



**Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government**

Town and Parish Councils

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17/10/13

## **Sustainable Communities Act 2007: Invitation to Town and Parish Councils**

My colleague, the Rt Hon Don Foster MP announced in May that we would be extending the Sustainable Communities Act so that town and parish councils can also take advantage of this valuable tool. This followed a consultation process that showed significant support for the extension within the sector. I am pleased to confirm that this change took effect from Monday 14 October.

I'm now writing on behalf of the Secretary of State to invite town and parish councils to submit proposals under the Act. This invitation is an extension of the invitation that the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP sent to principal councils on 15 December 2010, and which is still in place for those councils.

The Sustainable Communities Act embodies our commitment towards localism and empowering communities to take decisions about improvements they want to see introduced in their local areas. It provides an opportunity for local people to ask central government via local government to remove legislative or other barriers that prevent them from improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.

It was evident from responses to the consultation that town and parish councils are enthusiastic at the prospect of engaging with local people and encouraging them to become more involved in the democratic decision-making process. They understand the local communities they represent and are well placed to identify opportunities to support the localism agenda and work with local people on key issues of concern.

This is your opportunity to engage with the local community and ask for their ideas about how the community can be improved. If there are barriers to the implementation of these ideas you can use the Act to ask the government to remove them. The barriers can be in legislation or guidance or they may be the result of established practice. The Schedule to the Act contains more information but the idea could be concerned with a range of subjects including the provision of local services, increasing involvement in local democracy and improvements in community health.

## Submitting a Proposal and What Happens Next

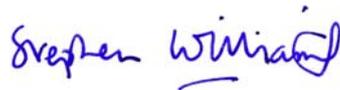
The law and process are the same for town and parish councils as for principal authorities. Before a proposal can be submitted a council is required to consult and try to reach agreement with local people on the issue. Proposals should then be submitted through the Barrier Busting website (<http://barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk/>), which provides guidance on the process. There is no deadline for the submission of proposals.

We are not being prescriptive about how you should consult and agree proposals with local people as we believe that you know how best to engage with your community. All we ask is that, when you submit your proposals you include evidence of your community engagement.

Following receipt of a proposal the Government will decide whether or not it should be implemented. If we accept a proposal we will set out an action plan to implement it. The contents of the action plan will depend on the nature of proposal but could include changes to guidance or legislation and the steps required to make these changes.

If we reject a proposal we will explain the reasons for this. Where this occurs the proposing council can ask the Selector to resubmit it to the Government. If the Selector agrees that the proposal should be implemented it will ask the Government to reconsider it. We would then be required to try and reach agreement with the Selector on the proposal. I am pleased that the National Association for Local Councils has agreed to undertake the Selector role for town and parish councils.

I look forward to receiving your proposals.



**STEPHEN WILLIAMS MP**