

## **13 UPDATE REPORT ON HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL BUILDING CONTROL AND THE L.A.B.C. PARTNER AUTHORITY SCHEME**

**Report By: Building Control Manager**

### **Wards Affected**

Countywide

### **Purpose**

1. To inform members of the progress of the implementation of the scheme by Building Control.

### **Financial Implications**

2. None.

### **Background**

3. At present Herefordshire Council has been participating in the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Scheme for the last four years.
  - 3.1 A by-product of the national Building Regulations being in a non-prescriptive format is that although the surveyors are given freedom to use their professional judgement, this has led to a variation of interpretation of the regulations. The variations are highlighted when clients use the service in different authorities.
  - 3.2 The Partner Authority Scheme was devised as a marketing tool to help our clients receive a more uniform level of service nationwide and enables clients to become a 'partner' with a single local authority.
  - 3.3 The Partner Authority deposits all Building Regulation submissions with the Local Authority where the work is to be carried out (Inspecting Authority) on behalf of the client. The Partner Authority is generally local to the client's head office or agent acting on behalf of the client; this enables the authority and design team to have a close working relationship that can be developed. The client has the benefit of advice and consultation on a regular basis or when required and can be kept up to date with current building regulations. The Local Authority has the benefit of "pre-submission" meetings to explain and educate the client/agent in the substantive requirements of the Regulations prior to any formal submissions being made.
  - 3.4 Once the client/agent is in a position to make a submission, it is deposited with the Partner Authority. The submission is forwarded to the Inspecting Authority. When the Partner Authority is in a position to make a decision on the submission following any necessary

negotiations etc, a 'Decision Advice Notice' is issued to the Inspecting Authority requesting them to issue the formal decision stated on the decision advice notice. The Inspecting Authority should issue the decision as specified by the Partner Authority.

3.5 The Partner Authority receives the 'plan fee' element of the charge from the client/agent with the Inspecting Authority collecting the 'inspection fee' element.

## Current Position of Herefordshire Building Control and the Partner Authority Scheme

4. Herefordshire Council has participated in the Partnership Scheme since its inception and at present have four partner companies:
- Border oak
  - Leominster Construction
  - Collins Engineering
  - Kingspan

Discussions with a potential fifth partner are ongoing.

During 2004 Wyevale who had been inactive for sometime left the scheme.

Two of our partners have been active outside the county during the past years; these are Border Oak and Leominster Construction. The table below shows the current statistics in relation to these active partners only:

### Year 2002

<u>Partner Company</u>	<u>Submissions</u>	<u>Fee income</u>	<u>Ave income/submission</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Border Oak	15	£1375	£91.66	£1050

### Year 2003

<u>Partner Company</u>	<u>Submissions</u>	<u>Fee Income</u>	<u>Ave income/submission</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Border Oak	13	£2086	£160.46	£910
Leominster Construction	4	£2506.70	£626.67	£980

### Year 2004

<u>Partner Company</u>	<u>Submissions</u>	<u>Fee Income</u>	<u>Ave income/submission</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Border Oak	23	£4005.39	£174.14	£1610
Leominster Construction	2	£926.76	£463.38	£595

**Total**

<u>Submissions</u>	<u>Fee Income</u>	<u>Ave income/submission</u>	<u>Cost</u>
57	£10899.85	£191.22	£5145

**Officer's Appraisal**

5. Herefordshire Councils involvement in the partnership scheme does produce benefits for both the Authority and the client.

5.1 The advantage for a company such as Border Oak is that due to its unusual construction methods, compared to modern day construction, the same questions are not raised by each separate authority. Also our familiarity with the type of construction enables a fast turn around of decisions. The relatively low fee for this type of submission does reflect the amount of time required per application.

5.2 Leominster Construction's competitive advantage seems to be that when competing against larger or better-known companies, the partnership with Herefordshire Council helps to give some credibility particularly at the initial stages of a potential project. The fee received for these submissions reflects the more complex designs and higher input from us because all submissions are individual in design.

5.3 During 2004 a potential partnership was refused due to staff shortages.

5.4 Our ability to provide more than the basic input into the scheme has been restricted, however further work and relationship building will continue to be carried out with our existing partners.

5.5 The number of partners will be increased when staffing levels permit, which should lead to increased income.

5.6 When we are in a position to move forward again, with this scheme, it is anticipated that a further three partners will be sought. An income of £6560 (an increase of 33%) could be considered as a reasonable target for the first year.

5.7 Due to conditions outlined above the potential of the Partnership Scheme is considerable. For this potential to be realised it is considered that the following must be in place;

- Targeted promotion of the scheme
- Liaison and continuing backup with and for the Partner companies
- Reinvestment into the scheme

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That members endorse this report and when resources permit the scheme be fully implemented.**