



Developers East Sussex (DES) was formally established in May 2016 as a group of organisations actively involved with the delivery of quality sustainable development in East Sussex. DES is committed to making a difference in the East Sussex growth agenda to bring about deliverable, high quality and sustainable development, a functional property market and growth in jobs and housing. DES aims to represent all developers in East Sussex – commercial and residential, large and small, private companies, housing associations, public bodies and owners, planners, construction companies, etc.

The DES group has continued to move forward in addressing the common barriers to quality sustainable development in East Sussex through collaboration and direct engagement with key stakeholders. The most recent DES meetings (Oct 2017 & Jan 2018) have focussed on Utilities and the importance of Design in the planning process, with input from the Environment Agency and Design South East respectively.

DES is introducing new good practices across the county and has helped develop the *East Sussex Planning Protocol*. The draft protocol document has been very well received and has now been signed-off by ESCC Leaders & Chief Executives. A launch event will be scheduled in Apr/May 2018.

Future DES meeting topics will include Skills, the 'I Construct' project, Utilities & Service Providers, ESCC's Property Investment Strategy and Local Growth Plans. The next DES meeting on 10 Apr 2018 will welcome Mark Farmer, author of the *Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model*, a government-commissioned review into the construction sector published in Oct 2016. The hard-hitting report – titled "Modernise or Die" – gave a full and frank analysis of the industry with a series of recommendations for transformational change, so a year on it's an absolute coup to have Mark agree to join the DES meeting to discuss his review.

Subscription membership

Since its inception DES has relied on the 'good will' support of its Chair, ESCC colleagues and other key personnel. In Jul 2017 DES also introduced a dedicated support role and appointed Nick Fenton as DES Coordinator (using initial pilot funding put forward by ESCC). A more permanent funding solution is required long term so a *subscription membership* arrangement has now been agreed.

Membership will be drawn from the development sector on a subscription basis to support the costs of running the group. Membership fees have been very carefully considered; a single membership fee of £1,500 per annum has been agreed, running from 1 Apr each year. An associate membership will also be available at £750 per annum for those who want to be involved but not to the extent of a full member (the difference between full and associate membership is full inclusivity and an annual dinner – associate membership is more suited to agents, planners, architects, etc. who want involvement but don't bring the same attributes as a full member).

DES has partnered with Let's Do Business Group (LDBG) and Locate East Sussex (LES) to provide the administrative support functions in terms of accountancy and legal advice, the collection of fees, arranging venues, as well as PR, marketing and a website if required. LDBG and LES will both continue to be influential partners to DES, with the same aims and aspirations on commercial delivery. ESCC has also agreed to continue with some of the high-level organisation and support necessary to ensure buy-in from the public sector.

Additional membership will also be allowed on a free-of-cost basis to include senior representatives from such groups as the Environment Agency (EA), Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), Natural England, Department for International Trade (DIT) and the County, Borough & District Councils – thereby extending the influence of the group and giving the paying members access and influence to these organisations as part of their membership. These additional members will also be invited to the annual dinner, attended by senior members of ESCC, providing an excellent way to bring everyone together and hear the issues and opportunities that can be taken forward and addressed jointly.

The new subscription arrangement has been welcomed by the DES group; a large number of the regular developer organisations have already indicated their support and their commitment to join. LDBG is currently in the process of liaising with these organisations and arranging invoicing/payment. It's expected

that final take-up will be high, and hopefully DES's established trend of attracting around 25+ attendees to DES meetings can continue.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

In Jul 2017 the government opened competitive bids to the Housing Infrastructure Fund. The £2.3bn pot was split into two streams:

- Marginal Viability Fund, which was open to lower-tier authorities to overcome viability issues at single site interventions; and
- Forward Funding pot, available to upper-tier authorities to address the requirement for larger scale strategic interventions.

Officers from the District, Borough and County Councils worked in partnership to identify a list of schemes that would be suitable for each of these available pots. In Feb 2018 the government announced £866m of investment in Marginal Viability schemes across the country; £16.7m was confirmed for East Sussex, to be invested in the following four schemes:

- Bedfordwell Road, Eastbourne – £1.23m (planning granted)
- Combe Valley Sports Village, Hastings – £2.225m
- North Street Quarter, Lewes – £10m (planning granted)
- Blackfriars, Battle – £3.24m (planning granted)

This is excellent news for the county and clearly demonstrates the collaborative work all the local authorities in East Sussex are undertaking to support housing and employment.

Regarding the Forward Funding pot, ESCC submitted a £32m bid focusing on interventions that would address issues surrounding the Ashdown Forest, increase education provision in South Wealden, and improve transport links along the Hailsham to Eastbourne corridor. Expressions of Interest will be shortlisted to go through to co-development, after which local authorities will be asked to submit final business cases during the summer; successful bids are expected to be announced by Oct 2018.