

## **Digest from the Construction Products Association picked up by *QM Bulletin* on 30 May 2007**

### **Manufacturing left behind in planning changes**

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ALTHOUGH the Planning White Paper, which was launched last week, identified many of the shortcomings in the planning system that industry has been highlighting, the Construction Products Association says it is concerned that the Paper fails to address some of the most serious issues facing industry.

It says the principle concern for product manufacturers and suppliers is the unacceptable length of time it takes to consider applications for industrial and business developments, especially mineral applications.

The Association is also concerned with the uncertainty about a long-term national policy for key infrastructure needs if it does not have the support of all the main political parties. It believes this will undermine the potential benefit of having a long-term framework as a basis for speedier decisions and a clearer framework against which industry can make future investment decisions.

Nevertheless, the Association said it welcomed the key proposal that major infrastructure systems will be subject to a new regime, whereby Ministers and Parliament will set a new national policy framework for the country's key infrastructure needs for the next 10–25 years, bringing it together under one legal framework. Decisions on specific proposals within this framework will be made by a new independent infrastructure planning commission.

The Association also welcomed the proposal to speed up the planning appeals system, whereby appeals will have to be lodged within eight weeks rather than six months.

Speaking after the launch, Michael Ankers, chief executive of the Construction Products Association, echoed the Government's comments and acknowledged the need that in order for business to be competitive it had to respond much more quickly to changes in market conditions.

He said: 'We all know that planning is vital to economic development and delays in the process, especially when dealing with major infrastructure projects, can damage the country's economic and environmental well-being. Too often in our industry these delays lead to investment and jobs being lost to overseas competitors. It is right that the Government is beginning to address some of these issues, but we need to ensure these good intentions are now followed through.'

The Planning White Paper is open for consultation until 17 August 2007.

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