in coastal towns, there is considerable scope for their simplification and integration. We are not persuaded, however, that a specific funding stream for coastal town regeneration is warranted. We recommend that the Government evaluates the impact of the termination of various funding streams on coastal town regeneration, with a view to addressing any funding gap. (Paragraph 91)
27. We agree with witnesses that it is important that the Revenue Support Grant calculations take into account the levels of elderly and transient populations in an area, and recognise the geographical variation in demands placed on services by these groups. (Paragraph 92)
28. We agree with witnesses that Government funding to local authorities should reflect the impact of day visitors on the costs associated with maintaining the public realm in the formula for funding allocations. We suspect that witnesses are correct in their assertions that the funding formula methodology needs to be improved and recommend that the Government ensures that the data on day visitor numbers is both localised and up to date. (Paragraph 94)

Education

29. The evidence suggests that a high number of young people in some coastal communities have low educational attainment levels and low aspirations. While we accept that raising educational achievement and career aspirations is an important element in local regeneration, we have no evidence to convince us that the experience of coastal communities in this regard is significantly different from other areas, such as inner cities or areas of deprivation, where the aspirations of young people and their level of educational attainment are lower than the national average. Any national initiatives to increase educational attainment levels in targeted geographical areas, should ensure that coastal communities with low attainment levels are included. (Paragraph 71)

Further national and regional action

30. We note that RDAs have adopted a variety of approaches towards supporting coastal towns and that a number of these has been welcomed by local regeneration partners. We are not convinced that any mandatory requirement for RDAs to adopt a specific approach towards coastal towns would be beneficial. We do recommend, however, that one RDA (such as SEEDA, owing to its expertise) has lead responsibility for facilitating the sharing of best practice on coastal towns across regions, and that RDAs establish regional forums for coastal towns. (Paragraph 99)
31. Given that the Government does not collate or analyse data on the investment levels and business growth in coastal towns it is difficult to see the basis for any confidence that coastal RDAs are effectively meeting the economic needs of the coastal towns in their respective regions. We note that currently RDAs disaggregate their output data on a rural/urban basis. We urge the Government to require RDAs to disaggregate their data in relation to coastal areas in their region. This would enable the Government to evaluate the effectiveness of RDAs in developing the economies of coastal towns within their regions. (Paragraph 101)
32. Fragmentation within the tourism support sector is a national issue and not specific to coastal towns. Coastal towns, as well as other tourist areas, would benefit from a more coherent and streamlined national structure. (Paragraph 102)
33. The Minister for Local Government stated that, in his view, further research on the impact of policy would help the Government to understand fully the needs of coastal towns and inform policy-making. We agree. (Paragraph 103)

Annex A: Visit note – Stakeholders in Exmouth, 6 June 2006

List of Participants

Dr Phyllis Starkey MP (Chair)

Sir Paul Beresford MP

Mr Clive Betts MP

John Cummings MP

Mr Greg Hands MP

Dr John Pugh MP

Alison Seabeck MP

Mr Andrew Bailey (Web Group)

Mr Bernard Hughes (Local Businessman, County and District Councillor)

Mrs Jill Elson (EDDC Communities portfolio holder and Exmouth member)

Mr Paul Diviani (EDDC Portfolio holder and Exmouth member)

Cllr Eileen Wragg (Mayor of Exmouth Town Council)

Mr Chris Davis (English Nature)

Mr Simon Bolt (Chairman of Chamber of Trade)

Mr John Wokersien (Town Clerk, Exmouth Town Council)

Mr David Conway (Exmouth WHC project Promotion Group)

Mr Malcolm Sherry (Business Consultant, Chair Honiton/East Devon Chamber of Commerce)

Mr J D Fowler (Eagle Investments Ltd)

Mr Andrew Gibbins (Natwest Bank PLC)

Mr Robin Carter (FWS Carter & Sons)

Mr John Ward (Cranford Nursing Home)

Mr Tony Alexander (Principle Exmouth Community College)

Mr Ian Stuart (Stuart Line Cruisers)

Mr Peter Jeffs (Director of Communities, EDDC)

Mr Simon Wood (Chamber of Trade)

Ms Cherry Harris (Exmouth Youth Worker, Devon County Council)

Mrs Pat Graham (EDDC member, Chairman of Exmouth Town Management partnership)

Mr Frank Hart-Venn (Exmouth Rotary)

Mr John Bain (Clinton Devon Estates)

Mr. Chris Fayers (Eagle One, developed the Docks area)

Ms Joan Thomas (Devon Cliffs Holiday Park)

Mr Fowler stated that Exmouth was a difficult town to categorise. It called itself a resort, but was more a town. It was economically dependent on Exeter, with a high proportion of retired people. There was no elected pressure to develop Exmouth as a coastal resort. Tourism was declining as traditional British resort goers were dying out. There was no development along the sea front, and the district council was happy in some ways not to revive it. In the meantime development was occurring in other places, and therefore jobs were created elsewhere, leading young people to leave the town and adults to seek work elsewhere.

Cllr Wragg stated that Exmouth needs to move away from the 1960s and 70s, and capitalise on the natural environment. The town had an SSSI in its estuary, was part of the Jurassic coast and was on the verge of hosting a visitors' centre. The county, district and town councils were all working together. One problem was that development would attract retired people, and this created an area of low paid work which meant young people could not afford to live in the town. Exmouth had a very large community college with 2,300 students, and it needed to keep young people in the town.

Mr Bolt expressed his view that in Exmouth there was a lack of jobs and adequate road infrastructure. The proposed A3303 dual carriageway had been downgraded, and there was no A road to the town. Public transport was also needed, but roads were more important, as better roads would attract more commuters. Exmouth was on a peninsula and at present was an 'end point going nowhere' — it needed to go somewhere.

Mr Hassett stated that there was a regional issue of a lack of affordable housing and employment. The economic future of the town was uncertain. The fishing industry was long gone, and tourism was restructuring itself.

Mrs Elson explained that Exmouth Council had to provide facilities for rural areas and day visitors, so not just its 36,000 residents, but more like 90,000. It needed to build in its opportunities, such as the forthcoming expansion of Exeter airport and the Skypark — it was the nearest coastal town to the development.

Mr Jeffs said that the town was split over embracing tourism. As well as the commercial economic benefit it brought costs to residents: low paid work which in turn placed pressure on social housing; 420 holiday homes potentially empty for much of the year; unstable seasonal employment, which also led to difficulty finding housing; temporary economic immigrants coming to the town for work which could present language issues and need for specialist services.

The greatest proportion of the town was the over 65s (23%), which meant there were more pensioners than under 20s, leading to inter-generational conflicts of view; such as between the vision of the area as a peaceful retirement place or that of a vibrant holiday resort or a place for young people to enjoy. Tourism also made demands on the taxpayer, e.g. maintaining sea front gardens, seating and beach cleaning.

Mr Alexander stated that the school was in very poor repair when he arrived four years ago, and has improved since, with lots of community support. However the funding it receives is very low—10-15% lower than other areas, e.g. Birmingham, where he had last taught. There was no provision for EFL teaching. From 2007, the school would like to make use of the Plymouth Royal College site, shortly to be vacated, which had superb facilities. There was a possibility that these buildings would be sold as a hotel or conference centre, which would be bad for the community college. Sixty-four per cent of pupils stayed on to the Sixth Form, the majority doing A levels. The college wanted to increase the vocational courses it offered too. Half the leavers went on to higher education, but a low number of these returned to the area. Twenty-two per cent of leavers went into local employment.

Mr Bain stated that the location of future employment land was of central importance for the economic development of Exmouth, in order to counter the dormitory effect of Exeter.

Ms Harris raised the issue of supportive housing. In particular, she stressed the importance of affordable housing for young people.

Mrs Elson stated that affordable housing was being addressed by the council, but that there were particular difficulties in the area with housing supply. Currently 18,000 people were on the housing register awaiting accommodation in Exmouth. She explained that there was a risk that more holiday properties would close in future due to the impact of the closure of the teacher training facility within Exmouth. This was because the properties tended to be rented during term-time to students and during the summer as holiday properties, in order for owners to maintain a regular income.

Mr Fayers explained that there was no affordable housing as part of the new marina development. However, a section 106 agreement had ensured that affordable housing would be provided within the town centre by the developer. This provided less affordable housing than the current local policy due to the planning decision being taken prior to it.

Mr Conway provided an overview of the proposal for the development of the Exmouth Gateway Visitor Centre. This was described as a major, ambitious project for the town that was supported by all partners. A feasibility study had been completed with the financial assistance from the SWRDA—this estimated visitor projections at 250-300 thousand people per annum. The proposal was for this development to be complete by 2009-10. The funding for this project had been allocated, but not formally committed as yet; however negotiations were taking place with the Living Landmarks Lottery Fund.

A number of meeting participants expressed the view that the night-time economy within Exmouth was booming, with young people being attracted into the town from a wide catchment area. This had a real economic benefit to the town, but had associated issues that needed addressing. In particular, given the high resident older population this did cause tensions.

English Nature and the RSPB were supportive of the visitor centre and were content that there would be no adverse effect on the environment.

Ms Homer explained that the RDA had had cross-departmental meetings on the visitor centre. £7.1 million had been committed to the Jurassic coast, with nine towns benefiting. This was a major opportunity for the Exmouth-Swanage coast. Everything had to comply with the UNESCO science development plan.

Mr Paul Diviani stated that tourism represented 20% of the East Devon GDP. It was therefore balanced by other sectors. The RSS and the Regional Enterprise Strategy had

increased employment provision. Many residents were resistant to change. The biggest problem, when the Cranbrook development was devised, was that the resources for infrastructure were not in district council control. Exmouth and its surrounds needed an iconic project to turn it into a tourist centre.

Ms Stuart informed the Committee that Exmouth had won an award for the best value family coastal resort. Stuart Cruises now operated all year round. The Ex was the top river in country for wildlife and attracted visitors in winter. Other people were starting to realise the potential for winter activity. She felt that many people in the meeting seemed to be against tourism, when in fact there was great potential which went undeveloped. The sea front swimming pool, for example, went unmodernised, and holiday camps were expanding and not being noticed. Stuart Cruises now employed ten people plus seasonal part timers.

Mr Thomas stated that the season was getting longer because of walkers. Exmouth had an excellent nightlife which attracted visitors.

Mr Wokersien said that Exeter was very lively at night. There were three clubs and lots of pubs, it was a developing sector. Some described the town as Jekyll and Hyde. Local people came for the nightlife, even from Exeter, not just tourists. This could create problems with the elderly residents. There were also 'boy racers', and the CCTV which had been installed with grants needed renewing, with no financing available to do this.

Mrs Elson stated that there were more licensed premises in Exmouth than Exeter. Almost all policing was done at night, and the elderly population was unhappy that most daytime shifts were taken by Community Support Officers.

Mr Alexander explained that Exeter Community College was the largest employer in East Devon. Tourism would be a big boost to the sector, especially once the Plymouth Royal College had moved. The seaside culture could encourage academic underachievement as low qualifications were needed for much local work.

Mr Hughes stated that the Committee should not think that Exmouth was not optimistic. Nimbyism and other anti-groups were preventing development. There had been a petition of 12,000 signatures to oppose Unlocking Exmouth, but at the same time, there was a recognition in the town that 'something needed to be done'. The town had really suffered when Clark's factory had closed down, and the heart needed to be put back into the town. There were now 16 charity shops in the town centre – it was gradually running down. Part of the problem was that the council appeared to expect developers to pick up the costs of infrastructure improvement, for example, a £4 million watersports centre on the front had been proposed; was this to be entirely paid for by the developer? Work was needed on the roads, but this had been abandoned on cost grounds. Financial support from central government was needed.

Cllr Temperley stated that the problem for Exmouth was that it was too big to come under the assistance of the Market and Coastal Towns Association but too small to be a national priority.

Mr Hassan said that the town did not *look* deprived on a day to day basis but it was not fulfilling its potential. It had struggled to access national funds so that was why it was now looking towards the private sector. The regeneration of Exmouth did need to be part of a wider project.

Cllr Wragg stated that it should be made clear that a relatively small number of people were opposed to development; the petition was not reliable. The local press had supported the negative point of view until recently, but now was encouraging positive responses.

Mr Fayers said that Exmouth had only one third of the hinterland that most towns had, because of the coast and the estuary. Although the visitor centre plans were laudable, they were not a panacea for the town's economy. Returning visitors would be essential to success, and other problems the town faced should not be forgotten.

Mr Venn stated that the people of Exmouth were very supportive of the voluntary sector. The visitors centre would be an ongoing, evolving one which should attract return visits. The development's goal was to attract people who would return regularly.

Mr Bolt said that towns need an 'attractor' to generate visitors. Exmouth had relied too much on its resort side but now had new plans. However the town centre needed to be better, with proper planning and transport links.

Mr Conway explained that the visitor centre would go out to the wider community, encouraging local and longer term visitors. It was linked to the expansion of the community college. The county council did fund development; it had for example financed the cycle path on the coast at £1.9 million per annum.

Annex B: Visit note – Stakeholders in Margate, 18 October 2006

Participants

Dr Phyllis Starkey MP (Chair)

Lyn Brown MP

Mr Greg Hands MP

Dr John Pugh MP

Richard Samuel (Chief Executive, Thanet District Council)

John Bunnett (Corp. Director, Thanet District Council)

Cllr Sandy Ezekiel (Leader, Thanet District Council)

Sam Thomas (Regeneration Manager, Thanet District Council)

Cllr Bayford (Chair, Margate Renewal Partnership)

Carla Wenham (Renewal Manager, Thanet District Council)

Derek Harding (Director, Renewal Partnership)

Ann Smith (Chair, Margate Town Partnership)

Fran Warrington/Ruth Wood (Kent Tourism Alliance)

Frank Thorley (Local Entrepreneur)

Chief Supt. Peter West (Kent Police)

John Haward (Director Kent and Medway, GOSE)

Richard Murrells (Director, Health for Children & Young People, Kent County Council)

Janet Waghorn (Executive Director, East Kent Partnership)

Paul Tipple (Chair, East Kent Partnership)

Frances Rehal (Director, Surestart Millmead)

Victoria Pomery (Director, Turner Contemporary)

Keith MacKenney (Regeneration Manager, Kent County Council)

Lucy Betts (Supporting Independence Programme)

Allert Riepma (Senior Development Manager, SEEDA)

John Holmes (Chair, Thanet Community Development Trust)

Paul Trumble (Chair, Local Strategic Partnership)

Jenny Cranstone (Dalby Square Project)

Sue Buss (Principal, Thanet College)

Cheryl Pendry (Press Officer, Thanet District Council)

Andrea Bennett (Corporate Project Officer, Thanet District Council)

The Chair opened the meeting by thanking local stakeholders for attending, and outlined the main themes of the Committee's inquiry.

Mr Thorley said that public funding was vital to the future of Margate. The future of the Dreamland site was the major issue facing the town as its regeneration could act as a catalyst for regeneration of the rest of Margate.

Mr MacKenney said the area benefited from a strong and active partnership. However, various local funding streams had been or would soon be lost—single regeneration budget, objective 2, townscape initiatives and Heritage Lottery Fund monies among them. He said that something equivalent to the coalfield communities fund could be a way forward towards helping coastal towns.

Mr Thomas said that the area differed from other urban centres because of the large number of small-scale private sector businesses operating in it.

Ms Rehal argued for the development of more children's centres, suggesting that more lottery funding was required and that the allocation of funding needed careful consideration.

Mr Murrells discussed the role of improved community infrastructure in regeneration.

Mr Harding said the town needed to be more reactive to its problems and stressed the scale of the problems relating to unemployment, a significant transient population and low local skills levels. A serious programme was required to tackle those issues.

Ms Waghorn said local authorities had worked with an inward investment agency to bring in more private sector experience. There had been significant advances in the town's marine and aviation facilities with substantial improvements in the port and the local airport. This effort was focused beyond Margate.

Mr Trumble said major improvements were necessary to local infrastructure, and that the Local Strategic Partnership was working on that. In particular, transport links required improvement, but the "loop", a bus system for the local area, was improving.

Another participant argued for significant infrastructure investment. He added that small and medium-sized enterprises could not afford to pay substantial training costs and that the area had sought large company investment but had many small firms operating within it. He argued for substantial improvements in local literacy and skills levels, suggesting that community-based projects for training before formal qualifications were sought would be useful.

Mr Holmes stated that the image of coastal towns needed to be enhanced at a national level.

Chief Supt Peter West spoke on the issue of funding, saying that funding levels do not adequately reflect the level of policing need, influenced by factors such as the high numbers of Looked after Children in the area.

Mr Riepma outlined SEEDA's support for improving the skills-base within the local area. He went on to outline two major projects that SEEDA had supported to assist in regenerating the area, producing high-quality residential accommodation in the old town centre area and the development of a business park. It was stated that these projects would lever in private sector funding.

Cllr Bayford spoke on the need to enhance the image of Margate town centre. He noted that the Dreamland site was privately owned, and as such this presented a challenge.

Ms Cranstone spoke from her experience in regenerating Dalby Square of the need to involve residents and overcome their apathy. She also highlighted the lack of public transport in the area, informing the Committee that locals called Thanet 'Planet Thanet'.

Ms Smith stated that with climate change and global warming Thanet had the potential to increase its levels of tourists, and that as such it needed to improve its beaches and coastal paths.

Mr Bunnett spoke on the need to have a vision for the local area and said strong partnerships were critical in developing a shared vision across organisations necessary for successful regeneration.

In response to a question on ownership of the vision for the area, **Ms Wenham** spoke of the work under way to communicate a co-ordinated simple message to the public about the regeneration of the town. **Mr Samuel** explained that as the Chief Executive of Thanet District Council he was ultimately responsible for the Vision and regeneration of the town, as the public look towards the district council for action.

Cllr Ezekiel spoke on the challenge in communicating change to the public particularly on issues such as the Dreamland site, where there is a resistance to change. He explained that the council had a community leadership role in communicating and managing this change process.

Ms Wenham added that there was a particular difficulty in engaging transient populations in regeneration, as they are not connected to the local area.

Mr. Harding stated that many local people held a nostalgic regard for Dreamland as they feel it is the heart of Margate. He explained that this was a difficult issue and that people need to be helped to develop a new identity with the town.

Mr Tipple stressed that the need for good transport links within the local area was just as important as its rail link to London. In particular, Thanet had a low level of car ownership making effective public transport even more important.

Mr Murrells said that raising the educational attainment levels in the area was vital in attracting the private sector to invest. He stated that central Government needed to create more incentives beyond simple investment in schools for this to take place.

Mr Thorley finished by stating that Margate had a lot to offer tourists and private investors, as he believed Margate was an attractive seaside town with the best beaches.

Annex C: Visit note – Young people in Margate, 18 October 2006

Participants

Dr Phyllis Starkey MP (Chair)

Lyn Brown MP

Mr Greg Hands MP

Dr John Pugh MP

Nigel Cross (Thanet Youth Council Officer)

Kirra Contento (Thanet Youth Council)

Robert Ward (Charles Dickens School)

Jameelah Bowden (Charles Dickens School)

Mat Hayes (Hereson School)

Alex Fitzjohn (Hereson School)

Dan Parkinson (Hereson School)

Kyle Daniel (Hereson School)

Zak Bowra (Hereson School)

The Chair opened the meeting by outlining the purpose of the Committee's inquiry.

General points

The general view expressed by the young people was that there is not much for them to do in Margate in evenings or at weekends. The lack of any kind of youth centre or sports facilities meant that young people generally stayed home or hung around on street corners, which led to the possibility of drinking and fights.

Miss Contento said that the local council had organised summer activities, including bowling, skating and mountain biking, which had proved popular and been well attended, but that the funding was not available to do this all year round.

Job opportunities

The group from Hereson School said that most young people in and around the town expected to move away when they left school, not least because of job opportunities. There was plenty of manual labour around, particularly in the building trade, but few, if any, opportunities for office work. Most would think about living in London.

There were summertime jobs available for their age group. Several said they would consider staying in the area if better-quality jobs were available. They felt pushed to go

elsewhere in search of work. Two of the Hereson group had moved into the area from Bradford and Huddersfield: each felt their previous home had had more to offer people their age, and each intended to move away.

Drugs

The Hereson group said that weed was the most easily—and pretty easily—obtainable drug. Harder drugs were less prevalent. They believed that most drugs arrived in the area from London.

Policing

One of the group also said the local police could spend more time trying to deal with local drug sales; at present, particularly on weekends, too much of their time was spent dealing with routine trouble, such as street fights. Indeed, there was a general feeling that the police were not sufficiently visible. There was a general feeling that Margate, in particular among local towns, was a trouble spot. None of the group had themselves been beaten up, but several knew people who had.

Absence of youth facilities

The pupils from Charles Dickens school said that there was little to do in town at weekends, which were spent largely phoning friends, meeting in the town, or watching television or doing coursework at home.

One of the Hereson group said that things were easier for younger people in the summer because of the beach—“but you can’t go there every day”.

Relationship with older people

On relationships with older people, one of the Hereson group suggested younger people tended to be branded as bad apples on the basis of isolated incidents.

Aspiration

Asked how many of them intended to go on to university, three of the eight put their hands up.

Annex D: Visit note – Stakeholders in Hastings, 18 October 2006

Participants

Dr Phyllis Starkey MP (Chair)

Lyn Brown MP

Dr John Pugh MP

Robin Deane (Performance Director, 1066 Housing Association)

Clive Galbraith (Co-chair of the Local Strategic Partnership)

John Hodges (Co-chair of the Local Strategic Partnership)

Tim Hulme (Director of Projects, Hastings New College)

Steve Manwaring (Director, Hastings Voluntary Action)

Graham Marley (Ten Sixty Six Enterprise)

Cllr Matthew Lock (lead member regeneration at Hastings Borough Council, and East Sussex County Council transport lead)

Roy Mawford (Chief Executive, Hastings Borough Council)

Cheryl Miller (Chief Executive, East Sussex County Council)

Michael Nix (Partnership Director, Hastings and Rother Learning and Skills Council)

Cllr Peter Pragnell (Leader of Hastings Borough Council)

Cllr Simon Radford-Kirby (economic development projects, East Sussex County Council)

John Shaw (Director, Sea Space (local regeneration company))

Luke Springthorpe (Chair, Young Persons' Council)

Steve Swan (National Sales and Development Manager, Tomorrow's People)

Owen Thompson (Chair, Local Strategic Partnership equalities group)

The Chair opened the meeting by thanking local stakeholders for attending, and outlined the main themes of the Committee's inquiry.

Cllr Pragnell welcomed the Committee on behalf of the participants. He stated that having recently become council leader, he and his group intended to maintain the cross-party commitment to regenerating Hastings, a prime example of which was the university centre in which we were having the meeting. But it had taken the town 40 to 60 years to decline, and regeneration would be a long-term process. He said that the key issue facing the town was education and training with a view to improving the skills base in order to

attract employers. An early key plank of that programme would be the development of a major college on the old station site.

Mr Mawford said Hastings had, 50 years ago, been the third tourist resort in the country behind Blackpool and Bournemouth, but that over-reliance on tourism was part of the reason for subsequent decline. None the less, although education was, indeed, the key issue in reviving Hastings, tourism remained the second most important issue. Transport was the third major need: Hastings connections with Kent and beyond were vital to bring wages, house prices and employment levels up.

Ms Miller said Hastings differed significantly from other coastal towns in the strength of the partnerships forged between the various strands of local government and development agencies. This had arisen from the Government's rejection of a bypass plan, leading to the creation of a 10-year, five-point plan for the area.

Mr Shaw outlined the vision for Hastings contained in those five points: 1) Urban renaissance. 2) Educational excellence. 3) Business and enterprise initiatives aimed at existing businesses, expansion and links to educational institutions. 4) Improving IT use in business, particularly broadband. 5) Improved transport connections, both road and rail.

He added that Hastings' employment demography gave the town unique problems:

- 41% is public sector;
- 13% manufacturing (which is above the regional average);
- 22% is in distribution, retailing and hospitality (below the 29% regional average);
- 8% is in financial services (well below the 22% regional average).

This profile highlighted the lack of high-skilled employment opportunities in the area. In addition, the employment rate was 70%, against a national 80% average, and educational qualifications also fell below national averages.

Finally, Hastings suffered from low-quality housing stock as a result of poor conversion of former tourist resort properties. In the 1950s, the town had 50,000 bed nights, with accommodation to match. Now the figure was nearer 900 bed nights, with the accommodation converted into flats or HMOs.

Mr Hodges said Hastings's problems stretched back 150 rather than just 50 years. The town had always had transient populations moving through and had been at the fringe of everything and the centre of nothing. The former tourist hotels had now become transient accommodation for refugees, with a high concentration of Kosovans. But the town needed to remember it had a 180 degree hinterland, with the view in the direction of the other 180 degrees across the channel.

Mr Deane talked about the neighbourhood renewal focus on social housing. The neighbourhood renewal unit, in particular, had a strongly urban focus, rather than dealing with specifically coastal concerns. HMOs were a common issue facing coastal towns.

Mr Hulme also said the town had significant similarities with Margate and Folkestone as former coastal resorts. The new college in Hastings was focused on improving skills among the young, with 1,200 full-time and 10,000 part-time students. Employers seeking workers had reported that basic reading and writing skills in the area were often poor – in some instances, school leavers had the literacy levels of 10-year-olds. For the college, that

raised the difficulty that students of the right age were often a long way from being able to undertake further education.

Mr Mawford added that the town had an unusual population profile: more young and older people than average, with consequently fewer in the middle age range.

Cllr Radford-Kirby said that Hastings suffered, as the whole of East Sussex did, from accessibility problems. This was nothing new: 14th century east Sussex peasants had been unable to join the Peasants' Revolt for lack of usable roads.

He highlighted significant local employment issues, such as the seasonality of employment and the number of low-paid jobs – “not what you'd want if you had a choice”.

Cllr Pragnell, in response to questions, stressed that tourism was not the No. 1 industry in the town, and had not been since at least the 1970s. Although educational attainment was rising, the town still had high levels of people suffering mental health problems.

Mr Marley said there were two key issues: skill levels and ‘employability’ among younger people; and transport, with 85% of the area's businesses and micro-businesses operating within a 10-mile radius because they simply couldn't get out any further.

Mr Swann, national sales and development manager of Tomorrow's People, pleaded with the Committee not to forget disadvantaged people and the work of the third sector. He said that Single Regeneration Budget funding for his group would end in March and that the Learning and Skills Council was providing only 10 months' funding for educational provision. Sustainable long-term funding for the third sector was a priority.

Mr Thompson, chair of the local strategic partnership equalities group, said that Hastings was a multicultural town. It had become a dispersal area for asylum seekers, but without sufficient government support for that burden in an already deprived area. The town had coped, but needed more help.

Cllr Pragnell added that the number of asylum seekers being housed in the town was falling off, and that dispersal was being handled better with people being housed at different locations throughout the area: at one point previously, “torturers and tortured” had been housed in the same former hotel, leading to the obvious trouble between different groups.

Cllr Matthew Lock said, on educational needs and skills levels, that he had been shocked to read a survey saying most employers in the area would prefer to employ an ex-prisoner than a school-leaver on the grounds that the former were more reliable.

Cllr Radford-Kirby said that there had not been enough money to deal with dispersal of asylum seekers in Hastings, perhaps because the area suffered from the incorrect perception that the south-east is rich.

Ms Miller noted that the black and minority ethnic population of the area was only 3% of the total.

Mr Thompson added that that population had previously been negligible: when he arrived in Hastings 40 years ago, his was the only dark face he ever saw.

Cllr Pragnell added, though, that there are now between 70 and 90 ethnic groups within the area.

Ms Miller said that a response to the changing population was required from the area's education authority, and that increasing legal constraints on how the travellers population should be dealt with raised issues.

She agreed with **Mr Radford-Kirby** that Hastings might be seen as prosperous because it was in the south-east, while it in fact had the same GDP as Merseyside or Humberside.

She, too, stressed connectivity problems — it takes as long to go from Hastings to London as from London to Yorkshire.

She, too, said improved tourism will not alone regenerate the town: better employment opportunities are the route to economic improvement, while changing the town's image as somewhere people retire to is also essential.

She also explained the need to change the town's demographic profile, stressing that Hastings had among the highest proportions of elderly people in the country.

Mr Manwaring, said although Hastings was a small place it had a vibrant voluntary sector with more than 400 organisations at work. But local action sometimes happened in spite of rather than because of national programmes. He called for neighbourhood renewal assistance to help get self-starting local schemes under way.

Cllr Lock, in response to questioning on whether the role of tourism was not being undervalued, said that Hastings was looking forwards not backwards.

Cllr Pragnell added that the town had a past and was proud of it — the recent 940th anniversary celebrations of the Battle of Hastings, for example. Links were being forged with Bayeux, Calvados and Caen on the basis of that shared past, but Hastings was not primarily a seaside resort and tourism alone would not be enough to lift out of decline a town that was the 39th most deprived borough among 350.

Mr Hedges said, however, that 2,000 people had taken part in the Battle of Hastings re-enactment recently, with 10,000 in the area and spending money for the event. He said many of Hastings's problems were self-inflicted, with inept councils not investing properly.

Mr Springthorpe said there were 25,000 young people in the area. His main interest was in the social side of regeneration, with a major need for a youth building offering educational and recreational opportunities. Otherwise, drinking was a local problem because young people had few places to go but pubs, especially in the winter months.

He said local buses could do better at serving people's needs rather than sticking to set routes: for example, they could focus on places young people might leave in significant numbers late at night.

Older people in the town perceived a pandemic of youngsters out drinking on the streets, a perception that could be partly addressed by creating a centre for the younger population.

Like **Cllr Lock**, he was appalled by the survey reporting that employers were more likely to employ ex-prisoners than young people, and he felt that owed something to perceptions created by the media about young people's habits and educational levels.

He believed that most young people would want to leave the town when it came to seeking jobs. There simply were not enough high-end jobs, with Brighton and London much more attractive. Low-skilled jobs were available, but the town badly needed a high-skilled labour force so that jobs would be created in the area.

He also said that while schools surrounding Hastings were of good quality, standards within the town's schools were low.

It fairly easy to obtain "soft" drugs — cannabis and ecstasy in particular. Some cocaine was also available. He believed that these drugs came to the town from London.

Mr Thompson praised the youth council for working with older people in the town on common problems.

Mr Mawford, questioned about perceptions of the town created by the media, said the local media were generally supportive, but that national media stories, particularly in the Daily Mail, had been deeply unhelpful.

Witnesses

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Steve Vinson , Head of Economic & Community Services and Kaja Curry , Tourism Development Manager, Caradon District Council	Ev 1
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Peter Coe , Head of Regeneration, District of Easington Council	Ev 1
Adam Bates , Head of Tourism, Brighton & Hove City Council	Ev 5
Dr Robin McInnes OBE , Coastal Manager, and Steve Weaver , Chief Executive, Blackpool Borough Council	Ev 5
Councillor Ian Ward , Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Transport, Isle of Wight Council	Ev 5
Paul Lovejoy , Executive Director, Strategy & Sustainability, South East England Development Agency	Ev 11
Jamie Merrick , Director of Sustainable Communities, East of England Development Agency	Ev 11
Ian Wray , Head of Planning, /Transport and Housing, North West Regional Development Agency	Ev 11
Ian Thompson , Director of Operations (North), South West of England Regional Development Agency	Ev 11

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Professor Steve Fothergill , Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University	Ev 16
James Hassett , Chief Executive, Market and Coastal Towns Association	Ev 20
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- Colin Dawson**, Chief Executive, **Philip Miller MBE**, Managing Director of Stockvale Ltd, The British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers & Attractions Ltd Ev 30
- Michael Bedingfield**, England Marketing Director, **Stuart Barrow**, Government Affairs Officer, VisitBritain Ev 30
- Judith Cligman**, Director of Policy, **Kate Clarke**, Deputy Director, Policy, Heritage Lottery Fund Ev 36
- Duncan McCallum**, Policy Director, Policy and Communications Group, English Heritage Ev 36
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- Peter Kegg**, Chartered Institute of Housing and Chief Executive of Bournemouth Churches Housing Association Ev 45
- Sophie Livingston**, Head of Policy and Communications, and **Peter Shimwell**, Manager of the Redruth Foyer, Foyer Federation Ev 49
- Bill Wells**, Economy and Labour Market Divisional Manager, DWP, and **Jeremy Groombridge**, Director Business Design, JobCentre Plus Ev 53
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Tuesday 24 October 2006

- Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge MBE MP**, Minister of State (Industry and the Regions), Department of Trade and Industry Ev 63
- Barry Gardiner MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Ev 67
- Rt Hon. Richard Caborn MP**, Minister of State (Sport), Department for Culture, Media and Sport Ev 71
- Phil Woolas MP**, Minister of State (Local Government & Community Cohesion) Ev 75

List of written evidence

The following written submissions were published on 18 April 2006 in *Coastal Towns: Written Evidence*, HC 1023-II, Session 2005–06.

Councillor Geoffrey Richards, Sutton on Sea South Ward
Coastal Academy
Councillor Ron Shapland MBE BSc FICFor
Lancaster City Council
Exmouth Town Council
Cumbria Tourist Board
Channel Corridor Partnership (CCP)
Caradon District Council
English Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
Essex County Council
South Hams District Council
South Lakeland District Council
East of England Development Agency (EEDA)
nef (new economics foundation)
Holyhead Forward
Market and Coastal Towns Association (MCTA)
Southport Partnership
Skegness Town Council
Southampton City Council
Torbay Line Rail Users Group
Dover Pride
East Kent Partnership
Thanet District Council
Jenny Lennon-Wood & Christopher Wood
Cornwall County Council
The Theatres Trust
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
The National Piers Society
Dover District Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC)
United Utilities (UU)
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
Kent County Council
South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA)
Shepway District Council
Brighton & Hove City Council
English Heritage
South Tyneside Council
Kent Green Party
Bournemouth Borough Council

The British Amusement Catering Trades Association (BACTA)
British Resorts And Destinations Association (BRADA)
Shepway Economic Regeneration Partnership
Devon County Council
Lincolnshire Coastal Action Zone (CAZ) Partnership
Isle of Wight Council
Blackpool Council
Torbay Council
Wyre Borough Council
Environment Agency
Suffolk Coastal District Council
The British Associations of Leisure Parks, Piers & Attractions Ltd (BALPPA)
Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Supplementary written evidence

The following written submissions were received after the publication of *Coastal Towns: Written Evidence, HC 1023-II, Session 2005–06*. They are reproduced in the back pages of this Report.

District of Easington (CT 55)	Ev 82
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British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) (CT 58)	Ev 88
Foyer Federation (CT 59)	Ev 89
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (CT 60)	Ev 92
Supplementary memorandum by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (CT 60(a))	Ev 100
Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) (CT 61)	Ev 108
Supplementary memorandum by the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) (CT 61(a))	Ev 109
Mr M S Kirkaldie BSc (CT 62)	Ev 109
Mr Glyn-Jones (CT 63)	Ev 110
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (CT 64)	Ev 110
Supplementary memorandum by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council (CT 30(a))	Ev 112
Supplementary memorandum by the Environment Agency (CT 50(a))	Ev 114
London Councils (CT 65)	Ev 121
Local Government Association (CT 66)	Ev 122
Supplementary memorandum by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CT 56(b))	Ev 122
Supplementary memorandum by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (CT 60(b))	Ev 123
Supplementary memorandum by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (CT 60(c))	Ev 131

List of unprinted written evidence

Additional papers have been received from the following and have been reported to the House but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Record Office, House of Lords and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to the Parliamentary Archives, House of Lords, London SW1. (Tel 020 7219 3074). Hours of inspection are from 9:30am to 5:00pm on Mondays to Fridays.

CT 36(i) - Economic indicators and measures of deprivation, Brighton & Hove City Council

CT 37(i) - Background paper from English Heritage/Heritage Lottery Fund for the Committee's visit to Margate, Whitstable and Hasting, 18 Oct 06

CT B/P 02 – DCMS – Background note on Government Policy

CT B/P 06 – JPC Shapter/Sybil Cardy – Documents re: development of Exmouth Docks.

CT B/P 10 – Save Dreamland Campaign [note from the Committee visit to Margate, Whitstable and Hastings, 18 Oct '06]

CT B/P 14 – Note from Councillor Jeannie Law, Ward Councillor for Seasalter, Whitstable, Kent on 'How Whitstable turned itself into a success'

Formal Minutes

Monday 26 February 2007

Members present:

Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Sir Paul Beresford
Mr Clive Betts
John Cummings

Mr Greg Hands
Anne Main
Dr John Pugh

Coastal Towns

Draft Report (*Coastal Towns*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 110 read and agreed to.

Annexes read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Several Papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 27 February 2007 at Ten o'clock.]

Reports from the Communities and Local Government Committee in the current Parliament

The following reports have been produced by the Committee in the current Parliament. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

On 27th June 2006, by Order of the House, the ODPM Committee was succeeded by the Communities and Local Government Committee and all proceedings of the former Committee were deemed to be proceedings of the latter.

Session 2006–07

First Report	The Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 198
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Session 2005–06

First Report	ODPM Annual Report and Accounts	HC 559 (<i>HC 1072</i>)
Second Report	Re-licensing	HC 606 (<i>Cm 6788</i>)
Third Report	Affordability and the Supply of Housing	HC 703–I (<i>Cm 6912</i>)
First Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2004–05, on the ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2004	HC 407
Second Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report of Session 2004–05, on the Role and Effectiveness of The Local Government Ombudsmen for England	HC 605
Third Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2004–05, on the Role and Effectiveness of the Standards Board for England	HC 988
Fourth Special Report	Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2005–06, on the ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2005.	HC 1072
Fourth Report	The Fire and Rescue Service	HC 872–I (<i>Cm 6919</i>)
Fifth Report	Planning-gain Supplement	HC 1024–I (<i>Cm 7005</i>)