

## Information Digest from the Technical press

BAA comments are well featured this month on the Working Time Directive, MPS1 planning consultation and the proposed (and now *fait accompli* in the Commons Monday and the Lords tonight!) Planning Fee increases from April.

Snippets follow:

**Road Transport Directive** In January the British Aggregates Association warned that the Road Transport Directive, which takes effect in the UK on 25 March 2005, had the *"potential to bring about the loss of a large part of our domestic aggregate industry"* and sought a derogation for the aggregates sector. BAA is concerned about the ability to compete against imported aggregates. *"Most of our large conurbations are on the coast and have operational ports with established facilities for unloading, dispersing and processing aggregates and it can already cost more to deliver to these cities by road than to ship in bulk from countries like Norway. A significant incentive to locate concrete works and asphalt facilities in the docklands is that much of our cement and all our bitumen arrives by sea."* Imports of aggregates are rising and Network Rail has bought Norwegian track ballast. Much of the stone market has been lost to imports with granite slabs, setts etc coming from Spain, Portugal or China. Similarly, Spanish slate has started to dominate the roofing market.

**Minerals Policy Statement 1: Planning and Minerals.** Among early comments made on the draft MPS1, Devon CC noted several additions or amendments that should be made. These included promoting the use of sustainable construction methods to reduce demand for minerals; the protection from minerals development of regionally and locally designated areas of landscape, nature conservation and historic value; and an explicit statement on how demand for minerals should be met in the event that there are no environmentally acceptable sources within an area. Clarification was required on whether the test of need in SSSIs and sites containing protected species was the same as that for National Parks and other national landscape designations. **The British Aggregates Association** in January noted that MPS1 and the Guidance were essentially a consolidation of current practice "and is thankfully shorter". However, it had not achieved the clarity and incentive to create a more positive environment for business investment, and offer a clearer remit to planners (and hopefully for a new generation of planners being attracted into the industry). BAA asked that the overall policy statement be further reviewed.

**Planning fees: further consultation** A second ODPM consultation in December for response by 28 January 2005 followed the consultation on planning fee increases that ended on 9 December. The second consultation document

proposes further increases. There were strong representations in the first consultation that the planning fee increases were not high enough and that the aim of any increases should be to recover costs of handling planning applications. Any proposed changes can still be introduced from 1 April 2005. The British Aggregates Association did not consider that the proposed increases were either fair or reasonable.

Regards  
Peter