



House of Commons

Children, Schools and Families
Committee

Sustainable Schools and Building Schools for the Future

Oral and written evidence

The Children, Schools and Families Committee

The Children, Schools and Families Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Children, Schools and Families and its associated public bodies.

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The current staff of the Committee are Kenneth Fox (Clerk), Sarah Thatcher, (Second Clerk), Emma Wisby (Committee Specialist), Judith Boyce (Committee Specialist), Jenny Nelson (Senior Committee Assistant), Kathryn Smith (Committee Assistant), and Jim Lawford (Committee Support Assistant).

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The following memoranda have been reported to the House, but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives, and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

Zurich Municipal

Euroclad

Rockwool Ltd

Oral evidence

Taken before the Children, Schools and Families Committee

on Monday 14 July 2008

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Annette Brooke
Mr Douglas Carswell
Mr David Chaytor
Paul Holmes

Fiona Mactaggart
Mr Andy Slaughter
Mr Graham Stuart
Lynda Waltho

Memorandum submitted by The British Council for School Environments (BCSE)

1. The British Council for School Environments is a membership organisation and charity made up of schools, local authorities, construction companies, architects and all those involved in and concerned about designing excellent learning environments.

This new organisation is a forum for the exchange of good practice, research, dialogue and advocacy, supporting organisations from across the private and public sectors to understand each others needs. The members range from global leaders in construction, engineering and design to primary and secondary schools.

1.1 The organisation has most recently:

- Hosted study tours to schools in Denmark, Sweden, Stoke, Kent, Leeds and Hampshire.
- Delivered Training courses.
- Hosted expert groups on acoustics/ventilation and sustainability.
- Published materials on teaching and learning and extended schools, sustainability and learning technologies.
- Given written and oral evidence to the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on “Building Schools for the Future and sustainable schools”.
- Launched BCSE Industry awards.
- Hosted National School Environments Week 2007 and 2008.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The BCSE and its members continue to celebrate investment in our schools’ infrastructure.

2.2 We continue to welcome time spent on looking at the procurement process and key issues as a meaningful way of ensuring that this money is spent wisely. We are also heartened that Partnerships for Schools is working with organisations like the BCSE to hear experience from the frontline.

2.3 Although the targets for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) procured schools have been re-drawn; we are able to see BSF-funded schools in many parts of the country. It is important to note that BSF one school pathfinder projects are able to be designed and built avoiding much of the formal BSF procurement process itself.

2.4 Many private and public sector partners have now been part of the BSF procurement process and are able to share experiences.

2.5 Comments continue to focus on the procurement process of BSF—the “how”, whilst the challenges of the “what”—transformed schools, are a priority for others. There is widespread agreement that suggestions made to change the procurement process are a step in the right direction. Yet, much work still remains to create a process that truly plays to the strengths of all those involved and does not become merely an end in itself.

2.6 We demand innovation and transformation of our schools as a society without releasing the resources to ensure proper change management within our schools and communities.

2.7 The involvement of teachers and young people often remains a worthy aspiration that is not underwritten or made explicit in the procurement process. The meaningful involvement of users remains patchy and could benefit from clear guidelines. The Design Quality Indicators are not in themselves a participation strategy.

2.8 A better informed client and the real ownership of educational transformation by teachers and learners will ensure value for money and the time for proper connections to be made with a wider sustainability agenda, children’s services agenda or a community regeneration strategy.

2.9 It is of profound and worrying significance that there is no Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) tied to this investment. We need to be able to give proper user feedback and energy data to those designing, building, engineering and supplying our schools.

2.10 Post Occupancy Evaluation also acts to enshrine the positive aspects of this spending within public policy and Government more widely.

2.11 The BCSE acknowledges the crucial nature of this investment, the vital importance of how it is spent and the ability of all those involved to learn on a national level.

2.12 The BCSE would like to see further national “test-bed” pathfinder sites in BSF to include such issues as the carbon neutral school, alternative procurement methods and the Future School—exploring new ways of teaching and learning.

2.13 Great schools do not happen by accident.

3.0 The procurement process—We welcome the changes that have already taken place in the BSF process but there still remain concern over the costs, timescales and the lack of involvement of teachers and learners. Often discussion about transformation in education is driven by the procurement process itself rather than what it is you’re trying to procure.

3.1 Members of the BCSE continue to raise a number of questions:

- (i) Does the present process help or hinder the transformation we want?
- (ii) Is the present process a creative straitjacket that can only ever produce new “old” schools and is it more “nanny procurement” which lowers confidence and plays to a risk averse mindset?
- (iii) Is the present BSF procurement process really the best or only way to help Local Authorities find a partnership that will endure?
- (iv) Does the process allow enough meaningful time between designer and client?
- (v) Does it really help integrate those other agendas of extended schools or Every Child Matters?
- (vi) Key reviews of UK construction from Latham to Egan to “Modernising Construction” shared key approaches and benchmarks of good practice in procurement and partnering.
- (vii) Does the present BSF procurement process play to the real strengths of our design and construction industries?
- (viii) Does the success of the BSF-funded one school pathfinders indicate a new way forward in procuring BSF?

Views from the ground

“... goes well when the school leaders are allowed to be active partners so that they can learn about design and simple things like the importance of colour and fixtures and the balance between function and form.”

“How can we help schools to articulate their educational vision and truly understand what potential design had to deliver that vision when they have such limited time and resource to explore and research.”

“Architects have the skills and desires to deliver against the transformational agenda being sought. However 12–17 weeks in a competitive bidding process stifles this ambition.”

“Not enough time to engage and truly understand (client) requirements.”

“This competition doesn’t save money; it costs loads and stifles proper engagement.”

“Why is the bidding process so expensive and long?”

Participants at Building Better School Summit, London, June 2008

4.0 Design quality—We welcome the positive signs of several initiatives to raise design quality. We are concerned that there does not seem to be clear ownership of the delivery of educational transformation.

4.1 We need to look again at the mandatory Design Quality Indicator (DQI). Is it focused enough on teaching and learning spaces? Is it easily understood in its present form?

4.2 We need to ensure the on-going integrity of effective design in our schools. Consideration should be given to ensuring that design quality and how it relates to creating teaching and learning spaces is given adequate weighting in BSF bids.

4.3 This investment is about transforming educational experiences through quality build and design. The Government should publish a teaching and learning principles “kit of parts”—as we have seen in the State of Victoria, Australia.

4.4 Good design must serve the needs of our teachers and learners.

Views from the ground

“Teachers need more help in delivering education transformation—a new school won’t do it on its own. Proper funding for change management is needed.”

“Design is not given enough weighting in the BSF marking process.”

“It is not as simple as flicking the switch for change!”

“How can authority and school visions be mapped on to the dqj process?”

Participants at Building Better Schools Summit, London, June 2008

5.0 Building Bulletins—We need a new design guide for our schools—freed of contradictions and including up to the minute advice on community use for instance. Bolting on agenda after agenda is not the way to build coherence.

5.1 Government advice needs to be clear and relevant to modern needs. There is real confusion in the school community about the Building Bulletins which on the one hand encourage creative thinking and on the other are seen to set prescriptive ways of thinking.

5.2 Do these guidance bulletins in their present form hinder or help work on the ground?

6.0 Participation of Teachers and Learners—There is a lack of explicit time in the process for proper meaningful stakeholder engagement. We have a patchwork of approaches without an imaginative minimum threshold. The National Audit Office highlights the benefits for business of meeting user needs.

6.1 Building participation of pupils, staff and communities into the heart of the build and design process will help ensure fit for purpose schools and that transformation is shared.

6.2 Proper meaningful stakeholder engagement makes sense for business and for education. We need a mechanism for the participation of teachers and learners that feeds aspirations.

6.3 Young people need a sense of ownership over their lives and communities.

6.4 We need to prevent schools having to talk to multiple bid teams.

6.5 Minimum standards of participation could be a useful guide to clients and suppliers.

7.0 POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION

7.1 There is no schools post occupancy evaluation to clarify what we are doing right or wrong in this massive investment. We have a weak “learning loop” within this investment which precludes us from knowing what works and what doesn’t.

7.2 We need to introduce post occupancy evaluation across all schools investment.

Views from the ground

“Who in Government is collecting the research on what is working on completed projects.”

“We need to learn more from early projects—what mistakes must we ensure are not repeated?”

“Do we know what really improves learning? Are we using this to inform building design?”

“We need proper customer feedback.”

“What about some Post Occupancy Evaluation available for all.”

Participants at Building Better Schools Summit, London, June 2008

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by the Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)

This short paper sets out CABE’s response to the Committee’s follow up to the enquiry on Sustainable Schools and Building Schools for the Future. Before addressing the specific questions, we set out CABE’s role and experience in relation to school design.

1. CABE was set up by the first Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in 1999 with the mission to promote high quality architecture and design within the built environment in England. CABE’s vision is of a country that by 2010 will lead Europe in understanding and harnessing the ability of great buildings and spaces to transform neighbourhoods, to generate social value and to sustain economic growth.

2. CABE is now jointly funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The sponsorship arrangements are with the DCMS.

3. CAFE's enabling programme provides hands-on expert advice to public sector bodies that are procuring new buildings or masterplans, giving strategic advice on how to help get better value from their projects through better design. The advice covers issues such as project vision, client resources, briefing and competitive selection of design and developer teams.

4. CAFE has been, or is currently involved, in supporting 58 local authorities involved in the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme up to wave 5, with a further 12 wave 6 authorities scheduled to start. We are in discussions with DCSF and Partnerships for Schools (PFS) to define the best way to assist in future waves.

5. CAFE is assessing designs for BSF schools from selected authorities in Waves 1–3 at its Schools Design Panel, and had assessed 89 proposed designs for 35 schools by May 2008. The panel will assess all proposed designs from Wave 4.

6. This involvement builds on our work with previous school building programmes, before BSF. Our network of advisers ("enablers") has provided client-side support to 27 PFI "clusters" between 2000 and 2003. These clusters will eventually build 110 secondary schools, the majority of which are yet to open.

WHAT WE KNOW

1. In 2006, CAFE completed a comprehensive audit of recently completed (pre-BSF) secondary schools. The audit reviewed 52 completed schools, including PFI schools and those procured through other routes, including City Academies. These were assessed against a standard set of design criteria. The results of the audit, in combination with the results from the Schools Design Panel give CAFE a good insight into the rate of progress in schools building.

2. Since 2007, CAFE has had a direct involvement in the process through assessment of proposed designs, and involvement in the procurement and delivery of new school buildings through its enabling service. CAFE has derived significant insight into what works and what doesn't, and has a unique insight into the quality coming through the BSF procurement process.

3. While the quality of learning environments and design of proposals add most value to the actual function of school buildings, there can be a lack of emphasis on design quality at the expense of time and budget pressures. There is also a lack of transparency in procurement and formal mechanisms for sharing knowledge, which raises the risk of hampering future ability to learn from current experiences. In addition, there is currently little thought about how to ensure quality in schemes produced after Local Education Partnerships have been formed. This is concerning since these will make up around 80% of the eventual programme.

4. A wide spectrum of quality has been evident in the design proposals seen to date, although some schemes have been extremely promising. There are often difficulties in translating reformed methods of teaching and learning into design proposals. While these require flexible buildings and layouts, some approaches can actively inhibit such flexibility. Approaches to achieving sustainable school buildings also often fail to address fundamental issues of site planning and orientation of buildings, instead concentrating on a "tick box" feature driven approach.

5. To adapt to future changes in technology, it is important that school buildings are flexible and adaptable, and not over reliant on mechanical ventilation or other high energy servicing strategies. Similarly, moves towards wireless technology mean that schools risk procuring expensive white elephants should they invest too heavily in hardwired equipment. CAFE advises that DCSF should consider how to avoid purchasing up front ICT equipment and software which will become quickly outdated. Instead equipment could be leased from, and maintained by, private sector partners.

6. While we welcome the proposals announced in April for waves 7–15 of BSF, it is vital not to lose sight of the fundamental ingredients in procuring excellent and well designed schools. It is important that local authority clients, and schools, are given proper support to manage a complex procedure and translate new teaching and learning methods into visions, briefs and eventual designs. While we welcome linking local regeneration funding with BSF and authorities working in partnership, we would caution that there are practical difficulties involved.

7. The fundamental concern for CAFE, is that schools procured through BSF should have an excellent standard of design. Public money should not be spent on schools which fall below the standard expected. We believe that the best way to achieve this would be to institute a threshold or benchmark for design quality in BSF.

SPECIFIC TOPICS RAISED BY THE COMMITTEE

The rate of progress being made bringing projects to the construction stage

1. While we accept the imperative of the project timetable, CAFE still considers that the paramount concern should be the eventual quality of schools.

2. Due to the lengthy nature of such construction projects, it is too early to record any significant difference in the rate of progress since the last Committee inquiry in September 2006.

How is the experience of those in the early waves being disseminated?

1. We are not currently aware of any formal structure existing to disseminate learning from early waves to authorities in later ones. However the CABE Schools Design Panel in itself represents a form of dissemination of learning, since panel members work in the field of schools design on BSF projects and use their knowledge and experiences in offering advice.

2. CABE has long advocated that a formal structure be set up to share best practice in procurement and post occupancy evaluation. In 2006, we noted “It is important that a mechanism is established for systematic learning from early projects to ensure the continuous improvement of those in later waves. This applies to both the buildings themselves and the processes used to realise them”¹.

3. Although, with only one new build BSF school currently open, it would be too early to learn a great deal from post occupancy reviews of buildings at present; we feel setting up the structure to share this information would be a step forward. In 2006 we recommended that such reviews should be carried out for every school including an analysis of “user satisfaction, DQI for schools, a quality assessment and a cost analysis”². To that we would also add the measurement of energy use against expected levels. This information could be shared anonymously with PFS and CABE, who could produce and disseminate a summary of lessons learnt at the conclusion of each wave of the BSF programme. Certainly there is scope to learn more from good school buildings procured under other programmes in recent years.

4. One area where dissemination could be making a real impact already, is by sharing the experiences of early wave authorities of the procurement process. Unfortunately, this is not routinely the case, and CABE can only think of one example where a previous project is involved in mentoring a current one. Given the skills learnt during the process, not least by head teachers, it is imperative this knowledge is shared. PFS or 4Ps could hold a database of information and contacts for newer authorities to draw on.

How is the procurement process working?

1. Since there is more than one procurement route in BSF, with some authorities looking for alternatives to the preferred route of Local Education Partnerships, this is not as straightforward as it might be.

2. This is perhaps further complicated by the incorporation of the Academies programme into BSF. In CABE’s experience of the Schools Design Panel there have been a larger number of well designed Academy schools than those procured through conventional BSF routes. We believe that factors including the differing relationship between the Local Authority client and the architect may be part of the reason for this.

3. One area which is concerning is a lack of emphasis on how to ensure design quality in school projects once the Local Education Partnership is formed. This represents around 80% of the eventual programme, and yet contains fewer aids or safeguards. Retaining Client Design Advisors to advise clients on design after the LEP has been formed might help in this regard. The public sector still needs to resource the assurance of design quality properly with a dedicated project manager who can liaise between the schools and the LEP.

What is the rate of progress on reducing schools’ carbon emissions and on achieving zero carbon new buildings?

1. While some schemes demonstrate an admirable approach to sustainability and reducing carbon emissions, many proposals do not signal that sustainability has been the key driver for the project. Too often proposals are based around “sustainable” features, such as bio mass boilers. Such an approach will often be flawed since it only addresses the supply of energy, rather than managing demand for energy or energy efficiency.

2. CABE’s maintains the view that whether or not a school will be sustainable will largely depend on strategic decisions made early on in the process. These will include where the school is placed, the orientation of the buildings, and the landscape design of school grounds. The orientation of buildings, and site planning, can reduce the need for artificial lighting, air conditioning and other energy intensive features. Renewable energy sources and other such features can then be added where appropriate. Unfortunately, all too often, schools do not address basic fundamentals of sustainable design and instead opt for add-ons of dubious value to justify their sustainability credentials.

3. In terms of achieving zero carbon buildings, we would note that since the requirement to build zero carbon buildings does not kick in until 2016, the majority of the schools estate will have already been rebuilt or remodelled by that date on current timetables.

4. Regarding BREEAM ratings, the committee should be aware that the assessment includes issues which local authorities must address at the early stages, otherwise it will be very difficult for the contractors to achieve “excellent”. Some issues, such as infrastructure around the school, will be subject to funding provided by the local authority. Examples of points to be considered in stages A-C by the local authority include the following:

- Not more than 75% of the footprint being located on already developed land.

¹ Assessing Secondary School Design Quality, CABE, 2006, p70

² Ibid p72

- The potential for brown field site development.
- Site investigation (for contaminants, soil quality and historic value).
- Appointment of an ecologist for site assessment of bio diversity.
- The development of a travel plan at feasibility stage.
- Transport links to the site—bus stops need to be within 400 metres and have 30 minute frequency of service between 7.30am and 10.00am, and 3.00pm and 5.00pm.
- Good cycle paths to local transport nodes in the carriageway leading to the facility.
- Ease and safety of entrance and access for cyclists and pedestrians (many children’s centres on school sites are served by circuitous since they are located at the rear).
- Whole life costing. A holistic strategic model needs to be carried out at the feasibility or concept stage.

5. It may be worth considering a BREEAM assessor being appointed by the local authority at an early stage, rather than by the contractor at bidding stage. Alternatively, guidance documents on this could also be issued to the local authorities by DCSF.

6. In terms of energy efficiency the BREEAM assessment stops short of requesting actual energy consumption figures to ascertain the improvement against expectation. It is important to conduct post occupancy reviews to test this, and ensure that this information is shared with PfS and authorities in the programme.

7. Moves towards combining schools to make bigger schools will mean more children travelling to school over further distances. Since travel is very energy intensive this should be considered when schools are to be combined.

8. Sustainability should not stop at the school gates. The idea of the school as a community hub needs to be developed and married within the PFI contract to fully allow the community to use the facility. Sustainability is dependant upon the sensible sharing of resources. Schools are very expensive investments and represent incredible resources for the local community in terms of health, education and leisure.

How are personalisation and other educational strategies guiding the design of new schools?

1. If personalisation and other educational strategies are to be successful they must be “design tested”, to ensure they are practical. However, Local Authorities also need to be given the requisite help and support in incorporating personalisation, project based learning, and other educational reforms into their visions. Designing for new modes of learning can be difficult, and it is important that Local Authorities struggling with this are given proper support.

2. Project briefs often incorporate the need for personalised learning, but CABE’s experience at the Schools Design Panel is that this is rarely translated well into the eventual design. What is required are robust and adaptable buildings, however this is not always evident in designs. Some proposals use layouts for rooms and spaces which preclude the sort of flexibility needed to create workable “break out” learning spaces for instance.

3. There is a sense that some bidders’ schemes offer rather simplistic gestures to providing a place for transformational education (such as by creating flexibility via partitions between rooms) rather than creating a building that is truly varied in the spaces it provides and inherently flexible in its form and structure.

4. It is also apparent that in many authorities, head teachers play a very strong role in influencing the design of their school, stemming from their welcomed passion to transform education, improve attainment and contribute to the design process. However, the range of approaches and pace of change in secondary education, and in relation to the physical environments needed to support learning, means that translating a particular head teacher’s approach to management, the pastoral system or pedagogy into a very specific, highly tailored building can build in certain problems. Given that school buildings are normally operational for decades after the head teacher involved in commissioning it has left there is a potential to store up a number of problems for the future.

Developments in the procurement and design of ICT for schools

1. Due to the limited shelf life of much ICT equipment, if possible, such technology should be procured and renewed as part of the contract with the private sector bidder, removing that responsibility from the local authority. For example, one hospital unit CABE is aware of leases expensive equipment as part of the PFI contract rather than allowing the cost to be borne by the public sector. This puts the onus on the equipment providers to keep it up to date and well maintained. DCSF should consider how to avoid purchasing upfront any ICT equipment and software which will become quickly outdated. This is of particular concern considering 10% of the overall BSF budget is currently allocated to ICT.

2. Rapid changes in technology also create questions around hardwiring equipment into schools. Further moves towards wireless technology, or wi-fi, could leave schools with useless and redundant cabling procured at great expense. In order to avoid unnecessary cost, and to keep buildings flexible and adaptable in the future, hardwiring should be kept to a minimum.

3. There is a risk in designing for ICT as we use it now, and this could limit the life of school buildings, and the schools ability to change the use of rooms or spaces. Robust and adaptable buildings, in terms of spaces and potential for expansion or extension, will allow schools to cope with changing teaching methods, including use of new technology over time.

4. Ongoing access to servicing such as wiring, lighting and air-conditioning needs to be carefully considered once schools procure larger amounts of ICT. Office spaces are generally refurbished once every 5–15 years for necessary up-grading due to technology requirements, and changes to the working environment. If schools are to also procure high levels of ICT, it may be necessary to perform refurbishments in similar time scales and methods to office environments.

5. High ICT loads will lead to high heat, light and energy consumption loads. In turn these will mean high servicing loads, and schools with large amounts of ICT equipment will be more expensive to run in terms of servicing costs. Should future technology requirements change, and high levels of equipment and hard wiring are no longer necessary, it is vital that school buildings are able to easily adapt to these changed requirements. As such, schools should be designed with a passive low energy strategy, natural ventilation and daylight as the basis for operation rather than being dependant on a high level of servicing such as air-con just to function.

What has been the effect of the Government's announcement in April about the "acceleration" and "streamlining" of BSF and its implications for the delivery of the project as a whole?

1. While CAGE broadly welcomes the proposals for BSF Waves 7–15, our view is that it is vital not to lose sight of the essential ingredients of procuring excellent and well designed schools. Foremost among these are the need for thorough and proper planning of projects, and the necessary skills among the client team for the task of a complex procurement procedure. In addition it is also important that authorities receive adequate support to ensure the right steps are taken in this vital preparation stage, especially where experience of procuring such projects may be lacking. An example of this is educational transformation, which can be difficult to factor into project briefs and plans. Specialised support for authorities from educationalists provided in a similar manner to CAGE's Enabling service might help in this regard.

2. Such experience is invaluable, which is why CAGE gives a cautious welcome to the proposals allowing authorities to work on individual projects earlier than currently planned. We continue to believe, however, that more could be made of knowledge sharing between authorities in the process. This would enable those with less experience of procuring schools in BSF, to learn from those who have already been through the process. One area where advances could be made is implementing mandatory post occupancy evaluations of buildings procured in BSF, with this knowledge shared through PFS and CAGE.

3. We have concerns over the practicalities of the proposals on authorities working together in joint Local Education Partnerships (LEPs), since our experience of such arrangements has revealed a number of difficulties. Through its enabling service CAGE has seen examples of neighbouring authorities working together. In the cases where this has worked, one authority has needed to take the lead, which can lead to tension between authorities. Similarly, while co-location of services could result in benefits, problems could arise in joining these funding streams. On the Sure Start programme, where 40% of schemes were on school sites, CAGE's Enabling service experienced a marked resistance from primary schools to having buildings funded from other streams. Many schools feared it would result with them being left with the maintenance costs of the new buildings.

4. While we continue to welcome making the most of local regeneration funding and BSF, we would caution that if there are fewer checks and balances, such as the CAGE Schools Design Panel, on later projects, it may be easy for contractors to recoup losses through value engineering on the wider regeneration projects. The design quality of such projects should be subject to scrutiny to help prevent this eventuality.

5. The fundamental concern for CAGE, is that schools procured through BSF should have an excellent standard of design. Public money should not be spent on schools which fall below the standard expected. We believe that the best way to achieve this would be to institute a threshold or benchmark for design quality in the programme, underneath which no project would be allowed to progress. This could be assessed in a similar manner to the reviews undertaken by CAGE's advisory Schools Design Panel.

July 2008

Witnesses: **Ty Goddard**, Director, British Council for School Environments (BCSE), **Richard Simmons**, Chief Executive, Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), **Steven Mair**, Assistant Executive Director Resources and Infrastructure, Children, Young People and Families, Barnsley Council and **David Russell**, Building Schools for the Future Programme Manager, Barnsley Council, gave evidence.

Q1 Chairman: I now welcome Ty Goddard, Richard Simmons, Steven Mair and David Russell. I apologise for the slight shortening of the session, which is the result of the previous emergency session on the testing system. Most of you were in for that, so you will know that it was rather important. Ty Goddard is director of the British Council for School Environments. Richard Simmons is chief executive of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. Steven Mair is Assistant Executive Director, Resource and Infrastructure, Children, Young People and Families for Barnsley Council. David, I believe that you, too, are from Barnsley Council.

David Russell: I am the Programme Manager for Building Schools for the Future in Barnsley.

Q2 Chairman: I shall give each of you a chance to say a little about BSF and where it is at the moment. We do not need your biography or your CV, just a quick minute and a half on how you see the programme at the moment. Steven Mair?

Steven Mair: Within Barnsley, we are taking out all our secondary and specialist schools and replacing them with new build across the whole borough in one wave. We see it as a tremendous opportunity for the children, the pupils and learners within the borough. Where we are in the process is part-way through the competitive dialogue, and we are targeting a preferred bidder in October. We have a tight and condensed procurement programme, and assuming that we get to October our plan is that all our estate will be replaced by 2011–12—within the next three to four years. Combined with our primary programme, that will put over half the children in Barnsley in 21st-century schools within the next four years.

Q3 Chairman: Thank you for that. David?

David Russell: I can only repeat what Steven said.

Chairman: I should have known that you, being from Barnsley, would be straight and succinct.

David Russell: It is the same answer.

Q4 Chairman: Good. Ty Goddard?

Ty Goddard: In many ways, if we were to give a head teacher's report on building schools for the future, we would say, "Very slow start to the task, but now seems willing to listen to the advice of others." For us, as an organisation with more than 300 members from both the public and the private sectors all intimately involved in schools investment, we have a sense of partnership for schools, and the Government are beginning to listen more. Indeed, I think that the Committee's seventh report *Sustainable Schools; Are we building schools for the future?* played a major part in looking at this in terms of a system-wide response. What we welcomed in the Committee's report was that you were able to take all the key bits of that investment and look at them holistically. The head teacher would continue: "If this investment is to reach its full potential, it needs

to remember the original question." The original question, as you quite rightly said in your last report on BSF, was about the transformation of teaching and learning in this country.

Q5 Chairman: Thank you for that. Richard Simmons?

Richard Simmons: We have been running our design assessment programme with Building Schools for the Future for a few months. We have seen a relatively small number of projects. We are reviewing all projects from wave 4 onwards, so it is at an early stage. We are seeing measurable improvements, by seeing projects through their first stage and then their final bid stage. We do not think that the quality is yet good enough, but there is a will from Partnerships for Schools to improve it. There are some specific areas that need improving, one of which Ty has just mentioned, such as transformational education, sustainability strategies and so on. We are now seeing more new designs that are better than the schools they are replacing, which is very positive. Design still needs to have a stronger weighting in the selection of local education partnerships than it has at the moment.

Q6 Chairman: Thank you. You have all been very succinct. Ty, we are always pleased when people say nice things about reports, but that will not stop you getting some hard questions from us. What worries those of us who have followed through the reports on the progress of Building Schools for the Future when we attend conferences and seminars is the fact that the visioning process is very patchy between different local authorities. The Committee really welcomed it; Barnsley and other local authorities have given it a chance. They have really thought about the sort of secondary education provisions—long term, the whole bit—that we want in the 21st century. Others that have gone through the BSF process seem to have done so in a rather patchy and pragmatic way. They do not seem to have had a serious go at the vision. Is that your experience, Richard Simmons?

Richard Simmons: Yes. At the moment, we are finding a wide range of understanding about what the transformational education agenda might mean. On our right is an authority that seems to have approached it very well, thought about what it wants to achieve, what kind of schools are needed and how to form a contract to achieve that. Other authorities are finding it less easy. We certainly welcome the fact that Partnerships for Schools will now bring forward authorities that are ready to go, rather than necessarily leaving them in serried ranks whether they are ready to go or not. We need more opportunity to have much earlier conversations with local authorities about what they want to achieve from the educational agenda, as well as simply replacing the capital stock. No doubt Tim will say more about that. We need further work done,

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particularly on how to link the vision for education and the vision for the actual design and management of a school.

Q7 Chairman: Ty Goddard, if that is the case, and if you agree with it, who do you blame?

Ty Goddard: We are attempting not to blame anyone. The key issue is who is responsible for owning the transformation of teaching and learning. You are right. The Committee will see a vast spectrum of responses to the investment. You spent a lot of time listening and talking to people from Knowsley during the last report. The Knowsley experience and the Barnsley experience would be different from other authorities, but time and time again we have underestimated how complex the job is of thinking through what teaching and learning will be like in five or 10 years, let alone in 15 to 20 years. In our evidence to the Committee this time, we wanted to give you an opportunity to hear the views from the ground. You will see from our evidence that often we are not investing in change management properly. Too often, we think that transformation will happen just because someone is shown a PowerPoint or someone mentions it 11 times in a speech. People who are already pressured in terms of the leadership of schools or in respect of being teachers in schools have to take part in a procurement process that, in itself, does not stimulate the sort of new thinking and the time for thinking that we need. People often succeed in developing their visions in spite of the present procurement process, not because of it.

Q8 Chairman: Any comments?

David Russell: We found that the idea of transformation, when we started discussing things with schools, was fairly low key. Obviously, we realised that our heads and their senior management teams had to go into new buildings and operate the new buildings from two years hence pretty much seamlessly. In the two years that we have been discussing transformation—the designs, briefs and visions—we have seen a marked movement of their understanding of what transformation is, to the point where we are almost accepting designs. We have two bids on at the moment. We know that shortly after we have chosen the designs, we shall look at them again and review them, because the senior management teams have moved on significantly from the point where they were three months ago. We are seeing the senior management teams within the schools progressing in that thought process. We are certainly seeing it with our second phase schools as well—they are developing and moving much further along the spectrum. It is gradually moving, but we have to be aware that these senior management teams have to go into schools in two or three years' time and still operate and produce the outputs, in terms of education. So we have had to deal with it with a certain amount of tenderness, careful of the situation that we have been in with the senior management teams. We can certainly see that. Both our bidders have very good design teams, very good educationalists. If you like,

they have been pulling us along. There is still room for some movement. We think that that will happen through the first phase, and certainly through the second and third phases. It is a moving process, but we have to be very careful about how and at what point we commit and allow things to move on.

Q9 Chairman: Steven, do you have anything to add to that?

Steven Mair: The authority began the overall visioning process in 2003. I think that is a key point. We began it two years before we were actually receiving the BSF funding—or the announcement that we were going to get it. That is very important. We started with a strategic approach. We engaged with our heads very early on, because we want to continue our step change in learning and we had a number of school places issues to address. What we have tried to look at is overcoming some of the disadvantages and the barriers. In our case, we are not simply producing schools—we term them “advanced learning centres”, and we are wrapping care and other provision around them. An example of a barrier would be a child in one corner of the borough having to go to another corner of the borough to receive a service. If we can bring the services to the child, that helps attainment, because the child is not out of the school, and it focuses people on the child and not on the service, which is what this is all about. We are also looking at the pattern of the school day. You can find some schools at the moment that can open at 8.30 and can shut at 2.30. We are going for extended hours—8 in the morning until 10 at night, bringing in full community facilities as well. The key thing is that the visioning process has to start early, and BSF is simply a vehicle to deliver changes in learning, which we term “remaking learning”.

Chairman: Thank you for that. We shall open up the questioning now. May I just say that it is a pleasure to see two young people at the back of the Committee today who would be, will be and are using schools at the moment. It is very nice to have you here. We do not often have the real consumers present. Thank you for being here.

Q10 Mr Chaytor: In respect of the concerns about procurement; is part of the problem the elaborate structure that was set up through the local education partnerships? Had we not had the LEP structure, could local authorities have got on with procurement more quickly? I suppose that is a question to someone from Barnsley first, but also to Ty and Richard perhaps.

Steven Mair: I do not think it is the LEP itself. We fully accept that it is a very complex process. I think there are some improvements. Our colleagues are becoming pragmatic as we go along, and we are moving things along more quickly. What we have to remember, certainly in our case, is that we are transforming the entire estate. For Barnsley, this is a massive financial investment. It is a £1 billion-plus contract. We want to get this right. We will get this right. We will improve learning as a consequence. We think it is well worth the investment in time and

money that the council and the schools are putting in to get this right. The contract period is 25 years. Some elements of the school design life are 60 years. Quite frankly, we are probably putting up schools now that will be here next century. It is worth that time and investment to get it right. A tremendous advantage that we see is the competitive dialogue process. As David described, we have two very good bidders. They are committed to the scheme and we are pushing them through the process. Keeping them in competition and pushing them, we are getting advantages out of that. That is what we intend to continue doing until we are totally content that what we are getting is right.

Richard Simmons: One of the critical issues is the fact that the LEP is a partnership that will last for some considerable time. As we have heard, a lot of the focus at the moment is on what happens upfront—the first round of schools. As we said in our submission, about 80% of schools built by such programmes will not be part of the initial bid. The question is about how to maintain and sustain the partnership, and secondly, how to keep innovating so as to pick up on the transformational education agenda as we go along. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's position is that all procurement methods produce bad buildings. There is evidence for that. It is about how they are managed and used. The more the procurement process is used to produce a partnership that will stick together, deliver in the long run and deliver changes in how IT might be used in schools over the years, for example, the better the results will be. At the moment, not enough weight is given to design upfront, and we are concerned to ensure that the momentum continues after the partnership is formed.

Ty Goddard: Initially, the ambition for BSF was vast. All the views from the ground seem to focus on the complexity of the procurement process. The changes that have been announced and are due to roll out are welcome. Partnerships for Schools listened to industry and people in local government. However, we still have a system that wastes money that should be spent on schools. It duplicates effort from world-class designers and builders, and it costs our colleagues in local authorities a vast amount to do it properly.

Q11 Mr Chaytor: So where is the waste?

Ty Goddard: There are high costs for bidders and the bidding teams have to draw up designs that may never be used. They must be drawn up to a late stage, so they are highly detailed designs. There is a sense out in the country, and you have seen evidence from the Royal Institute of British Architects, that we seem to be besotted with having to put things in *OJEU*, the *Official Journal of the European Union*, when local authorities have spent years looking at procurement frameworks that they already have. We seem to be almost besotted with the process of the process, rather than allowing latitude. Because of the underspend, because targets were not reached, we had what were called one school pathfinders. Although complex at times, they have got rid of

many of the hoops and the testing that seems to go on. Although we have had best practice recommendations from the world of construction and big reports such as Latham and Egan, which explored how to find a partner, we have a procurement process that was probably fit for purpose in 2000, 2001 or 2003 when BSF was created. Is it up to speed and can it respond to the new agendas that we have now in our schools on children's services, regeneration and the big issue, which was not even mentioned at the launch—sustainability?

Q12 Mr Chaytor: The Royal Institute of British Architects has suggested that one way to shorten the procurement process further is through what it calls smart PFI. What is that?

Ty Goddard: Or smart BSF as it also calls it. The voices of RIBA and CABI would want to join in a critique of the procurement process and an attempt to work through a design with a local authority, supporting that local authority with experts in design. The Jo Richardson community school in Barking and Dagenham was procured and commissioned using a smart PFI route—the Committee may have visited the school. The design was drawn up and put out to the market. If we are talking about transformation in real time, rather than on paper, some have suggested, including RIBA and others, that this is worth testing. What has always baffled me is why we have not piloted or attempted to test different types of procurement. We demand that areas such as Barnsley innovate, we demand that our schools innovate, and yet, we are locked into a procurement process that probably has non-innovation at its heart. It demands that people make decisions when their knowledge is least and that they meet bid team after bid team when their time is short. Learning technologies are moving so fast that the procurement process may create a risk-averse culture.

Q13 Mr Chaytor: Do you think that the Department could publish a booklet suggesting half a dozen different models of procurement, in the way that it published one some time ago suggesting half a dozen different designs for schools?

Ty Goddard: I was in one of our major shire counties on Thursday, visiting schools. Those schools have been procured using the framework that they already had. What we are seeing, which was in CABI evidence, is that there is a fracturing of the procurement process already, but let us do that by design, not by accident.

Q14 Mr Chaytor: Was that quicker for that county council?

Ty Goddard: I think it was. In the evidence that you have got from Knowsley, there is a table that suggests two years for the process. Barnsley may want to comment themselves.

Chairman: I am conscious that each section here is short because of the previous sitting, so one person to each question—rattle them off, please. I am sorry it has to be like this; it is the time constraints around us.

Q15 Mr Chaytor: Okay, a final question: in terms of the partnerships, who dominates? Is it the local authority as manager; is it the voice of head teachers and teachers, in terms of the practicalities of this work; is it the construction industry; or is it the architects?

Richard Simmons: From our experience, it is a bit early to say. We are seeing examples of all those things: we are seeing some very dominant local authorities with a clear vision for what they are trying to achieve; some powerful contractors who are trying to drive the process in the direction that they want to go; and some opinionated architects, but many of them go in the end. It is probably a bit early to say who is going to be the dominant force, but ultimately, the key issue is that this has to be designed for the benefit of the young people who will be in the school. We would like to see in the system the young people themselves and the educationalists really empowered to deliver.

Q16 Mr Chaytor: My next question is to Barnsley. You said, Steven, that you started the visioning process in 2003, but in terms of IT in learning, a lot has happened in the last five years and even more will happen in the next five years. To what extent are you confident that you are building an IT infrastructure that will be sufficiently flexible to allow for future development?

Steven Mair: I agree; it is a developing field. If we could all see 20 years ahead in ICT, it would be tremendous, but we are confident that we are building something that will be sustainable. The IT contract is for five years, unlike that for the buildings. We are building in a refresh after five years, so we can look at what has come along. In five or 10 years' time, children might be bringing in laptops or personal digital assistants themselves, as with calculators now. We are working with our partners and our advisers and thinking forward as far as we can, but we are not committing to more than five years and we are putting aside enough money, so that in five years we can revisit that and make sure that we are not locked into something that is out of date.

Chairman: Moving on to educational sustainability, Annette, you are going to lead us.

Q17 Annette Brooke: Yes, I think that that follows on rather nicely. I do not think that I have quite got a handle on designing schools for the long term, because we could divide that up into all sorts of time periods. To some extent, that must almost be looking into a crystal ball, in terms of what you are trying to achieve. As you have just touched on the five-year chunks of time, Steven, perhaps I could start with you. How much have you built into the projects of

the visions for different time periods ahead? You have mentioned 10 years, but what about into the next century? How have you coped with that?

Steven Mair: As I said, we started with an authority-wide vision. We have individuals from each school, so we are very much making these personalised buildings. They are not imposed by the council. It is extremely important to get buy-in from the people—the pupils, teachers and heads—who will be using them in future. The key thing that we are trying to build in is flexibility and adaptability, because, as you quite rightly say, who can see so many years ahead? We are building in break-out spaces and flexible walls, so there could be a classroom of 30 next to another classroom of 30, but the wall comes apart so that you could have a class of 60 with two teachers—one teaching the majority of the children, or all of a level, and one focusing on those who need additional help. There are differential levels within classrooms. We are trying to take on board ICT as far as we can, such as video conferencing. A lesson could be put around the whole borough, again freeing up teachers to focus on those with particular additional needs. We are building in the children's services agenda, which a colleague referred to—this wrap-around care. They are not schools; they are advanced learning centres. We will have all our professionals at least hot-desking in those schools, including the welfare service and the youth service. We are engaging with our partners, the primary care trust and the police, and they will be on site. As far as possible—nobody can ever get it totally right—we are thinking and making things as flexible as we can to accommodate what comes on in future.

Q18 Annette Brooke: May I move to the other end of the table with a slightly different emphasis. Are all the issues that we have just touched on regular features of discussions in BSF projects?

Richard Simmons: Yes.

Annette Brooke: They really are?

Richard Simmons: They certainly are, now that the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment is reviewing each local education partnership's proposals before they come to final contract. Our assessment method, which is fairly structured, is to look at a whole range of issues about flexibility and whether learning environments can change over time. We are very interested in ICT and how schools might adapt, so we might build an ICT room but, with changes such as I have just described, it can be used for another purpose. Another thing is building for the long term. We are increasingly clear now that we have to make schools that are going to be environmentally sustainable. That means that sustainability has to be driven into the design of the school from the outset. We know for sure that we will need to have schools that rely much more on passive ventilation—in other words, air that moves through the building without being driven through it. We have to use natural light as much as we can, and we are starting to see that become a much stronger feature of school design. All those things are being discussed. To go back to the beginning of the conversation, some authorities—Barnsley is a good

example—understand these issues now, and others are still learning about them. We have to get the message out from the more successful partnerships that are developing to the newer partnerships that will develop in the future about how to go about ensuring that they are planning for the long term.

Q19 Annette Brooke: We look around and see masses of empty office buildings that will probably never be filled. Will we need all these school buildings in the future?

Richard Simmons: I think probably we will, because I am not sure that all those office buildings will be in the right place for the young people whom we want to use them.

Q20 Annette Brooke: No, I was not meaning using the office buildings. I meant that workers can work from home and therefore share desks, and maybe pupils will not go into a physical building every day in years to come.

Richard Simmons: I think that the long-term vision for schools is that they will become a hub for a wider group of people in the community. Young people will be staying on later, until they are 18, so pathways to work, for example, will become much more important to schools. It seems to me that the school could in some ways become a much more important focal point. I am not sure whether everybody will be at school for the same hours as now, but some of the support that needs to be delivered to young people—Barnsley have referred to this—is well delivered through something that is local to people's neighbourhood and perhaps more open to the community than many schools have been. The Jo Richardson school, for example, which we talked about earlier, has its sports facilities and library shared with the community. I think that in future we will see work spaces being shared so that businesses can be connected much more to their future work force in schools and so on. I think that they are going to become more important in future, but probably quite different from how they are designed now.

Q21 Annette Brooke: Right; going back to Steven, how much vision have you done on how teaching and learning will change with the shape of the building, or vice versa?

Steven Mair: We are working very heavily with our colleagues in schools on that. We have what we call "learning stars", who at the moment are 50 of our best and most innovative teachers. They are working with colleagues in the BSF team, being made aware of the extra resources that will be made available to them. They are testing different curriculum designs. We have a whole authority day in October, when they will come together with the pupils and the teachers, reflecting on what has worked. The key thing is not to get to the opening of the new buildings and suddenly start thinking "We'd better start innovating on teaching and learning." We want to be in there on day one, and really making these work as best we can. This is not a buildings programme in isolation. It is not a teaching and learning

programme in isolation. We have our BSF team; we have our advisory team; and we work very closely together on that, so that we get the best out of both.

Q22 Annette Brooke: Ty, that is very visionary, but is it going to work like that?

Ty Goddard: I respect not only Barnsley's optimism but Barnsley's sense of asking the really difficult questions, which are: what sort of education do we want and what kind of spaces will support that? That transformation, I think, is going to be difficult. It is going to need a higher level of support. It is going to need a process that actually meaningfully involves teachers and young people in sharing and telling us, as adults, what kind of spaces they learn best in. Also, it should allow the meaningful involvement of teachers. Too often teachers are the ones who are not consulted. Teachers are the ones who are not supported. I do not think that the transformation that you are seeing in Barnsley will necessarily be shared all over the country. We have to be optimistic. We must celebrate this investment. We have had a culture for many decades of being experts at patch and mend and make do in our schools. With that leap from deciding where the bucket goes under the leaky roof to beginning to think through what the future holds, as David said, the impetus of technology is going to be absolutely enormous.

Q23 Annette Brooke: A very quick question: to what extent have Government been leading the process of the interrelationship; or to what extent have they been following?

Ty Goddard: Leadership is absolutely crucial. We have a Chief Executive at Partnerships for Schools now who has experience of local government and procurement. He has said publicly time and again that he wants to go further in terms of loosening up the procurement process, making it much less expensive for bidders, and much less onerous for local authorities to actually begin to build these schools. I think we need leadership from Government. One of the main points of your last report was that we need to begin to define what we actually mean by transformation within education. The nature of leadership in other countries is different around teaching and learning. Here we seem to have in many ways become quite hands-off, and I think, often, the bidding process is used for something that it should not be, which is to explore different visions. A bidding process is not the best place. Finally, we are not learning as a nation. Where is the post-occupancy evaluation? We are building lots and lots of schools, but nowhere do we listen to the users and what they think about these buildings. Nowhere do we collect proper energy data. How can you have sustainable schools when you do not know what energy is being used in your present schools? So I am talking about meaningful stakeholder engagement; a procurement process that really focuses on teaching and learning and the involvement of learners and teachers; and actually beginning to capture some of the lessons that we know are out there. It goes beyond design review

panels, if I may say so respectfully to CABE; it goes to the heart of how you learn as a country and how you feed that information back.

Q24 Chairman: You said nice things about Tim Byles and the process at the beginning, and you end up saying they are not doing their job.

Ty Goddard: I said all sorts of things about Tim Byles. I have said that I think we finally have a leader of Partnerships for Schools who knows the terrain.

Q25 Chairman: Let us go to the end bit, though, about post-evaluation—

Ty Goddard: Post-occupancy evaluation?

Chairman: Yes.

Ty Goddard: That is what I think would be useful.

Q26 Chairman: Well, you have been saying that Tim Byles has been ignoring it.

Ty Goddard: I do not think he has been completely ignoring us.

Chairman: All right.

Ty Goddard: With your help, we can make this a system of investment that has improvements at its heart.

Richard Simmons: I wanted to say that no bit of Government at the moment is following the Office of Government Commerce and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury's instruction that they should do post-occupancy evaluation. In fact, PFS has started doing that on projects now, so we will start to see it coming through the system. It is very important.

Chairman: We leaned heavily, apparently, on the Office of Government Commerce to get the last contract that we discussed in this Committee a short time ago.

Q27 Mr Stuart: Is environmental sustainability lost among the myriad demands in the BSF programme?

Richard Simmons: It is one of the areas that we see as an area for improvement. We see several things that are getting much better very quickly, including things such as circulation in schools and how food gets served at lunchtimes. At the moment, we are not seeing enough projects driven by a proper sustainability strategy. Quite often, we are seeing that the technical side of sustainability is not strong enough. Simple things, such as which way the building faces on the site to take best advantage of the sun, natural light and so on, are not necessarily driving projects at the moment, so we would like to see greater improvement on that. To be fair to the people designing schools, that is, again, not unique to schools. It is an issue that we come across in design review all the time. Outside schools design review, we have seen about 700 projects in our full design review panel over the last two years and we reckon only about seven of those had a proper sustainability strategy that we would respect. It is an important issue. We have not gone far enough yet. This Committee's work in reviewing the issue has

been quite helpful in driving the agenda forward, but we would like to see a lot more improvements in that area.

Q28 Mr Stuart: But we have a Government who would like to be a global leader on climate change, and we have multi-billion pound expenditure—a quite extraordinary investment—and you are telling us that it does not deliver the most fundamental, basic environmental approaches. If schools are being built and they do not even work out, from an environmental point of view, which way they are facing, where the light comes in and what their energy use is likely to be, there is something pretty fundamentally wrong, is there not?

Richard Simmons: We have a big issue about skills in this area in the country at the moment, and an industry that is not yet used to the kinds of building that are being demanded of it by the kinds of brief that are coming forward. Again, those from Barnsley might want to say more about what they have been doing on that front.

Q29 Chairman: Do you mean there are architects who do not know which way a building should face?

Richard Simmons: We have architects who certainly do not know how to design low-energy and high natural light buildings. They have been used to designing buildings with a lot of air conditioning, lots of artificial lighting and very high intensity energy usage. As I think I said to the Committee last time, we are also seeing quite a few buildings coming through where the energy strategy does not take account of the amount of IT that is being put into the building, for example. We are seeing an industry that needs to learn faster. At the moment, we are not satisfied that we are getting the best we could, but the industry, in every sector, is still struggling with this agenda.

Steven Mair: Sustainability is very much a key item in what we are doing. We have a number of initiatives, and Dave can add to this. For example, all our schools will be 100% biomass heated, which is a carbon neutral source. We will have BREEAM—Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method—ratings of excellent. We are looking at cooling as well as heating to try to take account of the forthcoming issues that we all know about. We are looking at the potential for wind turbines, which is still subject to negotiation with our bidders, but a lot of this comes down to leadership by the authority, because this is not particularly driven by our bidders.

David Russell: The essence of the problem is that PFI in itself does not really allow for sustainability, because a bidder will put in a bid that gives him good marks and fulfils the criteria of the output spec, but energy is basically down to the client. The client pays for energy, so there is no impetus for the PFI bidder to put things in, because they do not improve his bid. In Barnsley, we recognise that. We have been through a 13-primary PFI scheme, and a lot of fine

words were said about sustainability, but nothing really came out of it. We put in half a million pounds per scheme for our nine advanced learning centres, basically for enhanced sustainability issues, and that is paying for the list of items that Steve mentioned. We are also considering enhanced passive cooling, which has been mentioned. We are looking at putting into the building some infrastructure to allow for future climate change. We are considering enhanced under-floor heating-sized coils in the floor, and absorption chilling, which is a way of chilling a building using a boiler. I know that seems a contradiction, but it is based on biomass heating. Those are all things that we have actively promoted in our scheme and not things that you would necessarily get within a PFI-procured system. That is what we are doing.

Q30 Mr Stuart: Where is the biomass taking place? Where is the power being burned?

David Russell: Localised boilers from each of the adult learning centres. The biomass itself will be harvested locally. Barnsley has some pedigree in biomass boilers. Its recent council offices are biomass-powered, as are a couple of major new developments.

Q31 Mr Stuart: But that bears out Ty's earlier remark about the fact that authorities such as yours take the issue seriously. They are not box ticking. They are doing so despite the procurement process, rather than because of it.

Steven Mair: We are doing it on top of, as well as leading the procurement process. As I mentioned to colleagues earlier, it is important that we have leadership in Government, but it is very important that we have leadership and skills in the authorities because we are the people who will be running the institutions for the next 25 or 50 years.

Q32 Mr Stuart: Does anyone want to comment on the Department for Children, Schools and Families' environmental sustainability taskforce and its effectiveness?

Ty Goddard: It is early days for that taskforce. There has been lots of discussion. The Government have produced case studies—not always successful with regard to energy usage. We have sharp rhetoric, yet at school level we still have confusion about sustainability and how to prioritise it and prioritise solutions within the process. There is a sense that there are technical answers all the time. For example, putting a windmill on the roof of a school equals sustainability. That was put to me in the phrase eco-bling. Eco-bling does not necessarily equal sustainability.

Chairman: We were not dazzled by that.

Ty Goddard: I am your straight man.

Mr Stuart: Aren't we all?

Ty Goddard: Some of us may be, and some may not.

Chairman: It must be the end of term.

Ty Goddard: That taskforce is hopefully going to be useful. It is owned by the profession. I do not think

that Richard is entirely correct when he says that we do not have the skills as a country or a profession. The profession is thinking far ahead. Arup gave evidence in the last report. It is a global leader in such issues and seriously pointed the way to how we begin to think about sustainability in our schools.

Q33 Mr Stuart: I am trying to capture this. What you are telling us is that Barnsley is a lead authority. It has taken an interest in this and has been ahead of the game. Authorities that have all the opposite qualities rarely turn up to give evidence to us. There tends to be more of them than there are of this kind. The picture that you seem to be painting is of a pretty disastrous failure to deliver environmental sustainability on a consistent basis across this incredibly large investment. Is that fair?

Richard Simmons: I think that there is a way to go.

Q34 Mr Stuart: How disastrous is it? It sounds pretty calamitous.

Richard Simmons: I have to declare an interest in the taskforce because one of our commissioners, Robin Nicholson, chairs it. The point about skills is that there are organisations, such as Arup, that have the skills. The question is whether there are enough of them in the right places at the right time. The evidence of what we are seeing at the moment at CAGE is that there are not yet enough people in the right place at the right time or enough clients who are making the right demands. It is a fixable problem because schools in Norway or Germany are already achieving very high standards. It is about making sure that the standards are out there and that those who will be the clients understand them. It is also about making sure, as colleagues from Barnsley have said, that the bidders know that it is on the agenda and that somebody who is capable will be checking it to make sure that it is being delivered.

Q35 Mr Stuart: My constituency was particularly badly affected by the floods last year. What reassurance can you give us that schools will be built with flooding in mind, and be sensibly placed and protected?

Richard Simmons: It is important to recognise that sustainability is not just about zero carbon. It is about a whole range of things, including how to deal with storm weather events in the future. From what we have seen, it is difficult to say that that is a serious consideration. Not many schools have been put before us that are in areas of high flood risk, but that is certainly on the list of issues that we shall be wanting to pick up.

Ty Goddard: It would be unfair to use the words "disastrous failure". It is a long journey. It is incumbent on us that we fully and properly respond to the challenge but, once again, latitude within a procurement process may make some of those issues easier to grapple with and understand. I do not know whether colleagues from Barnsley want to comment, but there is often confusion in whole-life costings for new technologies.

Q36 Mr Stuart: Typically, water-heating pumps are vast users of electricity. Europe's largest pump manufacturer told me last week that that always gets squeezed out in the PFI. As a result, it ends up selling a pump that is not energy-efficient. That is just a disaster. It is not cost-effective for the operator of the school or for any other facility. Will Barnsley tell us that it will put in high-efficiency pumps each time?

Steven Mair: We go back to the biomass, which we are putting into every advanced learning centre and special school, which are carbon-neutral for the whole of heat.

Richard Simmons: To me, it is critical that the partnership is responsible in the longer term for everything to do with the school. If, as you say, the client ends up with the energy bill, there is no incentive in the system to make sure that you build in such technology. If you invest up front, you will save money in the long run so it is a good idea to share the savings and the benefits.

Q37 Paul Holmes: When we were taking evidence and visiting schools for the first inquiry, there seemed to be a general trend that either sustainable measures were squeezed out because the up front costs could not be afforded or because individual schools had just not thought about it. Why is the Barnsley experience different? You talked about pump-priming. Does that mean you are putting in money other than BSF money? Is it also better in Barnsley because you are planning it as an authority, rather than as, say, 20 individual schools doing the wrong thing?

Steven Mair: Barnsley council and its schools are putting in a considerable amount, over and above what the Government have given. In effect, our scheme is 60% funded by the Government and 40% funded by Barnsley and its schools. It is its number one priority, and there is a major investment going on. As for sustainability, we have targeted it. We are well aware of it, along with many other issues, and we have put specific funding to one side to make sure that we achieve it because we can see the benefits going forward.

Q38 Paul Holmes: Are schools getting involved in the same sort of pattern? How much flexibility do they have within your framework?

Steven Mair: We are not imposing one standard of design or anything like that on schools. For cost-efficiency purposes, about 80% of the build will be the same and 20% will be personalised. All our schools are drawing up their own vision and their own reference scheme, and working fully with the authority. The worst thing in the world is to impose a model on schools, because they are working in it, and they need to own it and inspire it. They need to make it work, and that is what we are doing. It might cost a little more, but the figures are not big compared with motivating and raising attainment for pupils and teachers in the next 25 to 50 years.

Q39 Chairman: This is a very interesting session. I am sure that we could go on for much longer, but I have a quick question to ask Richard or Ty before we finish. We notice that big contractors have a large number of BSF PFIs. You have talked about skills, capacity and innovation. The programme has been going for some years now. Surely they have the skills? Are not some of the big contractors—not only Arup, but others—leading in innovation?

Richard Simmons: We are still learning a lot about how to deliver sustainability, for example. At the moment, I do not think that the whole industry is learning as rapidly as the best bits of it. In another part of my life, I am involved in Constructing Excellence, whose members tend to be ahead of the rest of the industry on these sorts of issues. It is a question of whether your business is focused on these kinds of improvements, and some are more so than others.

Chairman: I am afraid that that is the end of the session. I thank you very much, particularly the Barnsley people. Jeff Ennis used to be on the previous Committee, and Barnsley was the most mentioned place name. We have done him proud by hearing that your experience is innovative and useful, so thank you. Thank you, too, Ty Goddard and Richard Simmons. Will you remain in conversation with us? A regular update on BSF will take place. A large amount of taxpayers' money is involved, and we will keep coming back to it. If you go away and think of things that you should have said to the Committee or things that should have been asked, will you get in contact with us.

Memorandum submitted by Partnerships for Schools (PFS)

PROGRESS AND PROCESS UPDATE: JULY 2008

Since the Select Committee last took evidence from Tim Byles, Chief Executive of Partnerships for Schools, there has been considerable acceleration across all aspects of delivery for the Building Schools for the Future programme. This note highlights progress since Tim Byles took up post at the start of November 2006.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE PROGRAMME

<i>July 2008</i>	<i>November 2006</i>
80	39

BSF PROJECTS ACHIEVING FINANCIAL CLOSE (FORMING PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDER)

<i>July 2008</i>	<i>November 2006</i>
21	2

BSF SCHOOLS OPEN

<i>July 2008</i>	<i>November 2006</i>
13	4

CHANGES TO THE BSF PROCESS

- Implementation of new pre-procurement process designed to ensure that local authorities' plans are focused on educational transformation and that they are ready to hit the ground running on entry to BSF is resulting in a six month reduction to this phase of the process.
- The BSF Procurement Review, approved by Ministers in May for implementation this autumn, is projected to deliver up to £250 million of savings across the national programme and a further reduction of two months to the delivery timetable.
- A third review of the process, commissioned by PfS, is currently examining Local Education Partnerships in operation, focusing on the extent to which they offer a fully integrated service and how they add value in the longer term.
- Last month, on the basis of demonstrating their readiness to deliver, eight local authorities (Enfield, Hounslow, North Tyneside, Rotherham, Southampton, Staffordshire, Walsall and Worcestershire) were selected to be fast-tracked for early entry to the programme.
- DCSF consultation on the management of Waves 7 to 15 of BSF, which ended this month, has been considering a move away from a wave-based approach to bringing in more authorities sooner than was previously possible, targeting areas of deprivation first.

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Witness: **Tim Byles**, Chief Executive, Partnerships for Schools (PfS), gave evidence.

Q40 Chairman: On behalf of members of the Committee, I welcome the next witness, Tim Byles. Some of us know that he has a passion for Shakespeare in schools, and some of us know that he was formerly the chief executive of a local authority in the eastern region. Welcome to our proceedings. You have heard a lot of the previous session, and we are going to give you a chance. You saw what was said in our report, which was not badly received when it came out. You heard from the evidence that Ty, Richard and the Barnsley people were giving that not all the criticisms in our report have been answered. Where are we with BSF, from where you are sitting?

Tim Byles: Thank you, Chairman. I am glad to be in front of the Committee again and to have the opportunity to brief you on the progress in the programme since I last gave evidence, back in December 2006.

Q41 Chairman: You had just been appointed, had you not?

Tim Byles: Indeed. I was just about to refer to that. It was a particular pleasure, if a bracing one. I had been in the job for only five weeks when I appeared last time, and quite a lot has happened since. I would like to take the opportunity to mention some of it. As you will see from the short handout that we have circulated, when I arrived at Partnerships for

Schools in November 2006, two local authorities had been through the procurement process and selected a private sector partner. Today, that number stands at 21. Then, a few early quick-win schools had opened their doors; today, we have 13 open, with that number set to be more than double this autumn and rise to about 200 schools per annum in the next few years. Some 80 of the 150 top-tier authorities are now in the programme, and about 1,000 schools are somewhere between design and delivery in BSF. So there has been significant progress since I was last here. Indeed, 2007–08 was the first financial year in which PfS met or exceeded all its delivery targets. I am confident that we are on track to repeat that progress this year, after a slow start in BSF, which was the subject of much of our discussion last time. Clearly, success should not be measured just in terms of deals done or bricks and mortar. When I arrived at PfS, much of the public scrutiny of the programme had focused purely on its time scales. It was welcome to have a discussion in the Committee, and read in your report, about having a focus on quality as well and recognising the potential of the programme to help transform life chances for millions of young people. As the delivery agency for BSF and for academies, it is the job of Partnerships for Schools to ensure that the programme delivers on time and on budget. We are on track to do that, but it is more important that the programme delivers on its ultimate objective, which is to help transform

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educational delivery for every young person, no matter what their background. That focus on quality is what has driven a number of changes that we have made to the processes that help to deliver BSF, and it is helpful to think about those in three parts. There is a difference between early projects, which are often focused on in BSF, and those that are going through the system now. If I may, I shall mention two or three changes that we have introduced. First, on pre-procurement, we have tried to make sure that the vision of the local authority is sufficiently ambitious and bold, and that the local authority is ready to hit the ground running early, on entry to the programme. You heard from the previous witnesses about some issues in early procurement, where the procurement process was being used as a means of refining the objectives of the programme. Those pre-procurement changes have improved the time by up to 30% for local authorities—a reduction of nearly six months through starting earlier and being better prepared. Secondly, on procurement, we have streamlined the process within EU requirements, which will deliver significant savings to BSF at a programme level—up to £250 million. That will help to ensure that the market is vibrant and that there are enough players to compete, in order to deliver a value-for-money solution. Thirdly, we are now engaged in a review of the operational phase, checking and challenging how local education partnerships are operating in practice, and how they are delivering value for money to the public purse. Those three changes have secured some significant reductions in the delivery timetable—up to eight months in total—and cost savings. I am more encouraged, however, because they provide a much better platform with which to ensure that BSF delivers learning environments in which every young person can do their best and can reach for excellence. We are already starting to see tangible results from that through independent review work. The National Foundation for Educational Research has conducted some research on Bristol Brunel academy, our first local education partnership-delivered school, which has given tangible and significant improvements in attendance, aspirations and staying-on rates. We are seeing good results on refurbishment schemes as well. For example, in Sunderland, the Oxclose School has already seen an improvement on GCSE results, from 24% of pupils attaining A to C grades in GCSEs, including English and maths, up to 41% last summer, and the forecast is that that will exceed to 50% this summer. The last point that I would like to mention in these opening remarks is to highlight the importance that we give to learning lessons, gathering lessons learned, and sharing them in the BSF community. We have increased our activity on that front significantly over the last 20 months: introducing a national learning network for BSF; re-launching our website, with dedicated spaces for learning from experience, from which e-mail alerts are issued to the BSF community as new lessons are learned; a quarterly publication sent to all local authorities and the private sector, highlighting learning and experience; a comprehensive calendar of conferences, including

sector-specific ones on ICT and design already this year; and we have started a programme of BSF open days, where local authorities and the private sector will be invited to a new BSF school, to hear direct from the partners involved in delivery, the challenges and issues that they face. The first one is to take place in the Michael Tippett school in Lambeth this autumn, a school that I think you visited recently, Chairman. Finally, for the avoidance of doubt, there is to be a post-occupancy evaluation of every BSF school, as we announced earlier this year. The gathering of that kind of information is important for the sharing of best practice—what has worked and what has worked less well. I am very keen that we do that. When I gave evidence to the Committee back in 2006, I made it clear then that we would continue to learn throughout BSF. That is still my firm belief. It is about helping to transform lives, and we at BSF will continue to work with and challenge local authorities, the private sector partners and ourselves, to do our best to ensure that we make the most of this opportunity.

Chairman: Let us start by drilling down on the procurement process.

Q42 Mr Carswell: I have a couple of questions. There is a massive amount of expenditure, putting a lot of our money on to the balance sheet of a few big corporations. Some people say that when it comes to defence procurement, a few small contractors have got the process rigged in their favour. Is that happening with this? Are there a few lucky ones who put all that public money on to their balance sheets because there are barriers to entry?

Tim Byles: No, that is not true of BSF. We currently have 21 active bidding consortiums into BSF and we have three new entrants coming into the market at the moment. An issue for us, as we think about the way in which the programme rolls out, is how to balance the breadth of market activity with the capacity and ability to learn. We are not seeing the reduction that some other programmes have seen. You mentioned defence, and health is another example where there is quite quickly a consolidation down to a small number of consortiums. That has not been the case so far in BSF.

Q43 Mr Carswell: How can that be? If you constrain the supplier in any market, the seller sets the terms of trade. PricewaterhouseCoopers did a report that, for example, allowed for more comprehensive pre-qualification for bidding consortiums, and more focus on effective partnering issues. Those are all barriers to entry, are they not?

Tim Byles: I do not think so. We have been careful to try to ensure that they are not barriers to entry. What is interesting is that, since the launch and approval of the procurement review, we have seen three new entrants. A range of factors influences activity in the market. Success is one—we have seen some people moving in and out—and the balance of the consortium is a second, but we are certainly not seeing a reduction on the basis of that activity.

Q44 Mr Carswell: Do you have any data, which we could perhaps make available afterwards, that would show exactly how the money had been spent—where the direct recipients are and what range of businesses are getting a share of the market?

Tim Byles: Yes, we can certainly publish, and do publish, the successful consortiums by local authority area, as they achieve success in BSF. There is not a problem in making that available. We also publish the scale of activity earlier in the process. The process begins with a number of bidders expressing an interest. There is then a shortlisting down to three and then two bidders, prior to the real competition, as it were. There is no shortage of information around, in relation to the market.

Q45 Mr Carswell: In order to squeeze better value for money out of every tax pound spent, is there anything that you would like actively to do now that would expand the range of bidders—I am not talking about what has happened, but going forward—perhaps even letting in small contractors who would not get a bite of the cherry?

Tim Byles: Yes, I am keen to find ways in which small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as a large consortium, can participate in BSF. We are already seeing that through the supply chain and through the relationships with the larger consortiums. We are also seeing a number of middle-sized builders and contractors leading the smaller schemes. There is quite a large range in the size of projects in BSF, from £80 million up to £1.5 billion. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach here. What we are trying to do is to balance the access with value for money, and with delivery and improvement of efficiency through time. The Department for Children, Schools and Families has just concluded a consultation on the second half of BSF—2007 to 2015—where we are looking at opportunities just like the ones you mention, for other entrants to bid on more targeted, smaller-scale schemes.

Q46 Mr Carswell: So, if a smaller business came to me and said that they found that they had barriers to entry, I could bring them to you and we could work out what those barriers to entry were and how to remove them?

Tim Byles: You certainly could. As I said, a number of smaller contractors are participating very effectively in BSF, with the flexibility that they bring. There is a need to balance value for money overall with flexibility and pace, which is often what they bring.

Q47 Mr Carswell: The second thing on which I would be interested in your views—we looked at this earlier—is the idea of national guidelines for the design of schools locally. I am very conscious of that. This is more to get your thoughts. In the '60s and '70s everyone thought tower blocks were a good thing, and then—someone talked about leaky roofs earlier—flat roofs were everything. Today, although I will probably be hung, drawn and quartered for saying it, the fad of the moment is carbon neutrality—we may or may not be talking about that

in 20 years' time. Now there is this great trend to make schools into some sort of community centre—that may or may not work. Even though people talk about flexibility and you can change the size and shape of the classroom, the fact is that there are certain preconceptions about what a school is going to be and what it is going to do. Is there not a certain danger in having national guidelines? Would there not be a smarter way of doing this, which would be somehow to allow different localities to do their own thing, giving them the freedom to develop?

Tim Byles: I think that the issue from my perspective is to try and get the balance right between having some national standards, which build on experience across the country, and giving local flexibility to make choices that are available to the very different settings in which these schools are located. Some local authorities have a local vision that sets their BSF school in the context of a much wider economic regeneration strategy, for example. Some others want to see schools as more stand-alone elements of the community spread across a large county, for example. Both of those are fine, as far as BSF is concerned. What is not fine is if we were to try and create a situation where there was overcrowding or inadequate facilities against some measures where we are clear that we want to stimulate learning, which is why every BSF school is an extended school. That is not a one-size-fits-all measure. It allows that extension to fit with the locally owned strategy—as it does in Essex, for example—and to fit more broadly with the local delivery of the gathering of services. Those might be social care services or wider education services as the children's plan envisages; but there is a great deal to be learned in a world that needs to be increasingly flexible. So we are trying to create places that are effective in today's technology and that have the flexibility to adapt through time. We want to check that progress with the users as well as the parents, teachers and communities in which these schools sit. I am very keen that we do not have a one-size-fits-all approach and that we learn lessons for where they are working—because there are some similarities across communities and there are experiments going on in what is the best way to deliver some aspects of learning in a modern environment.

Q48 Mr Carswell: One final question. Would you allow a school that says it is not going to have any access to any community activity, is going to go to the other extreme, is not going to worry too much about this carbon neutral stuff and is going to maybe emulate what the Victorians did? Would you allow that? That would be flexible.

Tim Byles: It would be flexible, wouldn't it? No; on sustainability we would not, because there are some national guidelines. To pick up on some points that were made before I sat down here, BSF was not high on the sustainability agenda when it began. The Government clarified the position in relation to sustainability last year through the introduction of a 60% reduction in carbon footprint for new BSF schools. We are on a trajectory via a taskforce that I know you have heard about this afternoon to get to

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carbon neutral schools by 2016. So there are some national standards that local schools need to take into account, but the dimensions of the extended school is very much a discussion that we have with each local authority—and, indeed, each school—to try to set a balance and pattern of service into what is a much larger and more complex service environment locally.

Mr Slaughter: Are we going on to educational sustainability?

Chairman: You can go on with anything you like.

Q49 Mr Slaughter: What has begun to interest me about the programme, which I suppose naively I originally thought was simply a modernisation and capital programme—there is nothing wrong with that at all—is how it can be used to change the whole educational approach of a local education authority. But that can be quite a political process. I am going to give you a parochial example, but it may have a wider significance; however, before I come on to it, are you aware of that? If there is a political agenda coming to you from local authorities in the way that they wish to spend these very considerable sums of money, are you alive to that and are you responding in a political way, or are you simply ticking a lot of boxes to see whether the money is being spent in a proper way?

Tim Byles: I am certainly not responding in a political way. I am responding to the different perspectives and priorities that local areas have—and they are different, across the country. There are some givens about the national programme. It is about raising standards comprehensively, and agreeing locally through a strategy for change process—which is the shorthand we have for capturing the local education strategy and the estate strategy in a form that does drive up standards and is in the interests of every young person within a local authority area. You are right; that sounds deceptively simple. There are issues about boundaries and the migration of pupils; about diversity and choice; and about the extent to which some local authorities want to gather wider services on and around school sites. That differs, but what we are trying to have—and that I believe we are developing—is an intelligent dialogue about the aspirations of the Government, which I am there to represent, and the aspirations of the local authority and the leader and chief executive of the council, with whom we deal, as well as the director of children's services. That is why, for each BSF school, as we begin them, I visit the authority and speak to the leadership—political and official—and we reach an agreement, which is quite a formal agreement, about the process that will be gone through in order to deliver the educational changes locally. I hope that that answers your question.

Q50 Mr Slaughter: Well, it allows me to introduce my example, which is one of my local authorities, Hammersmith and Fulham. Briefly, there are four principles that I see in the BSF programme, which they are just putting forward to Partnerships for Schools as we speak, almost. One is the

downgrading of community schools and the original proposal to amalgamate three community schools in a 16-form entry, which sounded quite bizarre. The second is to expand faith schools, even though they are over-represented already in the local school economy. The third is a massive expansion in sixth forms, but with no resources going to the one successful sixth-form college in the area, and a lot of the money therefore going to the building of those sixth forms—up to seven new or expanded sixth forms—within a small local authority area over a five-year period. Finally, there is the use of the money to dispose of assets to the independent sector in order to set up independent schools. None of those principles accords with what I would necessarily want to see as a use for Government money. I thought it was for improving school standards overall, but particularly for community schools with a high percentage of free-school-meals pupils that, although they were improving greatly, were not doing so well. Taking that as a hypothetical example, how would you respond?

Tim Byles: It sounds very hypothetical. I cannot comment on the absolute detail of that scheme, although I would be happy to talk to you separately about it. I will just look at some of the items that you have raised. We are not at all interested in the downgrading of community schools. We are interested in trying to ensure good access and good choice for every young person across the local authority area. We recently had the remit meeting, so we have commenced a process for the strategy for change that allows for further development. We have not agreed every item in it as yet. There was an eight-week process at the beginning and a 20-week process for the second part of the strategy for change. That will allow us to reach an agreement—or, indeed, a disagreement: if there is disagreement, the project will not proceed—about fair access and good opportunities for all young people. As for the hypothetical expansion of faith schools, we looked in quite a lot of detail at the pupil place numbers and the expected pupil places for each local authority area. That is a science, but it is also an art, particularly in London and especially in places like Hammersmith and Fulham, which have a large percentage of resident pupils who are educated outside the borough. We are trying to look at it in the broader sub-regional context in order to reach conclusions. If there is good evidence that we need more places in faith schools, we are capable of agreement on that, although I do not know in this specific case. On the expansion of sixth forms, we will be looking at the track record and delivery of existing institutions as well as any plans for new sixth-form places. The disposal of assets is generally a matter for the local authority, although there is a relationship between the disposal of school assets and the contribution that local authorities need to make towards the programme more generally in their areas. All those points are ones that I would expect to agree with any hypothetical Hammersmith and Fulham over this period of the strategy for change process. Those are the principles that we will

look at, and we have started a process that will debate them and bring them to a conclusion before the project proceeds in earnest.

Q51 Mr Slaughter: To conclude, even though you would obviously not be looking at this from a political point of view, let alone a party political point of view, if issues raised in that way appeared to you not to be achieving the objectives of the programme, would you at least question them?

Tim Byles: Yes. If they were not achieving the objectives of the programme, we would not allow them to proceed. It is normally the case that in the pre-engagement and early engagement phases we are sufficiently clear about the parameters that we are dealing with, and if not, we tend not to start the process. I am hopeful that we will reach a positive conclusion in Hammersmith and Fulham, but I do not have available this afternoon the detailed points that you make.

Mr Slaughter: I would be happy to supply them.

Q52 Chairman: Keeping on that point, if we interviewed the Learning and Skills Council and other players, such as the Association of Colleges and so on, about the transition of two years, and the dramatically changed shape of the LSC, they would say that because of you lot in Building Schools for the Future, and because of the academies programme—because of the world that they live in, in terms of planning their future—you are encouraging local authorities to plan for the future across the piece, to have a vision, yet at the same time they, especially the further education sector, will say, “How can we plan anything?”. How can the local authority plan anything, with trust schools and academies both having the potential for sixth forms, with Building Schools for the Future allowing sixth forms in their new build? It is a crazy kind of environment. Who is doing the planning? How can order be brought to that chaos?

Tim Byles: I think there is order. I think that order is coming. Through the strategy for change process we are trying to take into account 14 to 19 provision, locate the education strategy within the broader community strategy that the local authority holds for the whole area, and for that to cover zero to 19 and beyond. We are working with the Learning and Skills Council in London, looking specifically at the joins between vocational opportunities, academic sixth-form opportunities and the rest of the secondary school agenda, in order to overcome that kind of issue and to ensure that things are connected. A single document should set out clearly what a local authority wants to achieve in a broader context in its community strategy. Within the strategy for change it says, “Here are the places that we need for this local authority, here is the mix between vocational and academic opportunities and here are the specific linkages.” Each school has a strategy for change, as well as the local authority. We increasingly want to share vocational and academic resources between institutions in the locality, through clusters, federations or simply through the operation of expertise in adjacent areas. That is happening more

and more, and it is a key principle of BSF to look after everybody’s needs for an authority, not just for our own purposes, but for good planning generally to cover diversity and choice issues, efficiency and value for money.

Q53 Chairman: So how do you look down and look up? You are mainly at secondary level. Do you look down to the primary level and say, “What is the quality of new build going on outside the BSF programme?” What about the environmental standards that Graham mentioned just now? Do you look up to the FE sector? When we did the last inquiry on BSF we were told that 50% of that estate had been rebuilt, often not to the high standards that BSF hopes to achieve, and certainly not in terms of environmental standards and carbon footprint. Is your good practice spilling over, down or up?

Tim Byles: It is starting to. I do not claim that we have this solved—we do not. We have an agreement to look at the whole picture in terms of pupil numbers. Increasing numbers of local authorities use their local education partnership as a means to procure and deliver primary schools through the primary programme. We are making the connection at the strategy for change level with further education and on to higher education. We are responsible for the delivery of BSF. We do not run the primary programme. We are increasingly looking for ways to join that process up and we work actively with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to find better ways of doing so. This year we will see clearer linkages emerging and I hope that we will be able to deliver linkages beyond the strategy level with FE provision. We must allow the circulation of pupils between FE and sixth-form provision, which we already see in several strategy for change proposals. Blackpool is an example that springs to mind where we consciously have a programme that does exactly that. It allows the movement of pupils between an FE college and the seven secondary schools within the borough.

Q54 Chairman: Tim, you have been chief executive of a big local authority. We have taken evidence from local authorities and visited them. Taking on a big BSF strategy is demanding on resources, time and staffing. At the same time, the Government are throwing open the careers service and the funding of further education, and piling on the number of things that local authorities can deliver. Do they have the capacity to do that?

Tim Byles: When I was a local authority chief executive I was keen to have as much devolved to me as possible. In the report, I notice that you talk about the need to get that balance right. That needs to be judged carefully in terms of capacity and capability. In relation to BSF and the academies programme, there is a wider variation in capability and capacity in local authorities, which is why we try to tune our relationship accordingly. Some need more help and challenge than others, and some have a more comprehensive picture of where they want to go and how they will resource it than others. I am keen for authorities to have a programme for BSF that

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delivers effectively and is located within a broader strategy. I do not make an assessment of the Government's devolution of other schemes to them.

Q55 Annette Brooke: If we could look at some of the issues that came up in the previous session—you probably heard the answers. There was a question about whether there was enough post-evaluation, and you covered that in your introduction for obvious reasons. Could you tell us a little more about the post-evaluation that is taking place? Is it looking at all those issues of involving stakeholders, or indeed at energy measurement? In other words, is it going beyond value for money for the taxpayer? I feel there are a lot of dimensions that should be looked at.

Tim Byles: You are exactly right. There are a lot of dimensions. There is a sort of technical process. When people use the term post-occupancy evaluation, sometimes that is restricted to a very technical evaluation by technical assessors of the physical characteristics of the building. I am talking in a much broader sense. I am very keen that we use objective research information to plot our progress and to challenge us to develop further, as well as being clear about the ingredients that we can spread as best practice across the country. So we look at stakeholder research. For example, Ipsos MORI has carried out quite a widespread exercise for us this year, which we published on our website, that talks about stakeholder involvement; that was an issue that your report raised last year. It measures the extent of satisfaction and participation by parents, teachers and young people in the process. I will not go through all the details for you, but there has been a very significant shift over the last 18 months in the attitudes and perceptions of involvement among stakeholders, and the recognition that the programme needs to be seen as a whole programme—ICT, building and education transformation, all together. For example, 65% of stakeholders say that the amount of contact that they have with Partnerships for Schools is about right; 85% of stakeholders say that ICT is an integral part of the programme, and local authorities have a very high level indeed of favourable involvement at the preparation stage for BSF. So we have been checking across the stakeholder community. We have also been talking to students and head teachers. The National Foundation for Educational Research report on Bristol Brunel Academy, which I mentioned earlier, gave some very specific details, for example about reductions in bullying, feelings of safety when at school, and desire to stay on later. I would just like to give you one or two statistics from that report. The figure for those who feel safe at school at Bristol Brunel Academy most or all of the time increased from 57% to 87% this year. Those who felt proud of their school increased from 43% to 77%. Those who said they enjoyed going to school increased from 50% to 61%. Those who perceived that vandalism was at least a bit of a problem decreased from 84% to 33%. Those who perceived that bullying was a problem decreased from 39% to 16%. Those who expect to stay on into the sixth form

or to go on to the local further education college increased from 64% to 77%. We feel that those kinds of figures are significant measures of good progress at that particular school, which is why I am keen to chart it in other areas, as well as the academic and the sustainability points that you started with.

Q56 Annette Brooke: My question in the previous session was really whether Government were giving sufficient leadership. On the face of it, it sounded as if the Government were following; in other words, at individual authority level, there was the bolt-on of environmental sustainability on the transformation, which is a mix of local authority and central Government. Apart from the money, however, what are you really adding to the outcomes?

Tim Byles: There is quite a bit from us. If I just start from the beginning, when people are starting to plan their strategy for change process and starting to define the educational improvement strategy for that area, we spend quite a lot of time introducing resources that are not always available within a local authority, particularly in pupil place planning for example. It is very important for us that we have a view across an authority's area of how many pupils you will have for the next generation, in order to ensure that you have a good investment that is not too many or indeed too few places. So there is quite a lot of input in developing the education strategy. There is quite a lot of input in the early stage about the facilities available through ICT across the curriculum. As part of our single gateway, which was another of your recommendations that the Government have picked up, we manage the contracts with 4ps for pre-engagement work for capacity building and project management skills in authorities, with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment in order to challenge and support good design as the process proceeds, and with the National College for School Leadership, which is there to ensure that head teachers and their leadership teams understand what it means to lead a project through BSF. So there is quite a bit at the early stage. When it comes to going out to the market and engaging with the private sector, holding bidder days and starting to develop the strategy to run through what is a complex EU procurement process, we have expert project directors who are allocated to each local authority to help both to guide and to challenge that process within the local authority to the point of financial close. When the arrangement is concluded, we have, through our sister organisation, Building Schools for the Future investments, a place on the board of the operational local educational partnerships to ensure that progress is sufficient against the timetables that we have set. There is a significant capacity constraint within local authorities in the project management area and in the negotiation and skills area. We are seeing quite a lot of movement between local authorities, so we are engaged on our own account and with 4ps in developing training and wider access to those skills so that there is sufficient out there to help to manage BSF projects. We try to target and to provide our services proportionately to the need of

the local authority. We do not want to overdo it. Equally, we want to make sure that there is good progress in timing and quality for these projects.

Q57 Annette Brooke: It all sounds quite mechanical, and I cannot see where the innovative ideas have a chance to pop through the system. How is innovation being encouraged?

Tim Byles: We want to encourage innovation, and one way that we are finding helpful is through the engagement of young people. We use the Sorrell Foundation, through its joined-up design programme, to hold workshops, seminars and programmes that help to stimulate new ideas direct from pupils about what is important for the design of new schools. We encourage each local authority to participate in that process. We are also encouraging the design community to innovate in the way in which it produces proposals for design, and for the bidding consortium to do so as it approaches a local authority to enter into the procurement process. I would not describe that as a mechanical process, but it is a complex process. At its core, local authorities must choose a partner who will be able to respond to their aspirations locally, to deliver something that is flexible enough to respond in different local settings even within a single local authority area, to have a good relationship with the schools and communities in which they are located, and to deliver something that is effective and provides value for money on the ground.

Chairman: We are running out of time. Paul wants to go back to something that we missed out, but need for the record. We can then get Graham to wind up.

Q58 Paul Holmes: What are the lessons—this is partly connected with what you have just been talking about—from the one-school pathfinders?

Tim Byles: A number. We feel that it is most effective to make investments in schools in the context of the strategy we talked about before—overall, a strategy for change. You can go in and look at a school that has a particular need and sort it out in the individual school. Unless that sits in a broader strategy, the investment, if replicated too widely, would not provide the optimum solution. One-school pathfinders have allowed areas throughout the country, where there are high-need local situations, to produce new facilities quickly. It is better to do so in a broader way that fits with the overall strategy. That is my conclusion. We also need to make sure that the same rigour on design, sustainability and value for money applies to every investment across BSF. Some of the early one-school pathfinders did not score as highly as the schemes that are coming through now.

Q59 Paul Holmes: I was going to ask about that. Some of the early stories were horror stories about individual schools being taken to the cleaners by the PFI contractor, who might say, “Well, if you want these extra school activities in the evenings and at weekends, you will have to pay extra for them, and we will charge you for car parking and so on.” That goes against the whole point of improving and

extending school facilities. Are you saying that we have learned the lessons from that by doing whole-authority negotiations?

Tim Byles: Yes. That is important. There are two or three points to make on that. First, it was not just a function of one-school pathfinders. It was an issue historically with single-school PFI, which caused a range of problems on flexibility and value for money. However, there are some good examples of single-school PFIs which do not have those problems, so it is not just an issue in kind. The Jo Richardson community school in Barking and Dagenham is a good example of a flexible arrangement with a PFI provider. The maintenance and facilities management arrangements are managed by the school to a very high degree of value for money and flexibility through the introduction of vocational space, new special needs provision and so on. It can be done, but it is much more difficult on a single-school basis. That is why looking at the rest of the estate is so important. What is unique about the local education partnership approach—I speak as someone who, in my previous life, was quite critical of the problems of PFI in its early years—is that it is in the business interest of the consortium to both be flexible and deliver value for money. Otherwise, they lose the exclusivity for the period, which is given by the local authority and could be for ten years. The value for money has to increase year on year on a like-for-like basis, or the exclusivity is lost. That is the first time that I have seen PFI working in the explicit interests of the public sector as well as the private sector, and needing to demonstrate that flexibility. Each one of our first several schools coming through the second and third wave of procurement in BSF is hitting its value for money improvements. We monitor that on an individual school basis as well as in phases and waves in BSF. Were those improvements not to be delivered, we would go to an alternative source to provide the schools in a local authority area.

Q60 Mr Stuart: Tim, do you have a bonus structure for yourself, personally?

Tim Byles: Partnerships for Schools has one for me, yes.

Q61 Mr Stuart: What factors determine whether you receive your bonus?

Tim Byles: The bonus is determined by a committee of PfS, and it is against our business plan targets, which are to do with the number of projects delivered through local authorities, the number of academies, the quality of them, the educational outcomes of young people, sustainability—there is no shortage of measures, I can tell you, in relation to the performance of PfS. They are published in our business plan each year. We are measured against quite a large number of performance indicators—about 60.

Q62 Mr Stuart: So your personal annual bonus depends on 60 performance measures, does it?

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Tim Byles: Yes, it does. It reflects the overall performance of BSF as a whole, and the people who work within BSF are measured according to the areas for which they are responsible.

Q63 Mr Stuart: So in that context, what role does sustainability and the carbon footprint play? If it turns out that these schools are not delivering, will that stop you getting your bonus or not?

Tim Byles: I suspect that that would be a question of degree. There is an issue across each of the measures against which we are managed, and which we publish on our website. There is quite a large range of targets, and their proportionality is also set out in the business plan, which is publicly available: 60% is to do with delivery, 20% is to do with operating efficiencies and people-related aspects, and the remainder is to do with—

Q64 Mr Stuart: It sounds incredibly complex, compared with profit or numbers.

Tim Byles: It is complex, yes. As an ex-local authority chief executive, I can say that there are significantly fewer targets than I used to have to deal with as a local authority chief executive.

Q65 Mr Stuart: What hard data can you provide us with to monitor the sustainability not only of the schools that have been built to date but those that will be built, on the environmental front?

Tim Byles: On the environmental point, we monitor each school, and that information is publicly available. There are targets for the progressive improvement in sustainability, as I mentioned earlier, and we will be monitoring in each school, through its post-occupancy evaluation, how it has progressed against those targets.

Q66 Mr Stuart: Do you have collective numbers—a nice easy set that we can look at?

Tim Byles: I do not have a nice easy one for you this afternoon, but as I said, we will do our first post-occupancy evaluation this autumn at Bristol Brunel, where we will be examining the results on the ground against the targets that were originally set. The Government's position has clarified through time, and for each new school we are looking at a reduction in the carbon footprint of 60%, and we are measuring that for schools from a particular point in time. I wish that it were more simple for you, and indeed for me, but it is not. When we get to 2016, we are targeting a zero-carbon position for new-build schools. For refurbished schools, of course, different issues need to be managed, because we are managing a different thing.

Q67 Mr Stuart: But most of the BSF schools will at least be heavily under way by that point, 2016. Is zero carbon by 2016 a bit of a pointless promise?

Tim Byles: No, I do not think that it is pointless. All of government is committed to 2018, and BSF has been targeted to do that two years earlier. We need to work out practical and sensible ways to get to that target. In some cases, the technology is not available to us now without paying a significant premium. I

am aware of a couple of schools in this country that have delivered a carbon-neutral result. We are looking at the most effective way of doing that, in urban and rural settings. It will take some time for the taskforce to finalise its recommendations in relation to that. In the meantime, we are stretching ourselves to do the best that we can with the resources available to us.

Q68 Mr Stuart: One of the things we would like to understand is this. Sustainability comes off the tongue very easily. It is easy to incorporate it, and then you get to the hard measures a few years down the line and you find there has been no real change. Can you give us any picture of the BSF schools built to date? Have they reduced carbon by 60%, or was it too late for those?

Tim Byles: It is too late for those. Those that are coming through now will be delivering 60%.

Q69 Mr Stuart: As of when?

Tim Byles: The announcement was last year, so schools that will be up in about 15 to 18 months from now will be delivering that total. We are measuring those to date. I have mentioned it a couple of times, but I shall mention again Bristol Brunel academy. Where we start to get real traction on sustainability is where we integrate environmental sustainability into the curriculum. We have energy meters on the walls. We have young people policing the turning off of lights and the use of ICT. That creates an upward force, in addition to having a set of targets. To correct a point that you heard earlier, it is in the business interest of the consortium to demonstrate high sustainability and low energy use, because at the bid stage, it is measured on the extent to which that is achieved. A bid with high energy costs will be less successful than one with low energy costs.

Q70 Mr Stuart: There is no problem with the bidding. At the bidding stage, you get a beautiful school that is very environmental friendly. But as it gets squeezed to the end and there are cost pressures, suddenly that high-performance, low-energy pump with a bit of capital cost is squeezed out. All the other things like that are squeezed out throughout the project.

Tim Byles: That is not our experience, although I am familiar with the kind of example you give.

Q71 Mr Stuart: So can you assure us that, for instance, high-performance A-grade pumps only will be installed in BSF—

Tim Byles: No, I cannot do that, and the reason is that the decision that is taken at school and local authority level needs to fit within a framework that is about improving sustainability and gives the choice about the means of getting there to that local authority and school. I can certainly say that if that solution did not pass the sustainability hurdle of 60% carbon reduction, that would be a significant problem and it would not be approved.

Q72 Mr Stuart: But at the bid stage, of course, you have a theoretical school. We have all sorts of Government targets. I think that the offices of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have seen a 32% increase in energy use since 1999, which is at complete variance with its policies. The policies are fantastic, but the reality does not match. We are worried that the schools will not match.

Tim Byles: I can understand that. I can give you one illustration that may help this afternoon. We are seeing the consortiums taking these kinds of things seriously. One of the advantages of an integrated approach between construction and ICT is that we are seeing more money coming—in at least one case I can think of, from a construction consortium—to invest in low-energy ICT precisely because that reduces the energy bill for the school and therefore reduces the unitary charge. The local authority will benefit from that. It also ensures that there is a more contained energy problem, as it were, for the facilities management provider. We are trying to create an environment in which the objectives of the provider are aligned with those of the user and the Government. That was quite an interesting example. The consortium did not have to do that. It invested in the ICT to keep the overall footprint down.

Q73 Mr Stuart: Okay. The fear has to be that the bid fits with the 60% reduction but the actual school does not. What happens in that case?

Tim Byles: In the case of PFI, you are setting the price at the point of concluding the transaction. That means the risk transfer—that is why PFI is working for us in the area of new build—to the private sector that is affected at that point. Let us say that facilities management is not included and energy provision is not included within that package. Even in design and build solutions, more and more risk transfer is happening, but where it is not and the risk remains in the public sector, that creates the potential for the circumstances you have described. We are trying to design that out by creating a risk transfer to the private sector so that the bid sets the pattern for operation.

Q74 Mr Stuart: Okay. You are trying to design that out. Can you just explain to us precisely how it would work? I am trying to work out and understand, in respect of the contractor—as Warren Buffett would say, it is all about incentives—exactly how it would work at that point. Can you explain that to us?

Tim Byles: If you are going for a price for the provision of a range of services to a batch of schools and you are setting that price against all the variables that are set and you deliver that through a risk transfer to the private sector, that is the point at which you have set your course. It is then in the interests of the private sector to get the cheapest possible solutions. As a former board member of Constructing Excellence, I believe that this view is shared—quite rightly—and that more people want to see whole-life costing introduced and that they do not simply want to get the purchase price right, never

mind the maintenance. People are looking at it as a package. In the case of PFI, that is contained in the overall transaction and, for design and build, more and more local authorities are creating a fund locally to enable them to maintain the facilities through the life of the project. We have to keep an eye on that, because unless it is nailed down at the transaction level, it is a risk that needs to be managed.

Q75 Mr Stuart: What guarantee do we have on that front? Do we have your personal guarantee that, from now on, this will be built in and there is no way that we will have—

Tim Byles: No, I cannot say “No way”. I can give you examples where authorities can choose a “no way” risk-transfer solution, and I can tell you that we will be managing and measuring these issues in relation to each school.

Q76 Paul Holmes: May I ask the same question that I put to the two witnesses from Barnsley? When we were first looking at this matter in respect of the first report, schools we visited and evidence we got said that sustainability was squeezed out on ground of cost. The Barnsley people said that that is not happening there, because they are putting extra money in over and above what the Government provide. How do you square that with your confidence that sustainability is going to be there?

Tim Byles: I live in three worlds, as I alluded to earlier on. First, there are the early schemes—Barnsley is an example of quite an early scheme in BSF, where sustainability was not figuring as highly as it does now and the authority in Barnsley has invested more fully in some areas than other authorities early on. Secondly, there are those that we have already made changes to following on from wave 4—those authorities that have come in since November 2006—where, increasingly, sustainability has been quite specifically targeted in relation to the degree of carbon reduction that needs to be achieved for schools. That started with the announcement by Alan Johnson in spring 2007 about 60% reduction. Thirdly, we have the progress to get to the 2016 target. There have been several moves: those in the past, where some authorities have invested more and when, frankly, sustainability was not as high up the Government’s agenda as it is now; those who are coming through the system now; and those who will be getting us up to 2016.

Q77 Paul Holmes: So are the extra costs of achieving sustainability up front being met by taking something else out? Did you make £130 million extra available?

Tim Byles: There is additional funding being made available now—

Q78 Paul Holmes: But spread across all schools. That was not enough to make the difference.

Tim Byles: It is being made available for all new-build schools that hit the 60% target, and there is a calculation that generates extra money for all schools going through the system now that achieve

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that. The Barnsley scheme, I believe I am right in saying, was before that. I expect there to be further developments later for schemes taking us to 2016.

Q79 Mr Chaytor: I want to ask about travel and transport, because it seems that, at exactly the moment when the price of oil and the impact of climate change targets is encouraging people to travel less, national education policy is assuming that young people, particularly between the ages of 14 and 19, will travel more. How is school transport and the impact of the 14–19 curriculum being built into the schemes that are coming forward so far? What guidelines, if any, are you issuing about how schools should account for the carbon effect of increasing travel?

Tim Byles: In-curriculum transport is not a new issue to BSF. It was a huge issue for us in Norfolk, when I was chief executive there, where moving between a secondary school in Swaffham and the further education college in King's Lynn was a regular feature of life for pupils. It is highly differentiated according to the locality that you are putting it in. The sustainability figures that I have given you are to do with the building itself and its operation. Local authorities have separate travel-to-learn plans, which take into account the sustainability cost of travel. They need to be balanced between opportunity and the sharing of curricular activities—vocational and academic—between institutions in localities, and the need to keep costs to a minimum. That balancing issue is something that local authorities manage. It is not something that we impose from BSF. We ask them to take it into account. It is a balance, and it is a challenging balance for any local authority.

Q80 Mr Chaytor: Local authorities also have their own emission reductions target in their performance management frameworks. Will the carbon content of school travel have to be included in the local authority's performance indicators or will it be counted against the schools' carbon reduction calculations?

Tim Byles: That is a technical question. I do not know the answer. I am a bit out of date as a local authority chief executive. I believe that it will come at authority level and may also be measured at the school level. It certainly is not something that we take into account through our formal reporting at BSF.

Q81 Chairman: If you have departmental expertise, will you write a note to us on it?

Tim Byles: Indeed. Yes, we will.

Q82 Chairman: We have come to the end of the sitting. You live in three worlds. Does that world include speaking regularly to the Schools Commissioner?

Tim Byles: It does indeed. Yes, I speak to him regularly.

Q83 Chairman: What do you talk about?

Tim Byles: We talk about the need to balance choice and how to set that in the context of an improvement strategy for each institution in a local authority area. We meet regularly to discuss those issues. As each authority comes into BSF, we have a discussion at wave level to look at the plans of each authority to make sure that we have a pattern that meets the objectives of the Schools Commissioner and of the other aspects of the DCSF before commissioning the project at the remit meeting, which I chair on behalf of the Government in each local authority area. Those are the things that we discuss. The discussions centre on being sure that the improvement strategy for each school is convincing, and that a range of choice is available for young people within the local authority area.

Q84 Chairman: You talk regularly to Sir Bruce Liddington. Everyone knows that there is a discussion about two particular local authorities in London that are next door to each other. Everyone says that one is making a brilliant job of BSF, and that the other is making a real mess of it. How did the one authority that everyone says is making a mess get through all the hoops and get the money? What is going on?

Tim Byles: I am racking my brains about which authority you mean.

Chairman: The authorities are Greenwich and Lewisham. I shall not tell you which one is good and which one is bad. I shall leave that to your imagination.

Tim Byles: Different progress is made in those two boroughs. That is true. Their involvement with BSF considerably predates the existence of the Schools Commissioner, and they have adopted quite different procurement routes. I have been dealing in detail with both authorities over the past few months. A range of issues—not to do with the schools commissioner—has impacted on their progress. As it happens, both of them are starting to make good progress, but one, in particular, has had a slow start and is taking a long time.

Q85 Chairman: The word coming back—probably about the one with the slow start, I am not sure—was that it could not be bothered with the environmental stuff and sustainability affecting the environment.

Tim Byles: I am not seeing that. I am certainly seeing the settling of some substantial environmental factors affecting the progress of one particular school in one of those authorities. That is not because the authority is not taking the matter seriously, but because there is a need to balance the environmental regulation questions—as there is in other places. You mentioned flooding earlier.

Q86 Chairman: Tim, I am happy with that. How often do you talk to the Building Research Centre (BRC)?

Tim Byles: I do not talk to it frequently. Our design team is in pretty constant contact with all people engaged in building.

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Q87 Chairman: The BRC is doing really good stuff, but on sustainable buildings—those that contain energy and use less of it. I know that such matters are not linked directly to the DCSF, but surely you should be talking to people who do the innovation.

Tim Byles: I personally do not talk to them regularly.

Q88 Chairman: Does anyone do so from your team?

Tim Byles: I shall confirm that. I am sure that we do on the issue of developing sustainability. I do not claim that I have a direct dealing myself.

Q89 Chairman: But you mention innovation quite a lot.

Tim Byles: Absolutely.

Q90 Chairman: As it is innovation, it might be worth sending some of your people down there.

Tim Byles: We will do so.

Q91 Chairman: I do not know if Graham was talking about the high-quality pumps because he has a constituency interest. I hope that he was, because it just shows that he is doing his job superbly well. Heat Exchangers, a company in my constituency, is working on such an innovation. Tim, this has been a

valuable session. As long as you are in the job, we will call you back regularly. A lot of taxpayers' money is involved. Do you still think that it is worth using all that money to refurbish buildings? Should we not stop the programme and spend more money on good science and maths teachers? Do we have the priority wrong?

Tim Byles: We should be doing both. I see an enormous improvement in the behaviour, attitude and engagement of students with whom we are working throughout the country. I certainly think that it is important to achieve a right balance between new facilities, ICT, teaching and the engagement of parents to make sure that the whole package delivers the outcomes that we are seeking. While I am pleased that we have been asked to act as a single gateway into BSF—as you recommended in your report last year—it also gives us an opportunity to influence each of those areas as well as making sure the element that is the core of our business is delivered effectively.

Q92 Chairman: I think that you left the community out of that.

Tim Byles: The community is an important ingredient.

Chairman: Thank you.

Wednesday 21 January 2009

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Mr Douglas Carswell
Mr John Heppell
Mrs Sharon Hodgson
Paul Holmes

Fiona Mactaggart
Mr Andy Slaughter
Mr Graham Stuart

Witnesses: **Ian Fordham**, Deputy Chief Executive, British Council for School Environments, **Sunand Prasad**, President, Royal Institute of British Architects, **Dr Richard Simmons**, Chief Executive, Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment, and **Graham Watts OBE**, Chief Executive, Construction Industry Council, gave evidence.

Chairman: Gentlemen, this is an important session. We are slightly delayed due to prior business that the Committee had to settle, so we shall get straight into it. We tend to be reasonably informal in these sessions in terms of names, and although you have to call me the Chairman or Chair, I will call you Sunand, Ian, Richard and Graham. Is that all right? We do not use titles; it makes everything more efficient. You will know that this Committee takes its responsibility for the Building Schools for the Future programme very seriously. We have had a major inquiry into BSF. When we did that, we said that we would not leave it alone and just think, "There's a report" and let the report gather dust. BSF was initially described as a £45 billion rebuilding and refurbishment of the whole secondary estate in England. It is a massive taxpayers' commitment, so we regularly have these sessions as matters develop. You will remember that, when we did the original inquiry, not one BSF school was open—not even the Bristol schools had been opened—but now a significant number are open and can be visited.

Q93 Fiona Mactaggart: This is a big investment programme. I am interested in the impact that the economic downturn might have had so far on the programme. We know that it has hit the building and construction industries in various ways. I am interested to know whether you believe that it is going to impact on the number of projects in the public sector, or whether it will mean that the number is sustained but the scale or ambition is reduced.

Graham Watts: I am Graham Watts, from the Construction Industry Council. Obviously, the sharp rate of decline that the construction industry is experiencing at the moment is really unprecedented. We are expecting output in construction to fall by at least 9% in 2009—the worst fall in almost 30 years—so the economic situation is obviously significant. First and foremost, we should say that we see the Building Schools for the Future programme as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve the learning and educational environment for our children—that is the reason why it is important—but actually at the moment, along with other public sector programmes, it is seen by the industry as a lifeline, to prevent the fall in

output from going from 9% to perhaps 14 or 15% over the next two years. So I do not think that there is going to be any shortage of construction companies and designers who will want to be involved in BSF projects; but there are, of course, a number of issues that I think are quite well documented about failure to bring projects to financial close quickly or waste of resources in the bidding process. There are some very well documented cases of construction companies losing up to £5 million in bidding on one project, which will, of course, make them very wary of being involved in other projects.

Q94 Fiona Mactaggart: The obvious problem, as well, is accessing finance to mount all these projects. I was looking at a piece in *The Times Educational Supplement* on 5 December last year that suggested that an application has been made to the European Investment Bank for funds, because up to five local authorities are struggling to find private cash for BSF projects and are looking for additional funds. Are you aware of BSF projects that are stalling or struggling because of difficulties in finding private investment, and what would you want the Government to do to reassure investors that BSF is a relatively safe place to put money?

Graham Watts: First, we obviously welcome the European Investment Bank's agreement in principle to fund five projects near financial close with a £300 million package, but at least another 18 privately financed BSF schemes, worth around £1.3 billion, are due to close this year, and our information is that a number of them are struggling to raise the private capital that they require, because, of course, of the difficulty in liquidity within our banking system. So I think that intervention from the European Investment Bank, or further intervention from the EU or the Government, to try to provide some more direct funding to assist these projects and to change the structure, which, of course, was set up in different times when the credit crisis was not there, is what we are looking for.

Sunand Prasad: You asked if we were aware of other projects delayed through funding difficulties. We do not know for sure, but there are delays in the announcement of certain preferred bidders in projects due to funding problems. I think that we have to remember that, in the old days in times of

downturn, Government investment was a sure way of either copper-bottoming or kick-starting the economy. In this case, because of the involvement of private finances to such a large degree, that solution is not as readily available as one might think. The question is really whether we intervene in helping that credit and finance to be there through the Government. Should we perhaps for a time take a more traditional route for funding, because within BSF there are several procurement methods? There is design and build within BSF, and there are certain schools that are not procured entirely through public-private partnerships. I think that there are avenues to be looked at in whether those methods could be mixed more.

Q95 Fiona Mactaggart: I am hearing that you would like more investment from Government. One of the things that struck me is that that is producing a more competitive environment. You have less business outside this field. Is there scope for savings for the public purse?

Sunand Prasad: The RIBA's position is that the biggest scope for savings for the public purse right now would be the streamlining of the procurement method to reduce bid costs, which might bring in its wake a more competitive environment, because people will see less at risk. They would be competing not on the amount of risk that they can take, but on the price that they can offer.

Q96 Fiona Mactaggart: But the RIBA has told us that the bidding process is a burden and that good design practices are not necessarily involved because it ties up a lot of skills and that much of the work is then not used. Is that not inevitable in that kind of bidding process? Is it not quite usual? If the reward at the end of the process is work when the rest of the economy is not offering work, is that not a worthwhile investment of your skill and talent?

Sunand Prasad: That is why people will continue to turn to that process, even though up to two thirds of the work is not used. Two thirds of the work done is not used, at a cost of over £5 million—the figure typically used to be £5 million or £10 million, but that has since reduced to £7 million because of improvements in the process used by BSF for the bid costs.¹ A substantial amount of the work is simply not being used. That money has to come from somewhere, and ultimately, those bidders who have risked that money will get it back from the public sector in the long term. However, in a downturn, people will be keen to take part. Architects are certainly very attracted to BSF, not only for the work, but for the type of work. We still believe, however, that you still get competition and enthusiasm and that you can reduce waste, time and money.

Graham Watts: There is some evidence that PFI contractors are using their own cash to plug some of the funding gaps, but the number of companies in the construction industry that are able to invest

millions of pounds of their own money in the bidding process is very small. The industry is characterised in the main by very small firms that rely on the banks to invest in that process, and of course, at the moment that is not happening.

Q97 Fiona Mactaggart: One of the things that I am hearing from you, Sunand—I would not mind if other witnesses commented on it—is a sense that the bidding process is not as efficient as it might be if it were driven by partners who frequently built buildings. My brother is a property developer, and I do not imagine that he has a bidding process that is as complex as that which BSF involves. Inevitably, local education authorities and school partnerships do not include people whose main expertise is in commissioning and building buildings. Is there a failure in the education of your customers in going through that process in a way that gets the best value for money for the taxpayer and out of what the builders and designers can do?

Sunand Prasad: I think that that is absolutely right. Client skills are an issue. Interestingly, the best local authorities do very well. There are some high-performing, expert local authorities, but that learning is not transferred to the others. We are beginning to wonder whether there needs to be greater help centrally to local authorities to help them become more expert at procuring. If they were, perhaps some of the leaner, more competitive processes could be introduced. It is true that the current process does at least protect poor-performing local authorities to an extent from putting the public sector greatly at risk. Some help like that would help local authorities to be much more effective clients, who not only get the best designs and best design quality, but actually involve pupils and teachers in the development and are able to see it right through to delivery on time and budget, like the best-performing private sector bodies will.

Q98 Chairman: Ian, your organisation was formed to try to inform and spread good practice across local authorities and bidders. Do you want to respond to Fiona's question?

Ian Fordham: Yes, I do. In the evaluation of building schools for the future, which was issued yesterday, it came out strongly that local authority managers are becoming experts in the procurement process, but what is actually driving this programme is educational transformation. Our take, particularly on the procurement process, is that there are alternative ways of looking at BSF procurement that could be improved. Smart BSF, which we were strongly in favour of, is one of those approaches. We are aware of other local authorities going down different procurement routes as well. The issue around skills and knowledge at local authority level is key. It also goes down to the level of clients who are the beneficiaries of this programme. We would be delighted to play a more active role in the professional development of local authority managers as well as teachers to get the right outcome. In relation to the economic downturn, one

¹ *Note by witness:* The figure typically used to be £7 million or £10 million, but that since reduced because of improvements in the process used by BSF for the bid costs.

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of our issues is having real clarity about the Government's position on the Public Value Programme and its review of BSF. Taking the point made by CIC about the industry having the reassurance that money for BSF will continue, that level of commitment is essential at the moment. Knowing what will be the outcome of that public value programme review is essential. We are aware of a National Audit Office report on BSF coming out quite soon as well. That is another way of settling the industry's concerns about procurement and other issues.

Dr Simmons: Good practice is starting to emerge, as you will know from previous appearances. We have now started a process of reviewing designs at the bidding stage to try to help local authorities to decide who will be the best contractor in terms of good design. We have so far seen 54 schools—that means seeing 170 designs, as we are seeing three designs for each school—from 25 local authorities. That is about 1.5% of the total programme so far. We are about to kick in to the compulsory stage of reviewing in wave 4, which is coming to CAFE shortly. Picking up the point just made, one of the key issues is around educational transformation. Plenty of people can procure a building, but the people who can innovate and produce good educational transformation are much scarcer at the moment. In March, CAFE is to start a programme of sharing the learning that we are getting from design review at the moment. The process is ambitious, not just an estates programme. We constantly harp on about this, but it is about the young people who are the ultimate customers of the process and how schools can be designed better to enable teachers to work with them to improve educational performance. That is one of the key areas for us where further work and preparation are needed. We have been talking to Partnerships for Schools, which is very receptive to getting engaged earlier in the process, so that the educational authorities have time to think about their educational vision much more clearly before they start. Making the waves less formal, so seeing more schools from people who are ready to bid, rather than insisting that people come in serried ranks, will be a big help. We are already seeing improvements in preparation. Getting the educational vision is critical to getting the right vision both for the schools and for how they are looked after once they have been built.

Q99 Fiona Mactaggart: I am going to have to pop out shortly and will have to pass this back to the Chair, but I am interested in the point you make about the way in which design issues and learning about educational transformation can be changed. I know this sounds trivial, but it is not. I am a former teacher, and I know how important it is. I was struck that, in a newly built school in my constituency, the lavatories have windows on to the corridors—not the place where you actually pee but the space outside that. It has been quite transformative of bullying in the lavatories. I am struck by such small changes, which can improve the learning

environment in ways not necessarily likely to be thought of. Are you confident that there is a strong enough process to share the consequences of such innovations? Not all of them will work, obviously. I have a feeling that the big ones are being shared, but perhaps the little ones are not.

Dr Simmons: Lavatories are where most people start. If you talk to young people in schools about what the issues are, they start with lavatories and then move on to corridors or movement spaces, because, as you say, that is where bullying happens. Then they move on to where they get fed, and then the learning environment. That is absolutely right. I think that a lot is being learned. With things like loos, the question is how far to go before you stop innovating and say, "Right, that's a standard we can set. We don't have to go on spending design time on it, because people have worked out how to make it work well." As the programme develops, we will learn more. Partnerships for Schools plans to introduce something called post-occupancy evaluation or post-occupancy learning. That is where learning on the small issues will really be able to flow through. We are learning a lot at the moment, especially about getting it out there, but we still need to do a lot more.

Ian Fordham: I just want to make an observation about transformation and what it actually means. As a former teacher, I know the issues very well. How can we hard-wire it into the system? How can we look at the small innovations that make a massive difference to young people and teachers? We are proposing a much stronger emphasis on applied research and development—the kind that we can put into the hands of the people making decisions about what happens in their schools through the procurement process and afterwards: furniture, lighting, organisation of space. One of our concerns about how we work together effectively as partners is the finding in the evaluation that talks about how the design of new buildings is not having a massive effect on pedagogy and how teachers develop their practice. That is critical. All of us as organisations need to stand up to the mark and show how to make that happen.

Sunand Prasad: I strongly support that. The report says: "In the case of open BSF schools, there is no evidence to date suggesting that the design of new buildings, including flexible teaching areas, has significantly contributed to changing pedagogy and practice".² That is slightly surprising, because a lot of learning is taking place, but the fact is that we have not yet quite come to grips with how educational transformation and a vision about a new kind of educational practice or practices change the buildings themselves. As we have all said so often, BSF is not actually about building; it is about schools for children and teachers. We have not quite got there in the learning. One of the keys to that will be for schools to spend far more time defining their transformational vision, working directly with

² PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) *Evaluation of Building Schools for the Future—2nd Annual Report for the Department for Children, Schools and Families* December 2008.

designers who can provide it and coming to answers, rather than being thrown immediately into a procurement process that is, as we have all said, very complex. How do we make space for maximum contact between the people who need something or are changing something and the people who can design and construct it?

Q100 Mr Stuart: I was not clear. Has there been a movement from private finance initiative to design and build, as a result of the investment planning so far?

Sunand Prasad: So far, I would say that it is too early.
Chairman: Too early to know.

Q101 Mr Stuart: I understand that it was thought that that was likely to happen, but it was hoped that there might be an increase in design and build and then, when the market changed, a switch back to PFI. However, there is no evidence for that.

Graham Watts: No, there is no evidence for that at the moment. Could I return to that central point about experienced clients? It is worth making the point that the guidance and advice coming out from centralised public sector authorities—such as the Public Sector Construction Clients' Forum, the Office of Government Commerce, Partnerships for Schools and so on—is of an extremely good quality. I have been at CIC for 18 years and would say that the quality of the guidance given to procurement officials nowadays is better than it has ever been. Too often, there is a disconnect between that central guidance and the decisions taken locally. It is an age-old problem, but it is one of the issues that we need to address.

Q102 Chairman: Can I just push on a little on the issue that Fiona opened with? Is there a crisis in funding? You know, as well as we do, that there is another major programme for primary education and that there is a very big capital programme in further education, and we all understand that there has been a rush to get big capital projects through to the Learning and Skills Council, because people are worried that the LSC will disappear by 2010. Everyone is getting their bids in now. Is a crisis looming due to the lack of funding and the number of schools and colleges rushing to get their bids in, because they think that the money will run out?

Graham Watts: After a slow start, all the evidence until recently was that the programme was picking up. Indeed, the evidence of the early completions is that the full year's programme of schooling carried out afterwards was very good. The crisis is that that promising move and acceleration could come to a full stop if the funding is not there, particularly on the private sector side, to continue the work.

Chairman: So that is a crisis.

Graham Watts: Yes, potentially, it is.

Dr Simmons: The crisis is in the construction industry. Many firms in construction see schemes such as BSF and LIFT as a way of staying in business. The question is whether the collateral damage to firms from other parts of the sector will be such that it will either weaken their ability to attract

investment capital or weaken the skills in the organisation. As you know, a large number of people have already been made redundant from the industry, and the estimate is that 30% of the work force will possibly be gone by 2011. It is a question of whether we can hang on to and improve the skills in the sectors that the Government are still supporting, or whether firms that are having to spread their bets across a wider range than in the past, when losses from BSF could be spread across other programmes, will now be so focused on BSF that losing a BSF scheme will be fatal to the company. That is where the greatest danger lies from our perspective.

Sunand Prasad: There is no crisis in BSF. It remains an incredibly exciting and interesting programme, and knowledge is being generated. At this point in our economy, BSF ought to be part of the answer to the crisis, and the real question is whether it is currently configured to be most effective in answering that crisis. Can we bring schemes forward fast enough to have a real impact on the economy? So far the evidence is that we cannot. How can we put measures in place that release the true potential of BSF, not only to transform education, but also to deal with the economy?

Q103 Chairman: But, Sunand, the Government have been saying that they will use the construction industry and public sector construction projects in both health and education to get us through the recession. It would be tragic if a lack of finance stopped that process.

Sunand Prasad: It would be tragic if either a lack of finance or an inability to innovate a little more in procurement systems prevented that from happening.

Q104 Chairman: BSF was accepted with cross-party support by everyone in the education sector, because it was the first time that any Government had said, "Look, we want you to have a vision of teaching and learning that is innovative and creative. If you come up with a vision of what you want education in your local authority area to be into the 21st century, you will get money for construction." Does that still hold? Is that still the inspiration from your perspective?

Sunand Prasad: I would say that it is. Absolutely. We know from best practice what can be achieved. There are high-performing LEAs with transformational visions that are doing the right thing and achieving great results. However, we are not getting sufficient spread of that across the piece. It is improving, but the questions are whether it is improving fast enough and how can we, side by side with doing things such as loosening fiscal restraints, help centrally local authorities to be better at getting the results that we are all after?

Dr Simmons: There is no doubt from the people who we are meeting through the design review and the various forms in which we share learning that that is at the heart of what people are trying to achieve through the program. It is still seen that way. The issue is about whether all local authorities have the

skills to deliver that at the moment or access to the skills. One of the good things—let us talk about the positive side—is the huge enthusiasm on the part of head teachers, teachers and LEAs to share the learning that is going on at the moment. We are about to add some educationalists to our design review panel, so that we can get some more of that force behind the programme. Everyone understands the ambition and is keen to share it, but not everybody at the moment has the skills or necessarily the resources when they need them at the front end of the programme. From the work that we are doing, it is clear that, as Sunand said, it is really important to spend more time, before bidding or joining the programme, preparing your vision and thinking it through carefully, while still having a dialogue with designers about how to realise the vision through the buildings. It is very interesting that people are saying that pedagogy has not yet been shown to be improving through the design of schools. We have seen some schools where that is happening, so that definitely needs to be shared more widely. When you see that happening, you start to see the school's performance transforming as well, based on conversations with the heads.

Q105 Chairman: Where is that coming from, Richard? You say that pedagogy is changing, but when we held our original inquiry, we could not find such schools and innovations showing new ways of teaching and learning. It is all very well having that and talking about personalised learning, on which an inquiry has been going on for three years—in some respects it is a bit late for BSF—but if you are designing schools, the ideas for teaching and learning that inform the build of the school must come either from the Department or locally. Where is it coming from, if anywhere at all?

Dr Simmons: By and large—this is not universally true—we are seeing it coming from very imaginative head teachers, chairs and governors working with very imaginative people in the LEAs. They have the opportunity to influence the design outcomes of the schools. There are people who want to innovate in learning. On Friday, I was at a school from the old PFI programme, which, unfortunately, was not a design success. The school's ambition is being inhibited by the fact that the design has not worked, which means that it cannot achieve what it wants. However, its ambition remains, and it is doing the best that it can. As far as we are concerned, it is about getting those clients together with good architects and then sharing what they are doing with other people, so that they can understand the differences.

Q106 Chairman: Graham, hand on heart, do all local authorities still need that vision? Or are some authorities getting away with a traditional but new build? You know what it looks like—corridors with classrooms for 30 kids on either side. Are we building any of those?

Graham Watts: Well, I think that they are still happening. Only 42 schools were opened under the BSF programme by the end of December. I think

that I am right in saying that only about 1.3% of eligible schools have joined in the wave so far. It is very early days. I think that there are some ideological issues in some local authorities about opting into the BSF programme, because they do not want to outsource elements of the schools operation and those sorts of things. Going back to the original question, I feel that some evidence is already beginning to emerge of improvement in the learning process and in the schools environment through the early schools that have closed. I have seen some figures—

Q107 Chairman: Early schools that have closed?

Graham Watts: I am sorry. Early schools that have finished.

Dr Simmons: Closed the contract.

Graham Watts: Closed the contract—thank you, Richard. I have seen some data about examination results improving, and the percentage of students feeling safer is up 30%; the percentage of students feeling proud of their schools is up 33%; and vandalism is down 51%. That sort of information is beginning to come out of the process.³

Q108 Chairman: There are 42 schools. What I am asking you is, of those 42, how many are visionary and different, and how many are traditional schools of the type that I have just described?

Graham Watts: Of the ones that I have seen, which I have to say is not very many of those 42, I think that there is something visionary about all of them, particularly in terms of the design quality within the school.

Q109 Chairman: We all get in a panic to build, so will we not just revert to the attitude of, "Let's just put up a new school, cut corners and forget the vision"?

Sunand Prasad: Yes, if we get into a panic to build. However, there is absolutely no reason why we should get into that panic. As we keep saying, it has been done very well in places. What we must do is to make that the rule. There is not actually anything incredibly surprising about what is needed here; it is just that not everybody is up to speed on that, and we have to help the people who are not quite there to be there. Then they will not panic.

Q110 Mr Stuart: All of you make money out of this enormous, multi-billion pound programme, and yet the second annual report evaluation of BSF says, "Teachers . . . were less convinced that the teaching spaces were flexible and adaptable . . . It is too early to point to a clear link between new or refurbished school buildings and improvements in pupil attainment, although there was a clear message that the buildings alone would not raise attainment, unless accompanied by other changes . . . Our results mirror the existing literature in not finding a strong correlation between the two"—that is, basically, between these changes and pupil attainment and improvement. So we have a failing school system that, after a doubling of expenditure, has seen the

³ See Ev 38

number of children who are NEETs—not in education, employment or training—at 16, 17 or 18 remain unchanged after 12 years of economic growth; we have a crisis of competitiveness; and we have people effectively abandoned because of a lack of opportunity and a lack of attainment. At the same time, we are pouring billions into a building programme, for which there seems to be no evidence at all that it will tackle the fundamental source of those problems. Can you comment on that as a critique?

Chairman: I do not want a seminar on those issues. Could you come back briefly on that, please? Who wants to start?

Ian Fordham: I will start. Let us take a step back. What is this all about? It is about great schools. What do we want for our schools, for our education? If you use quite a narrow metric around attainment, clearly things may not necessarily be improving in the way that perhaps somebody wanted them to improve. If you are looking at those broader outcomes that we want to achieve, including higher attainment—obviously, the Department for Children, Schools and Families has put a consultation out about those broader outcomes. If you are measuring it just by that metric, yes, there needs to be improvements. Going back to the point about how you can hard-wire this into the system, then how you can take teachers on board and say, “What is the link between what you are doing in the classroom and how this new building programme is developing?”, is absolutely essential. I think that an opportunity is provided by the economic downturn, from the point of view of our taking stock and saying, “How do we actually move the system forward, how can we bring about that kind of innovation in the system?” I do not think that BSF is a failure; I do not think that the Primary Capital Programme, or PCP, is a failure. As somebody who is working in the not-for-profit sector, I would challenge the issue around making money from the programme. However, I think that this is what we are all about: from our different perspectives, we are all about achieving great schools. How can you actually take people on that journey? The Government’s ambition is very big and challenging. However, I think that we are all, from our different perspectives, trying to find ways of improving the system and I think that those simple metrics around league tables are a bit of a misnomer. I think that it is about those broader outcomes that we are looking for, which is about engaging the hard-to-reach and those NEETs you mentioned, as well as being about just the crude attainment tables.

Dr Simmons: That analysis, by Mr Stuart, is a fairly gloomy analysis, I think.

Chairman: He is just trying to provoke us all.

Dr Simmons: I thought that that might be the case. What we are seeing coming through the design process now is not conventional school design. In terms of the schemes that are being brought through the system, which have not yet been built, we are not seeing that old-fashioned school that you describe. We are seeing, broadly, five different types of school, which are trying to learn from some of the best, such

as Bristol Brunel. There is already some learning getting out there in terms of what is being built. I think that it is too early to judge yet because we have not seen that many new schools built. To say that you can transform education as a result of building 42 schools suggests a dramatic result, and if we achieved that it would be great.

Q111 Mr Stuart: The killer line from the official report is, “The results as a whole suggest a positive impact of capital on attainment”—hurrah—“but the magnitude is likely to be very small. We also found evidence for considerable diminishing returns to capital investments.” Given the crisis in our education, the challenges we face and the urgency of dealing with them, what would make an incoming Government continue pouring billions of pounds into this particular programme?

Dr Simmons: You need to remember where this programme started, which was originally around the quality of the school estate. Schools were leaking, they were not well maintained, so it was about trying to bring some innovation to that. Educational transformation, very sensibly, has been brought in because while you are changing the physical structures and dealing with the estate management issues, the opportunity also needs to be taken to improve learning.

Q112 Mr Stuart: But is it a false promise? There seems to be no evidence—

Chairman: Give them a chance. I am going back to the witnesses, who will respond to your question.

Sunand Prasad: As someone who is engaged on a day-to-day level, the picture you have drawn is not one I recognise at all. The excitement in schools before and after construction is truly inspiring when it happens, and it does happen. We need to interrogate that matrix because earlier on Graham read out some others, which seemed to contradict that.

Q113 Mr Stuart: He gave an anecdotal view of having seen some data that suggested that, whereas I am looking at the formal evaluation, which comes to opposite conclusions and seems to suggest—

Chairman: Which none of us have had a chance to read.

Sunand Prasad: There are other things in the formal evaluation. I do not recognise that picture and the key point is that it takes a long time for a building to be designed and built—three years minimum, probably more. We must not go on about the old picture. There was an earlier phase of BSF, which has produced the completed schools. BSF and Partnerships for Schools have learned a great deal from that early experience and have put in place really good measures. We do not think that they go far enough, but they nevertheless have put in place some very good measures, the results of which are now beginning to come through in the designs that we are seeing, which will be on the ground in probably two or three years’ time. The fact is that these are slow-moving programmes and the time to

market is quite long, and I would not panic about those kinds of figures. The evidence, anecdotal and otherwise, is that this will work if we do it right.

Chairman: We are going to drill down on this.

Q114 Paul Holmes: We have had various comments on design quality and education outcomes and so forth. To return to that issue in more detail, when the first wave of academies opened five or six years ago there was a lot of criticism that some of the new buildings were not very good; others had poured a fortune into a stylistic statement that did not have much to do with education and could even hinder it. When the first few BSF schools were opened and this Committee, in its previous form, did a report about them there was a lot of concern from people like you that the design was not coming up to promise. Now that more have opened—although there are still not many—where are we? In general, is the design meeting expectations?

Dr Simmons: I suppose I should start, because we are actually looking at what is coming through the system at the moment. We are seeing improvements. We are still seeing many schools at the first review. We generally do two reviews and people come back for a third or fourth bite as they have to, but generally we see schemes twice. We are seeing definite improvements between the first review and the second review, so that the number of very poor schools is diminishing. As you will know, the Government are proposing to produce a minimum design standard, so that schools that are truly poor do not get built at all. What that will comprise will be announced shortly and we are working with Partnerships for Schools. I think that that will make a big difference, certainly in helping people to understand what the benchmark is. Below a certain level, you just should not spend public money on some of what is being proposed and being built. So we are seeing an improvement. As a result of Partnerships for Schools issuing new guidance, we are also seeing much better briefing; architects and contractors are working with better briefs and that is helping the process as well. At the moment, we are still looking for improvement in three key areas. One is environmental strategies. No school that we have seen has yet achieved excellence in its use of resources, although some are good. We are looking for better civic presence; we see too many schools that still use a fence as their boundary with the neighbourhood, rather than a front door. That is often because of the nature of the site that the architects and the contractors are given. In some cases it may be that the cards are already stacked against the project because of the site. I suppose that I have already talked about the third area: educational transformation. We need more of a learning spread. Those are the kinds of areas that we think we need to see most improvement in at the moment. The story is positive but it could be a lot better. We would still like to see far more good and very good schools coming through.

Q115 Paul Holmes: So, there are no more horror stories like the school that had no playground, no green space. That was a brand new school, which could have been there for 30 or 40 years, but with no green space. There is nothing like that at the moment.

Dr Simmons: We are trying to weed those out, so there should be none in the future. Of course, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment does not see every school; we do not see refurbishments, for example, because generally they do not fit with the model of design review. Once the partnership has been formed, we have to be careful to keep up the pressure on producing good design. Part of the point about the post-occupancy evaluation that we touched on earlier is to make sure that once a partnership has been formed, there are checks to ensure that the high standard set at the outset is continued. Those risks have to be managed as a programme develops.

Sunand Prasad: The horror stories should disappear. The CABA design review and minimum standards should take care of that. I am pretty convinced that they will take care of that. What we want to do, however, is to go a bit beyond that. We want to have transformational education—education that is focused on the children and the staff. Our concern is how to achieve that in the best way possible. Looking back at successful projects—not only in BSF but in other programmes, such as the arts lottery—we know that when designers and the people who need the facility get together and work out what they want, and what they want then gets built through as simple a process as possible, you get the best results. How can we, while protecting the public purse and dealing with the risk—which is what many PPP and design, build, finance and operate models are predicated on—allow there to be the interfaces between designers and users that ensure we get the best possible designs? We are going to come back to the issue of local authority skills—client-side skills—and the procurement process, which at the moment tends to get in the way of that. We need to be imaginative and creative with certain constraints perceived in the European rules, which other European countries do not seem to be so bound by; we seem to interpret them more strictly. We believe that we will be more able to do the sensible thing if we look a little harder at this picture.

Q116 Paul Holmes: One of the early criticisms was that the Government had not provided, say, 10 different standard blueprints and said, “Why don’t you work around those?”, although other people said, “Oh, no—you do not want to stifle innovation.” In some of your earlier comments you seemed to suggest that good practice samples are now emerging. Where are we on that?

Dr Simmons: Shall I start on that again? We certainly oppose the idea of five standard schools built everywhere because we think that that is a failed model. There are certain things that you can set standards for and standardise around, and that means that you can put more of your design time into two key things: the innovation around

education environments and so on, and making the school part of, or having it add to, its civic context. We have seen some interesting schools recently. In one school in Southwark people want to incorporate business units alongside the school so that young people can experience business at first hand and see how businesses operate on site. A lot of the design resource should focus on how you can achieve that kind of thing in the design. But, as the programme is seeking innovation, there are some dangers in saying that everything should be standardised, because that will automatically stifle the ability of teachers, head teachers, the industry and the LEAs to come up with new ways of learning that they want to use to improve standards. There is a balance to be struck, and at the moment there is a lot of guidance on standards. I suppose that the key thing is how smart you are at using those standards effectively—for example, if there are problems with the limits on how much floor space you can fund, whether you can find ways to make that floor space more adaptable, so that you can use it for personalised learning some of the time and for more general classroom activity at other times. It is in those areas that smart design is important.

Q117 Paul Holmes: CABE has provided enablers—skilled architects—to take a lead and advise other people. Is much use being made of that?

Dr Simmons: Yes, all education authorities that are part of BSF have access to them and are using them. We are talking to BSF about using them much earlier in the process, because client design advisers are also appointed to advise the client once the programme is under way, so we are now looking at whether we can use our enablers much earlier in the process to help the conversation about the educational vision and how it would be applied to briefs—appointing design teams and so on. That will probably be a better use of their time, given that CDAs work with clients through the project.

Q118 Paul Holmes: The design quality indicator is online, and it was suggested that any project costing over £1 million, let alone a whole school, should use it as a yardstick. Is that being done?

Dr Simmons: DQIs are certainly very helpful in informing the brief to begin with, but we apply a slightly different process. Graham is the expert on DQIs, but as long as they are used properly, carefully and there is feedback about what they have done, they are a very good way to involve a wide group of people. You have to use several different ways of engaging the client, and the key message we are getting is that where clients—not the LEA, but the people who use the school—are directly engaged in a conversation with the architects and contractor, the results are better. Graham is probably in a better position to comment about DQIs.

Graham Watts: The DQI for schools is a very simple tool that should enable all the stakeholders in a school project, including the students and the teaching and ancillary staff, to be involved in a conversation about what they expect to achieve—their aspirations for the design quality of the finished

school. That is reviewed at various points in the process. It is very early days in the programme, and the problem is that it is seen more as a contractual necessity—a box to be ticked—rather than a process that is properly facilitated, involves all the stakeholders and is gone through in a considered and co-ordinated way. Where it happens, however, we see evidence that the process is improving the product.

Q119 Paul Holmes: My final question relates to some of your earlier comments. One or two of you talked about companies and architects who are a bit worried about going in for the design process and bid, but not being selected, and therefore losing money. What is unusual about that? I remember years ago, as a councillor, having presentations from three teams of architects and designers who wanted to build the new shopping precinct in Chesterfield; only one could win and two were not going to. Why is BSF any different from the usual process?

Sunand Prasad: What is unusual about the situation, when compared with what you describe, is the sheer amount of work involved. We are basically designing whole buildings in considerable detail. We had been doing three and chucking away two of them; now it will be two and we will chuck away one. That is one problem, which is why it is so expensive to bid. It also creates a discontinuity between those early engagements—we all agree that early preparation, getting your brief right and getting a good concept design together are essential. If we had continuity between that and using DQIs to track progress and the built school, that would be ideal. Currently, however, because of procurement rules, we have an interruption, whereby the contractors come in with their own designers and reinvent the wheel to minimise risk and other sorts of supposed aims. We believe that there are other ways of doing that and keeping that continuity. My position, and, in fact RIBA's position, is that that would get over many of the problems that we are describing—if we could have that continuity and if those designs could be novated to be constructed.

Chairman: We are going to have to speed up questions and answers because of our slightly late start. Douglas? No? John?

Q120 Mr Heppell: Personalised learning is often talked about, but people have different views of what it is. What are you doing to ensure that schools can cater more for personalised learning? I presume that there will be more one-to-one tuition. How has that affected the way that you design schools?

Ian Fordham: There is mixed press on the meaning of personalised learning. The Committee will be aware of some of the concerns and issues. At a school level, it is transforming the way teachers think, not only about classroom teaching but about how they organise themselves in different spaces and how young people learn outside the curriculum. The work of David Hargreaves on clustering the gateways to personalised learning—“the four deeps” as he calls them—is being embedded substantially in the curriculum. It goes back to design and pedagogy:

how the design of new school buildings integrates into changing thinking about teaching and learning and the different spaces within which that can be done. The evaluation highlights that there is still a gap between design and personalised learning. Engagement with teachers is critical. To build on the learning we have in that regard, we ran a series of transformational learning master-classes just before Christmas with Dr Kenn Fisher, a world expert on pedagogy and space. He has been inspirational in the work on personalised learning and new builds in primary schools. The learning that is taking place and that has been going on at school level on personalised learning—

Chairman: Usually in the corridor.

Ian Fordham: It is sometimes done in the corridor, but those things are connected. We must consider the dynamic that there is not just classroom teaching, but that learning takes place outside the classroom.

Chairman: Does anybody else want to come in on personalised learning?

Sunand Prasad: There is much to be learned from the primary sector, where personalised learning—the idea that each child has his or her way of dealing with the world and learning about it—is well established and tracked. The primary sector allows spaces to be flexible tools that teachers can use. That is how we must look at them. The school community, head teachers and teachers must be able to use and manipulate the space around them to suit learning styles. That must come from teachers. The key is adaptable and flexible spaces. That is where the focus is and some good examples are emerging.

Q121 Mr Heppell: Moving on from that, my colleague from Nottingham, South is always very concerned that most schools are not very environmentally friendly. There is talk of schools being zero-carbon by 2016. My experience is that people talk the talk well. As a quick anecdote, on a visit to Nottingham University I was shown marvellous technological innovations for making an environmental impact. There were many marvellous new inventions. I asked how many were used on the university premises and the answer was none. There were great ideas, but they were not being used. What has been learned from the first wave about making schools sustainable in terms of energy, carbon emissions and so on? How has that changed the design for what is coming?

Dr Simmons: Probably, what we have learned from the first wave is that there is not a lot to learn from the first wave, other than that the more IT equipment you put in a school, the hotter it gets. You can undermine a lot of the good design work if you do not design the building to be flexible enough to accommodate lots of kit. There is lots of equipment around—in the jargon—such as “thin clients”, which will reduce the heat output of IT equipment. The first learning point is to think about the school as a whole, including how it will operate and what will be in it. There are some simple things we can learn from the better schools—to be fair, we can learn from some schools from the first wave. We can also learn from what has happened in mainland

Europe in schools in Scandinavia and Germany. It is simple stuff. Before you start putting in all the kit, you should point the building in the right direction so it takes maximum advantage of sunlight. You should also make sure that you use daylight as much as possible, so that you are not spending money using electricity to light the building. You should use natural ventilation where you can and get the air to flow through the building in ways that are really quite traditional. When you are doing that, you should think about how to make sure that the place does not get too hot or cold, as I said. You can then start to look at whether you need to add bits of kit. We have seen quite a few schemes with a windmill, which is actually there for educational purposes.

Chairman: We have never seen a windmill that works.

Dr Simmons: That is why they are there for educational purposes. We would like to see every school starting from those basic points. I think our basic points are good architecture, really.

Sunand Prasad: Yes, it is amazing to hear the obvious and simple things that we have learned from the first wave. What we have really learned from the first wave is that setting targets for on-site renewables, for example, is not necessarily the best way to encourage low carbon. The best thing to do is to set carbon targets and say that you can achieve them in the way you want. If you want to achieve it through reducing your energy use or rescheduling your use of the building, do it that way, but make sure that you are conscious of what the true energy costs are. The second thing we have learned is that it costs money to put these measures in place, and when we still have a big problem with the costs of these buildings, those measures get chopped out—even though people start with good intentions. My firm is supposedly expert in sustainable design, but even though we have done a number of schools, they are not all exemplars of sustainable design because the money was not there to do it. Now that the Government have made the money available, we hope that there will be a generation of far higher performance schools coming through. We particularly request that we do not have prescriptive targets that tell you how to do something, but, by all means, set outcomes in terms of carbon energy reductions.

Dr Simmons: Could I add briefly to that? The same issue applies in housing. Last Friday, I was at a school on a brand new housing estate where the houses are supposed to achieve certain standards within the red line around each house, and the school is supposed to achieve certain standards in the red line around the school. It would have been much more sensible if sustainability had been looked at across the whole estate including the school. I hope that the Government are moving towards—they need to move towards—the idea of looking at neighbourhoods and larger areas when it comes to energy efficiency and sustainability. That way you can obtain enough investment to get the right kit to make sure that you get sustainable energy.

Q122 Chairman: I hope that you are talking to the Homes and Community Agency.

Dr Simmons: Absolutely.

Q123 Mr Heppell: That just seems a nice point at which to move on. There is a lot of talk about joint services and things being run in schools from one location—people being able to access health care and education there—and opening up schools to the community generally, so that their facilities can be used. That conflicts a bit with the heightened security that I tend to find in schools—getting into some schools is almost like getting into Fort Knox. How do you design a school to allow local access and at the same time keep a grip on security?

Sunand Prasad: If you go to the Jo Richardson Community School in Barking and Dagenham, you will see how those problems have been solved. Ian is really the person to address the issue of co-location because he has given a lot of thought to it.

Ian Fordham: Very briefly, the key issues are at different levels. Locally, particularly with the extended schools agenda, a huge amount of work is going on in terms of integrating services and providing a core of services outside the curriculum. We think that the “Designing Schools for Extended Services” work that was done a couple of years ago needs to be revisited because so much has changed in that time. A further thing is that if the DCSF is committing £200 million to a co-location fund, which talks about integrating services in a local area, a proportion of that needs to be used to look at the issues around design and construction.

Mr Heppell: One last thing—

Q124 Chairman: Before you do that one last thing, John, I went to Almondbury High School in my constituency recently. Yes, there are services, but it is a PFI school, and although the community desperately needs staff working in youth services in the evening, PFI does not allow that. You can pay to go in the gym and do health stuff if you are a paying customer, but young people in that community do not have access because of PFI. Does that generally happen now? Is it the case that every PFI school cannot serve the community because the PFI people do not want expensive security problems at night?

Ian Fordham: There are ways around that, Chairman. I must confess an interest: I did a piece of work on PFI and extended schools last year and we were looking for examples of good practice. There are ways of varying the contracts. Part of the issue is to have a master plan to see how activities for young people can be built into the system in an effective way. Having that integrated approach from a school’s perspective means that the contractor can collaborate and look at that space outside school hours. A number of contractors have been quite active in this and have set up community interest companies and so on to manage those facilities outside school hours in a PFI contract.

Q125 Mr Heppell: The National Deaf Children’s Society provides anecdotal evidence that many deaf children who are being taught in mainstream schools find it very difficult because the new schools that are being built have bad acoustical problems. As

someone who has a hearing problem, I can understand the difficulty. You can go in one room and you can pick up someone talking quite easily, yet in another room you cannot hear a word. How strong are you on building the acoustics of a building into the design?

Chairman: We have all met NDCS on this.

Sunand Prasad: There is a strong building bulletin on acoustics in schools which, if followed, would answer those questions. One of the issues is that some of these changing and emerging pedagogies and these flexible spaces are about open plan, so there is a direct conflict between acoustics and a pedagogic move towards more open plan and more flexible learning. Again, there are good examples of where that has been solved, but it is one of those areas that is a real design challenge. How do you balance those two and how do you take care of the needs of people with partial hearing, while allowing open plan? Without going into the details of the cases, it would be difficult to comment, but overall good codes, good practice and Building Bulletin 93 are available to deal with that, and some of that conflict might arise because of an internal issue about pedagogy.

Ian Fordham: The BCSE is grabbing this issue pretty strongly in the next month. We are having an expert session on the guidance in BB93 on acoustics. We are getting these issues out into the open. The current building standards for schools mean that less than 40 per cent. of speech is intelligible for some children with a hearing impairment. The title of the report says it all: “Must Do Better”. How can we get that information out into the system very quickly and avoid those obvious issues?

Chairman: Sadly, we are running out of time. Let us have a quick one from John to finish and then Andy or anyone else may have a quick one before we change panels.

Mr Heppell: I was just going to say that it often seems to me that the design of the room is right, but people have not taken background noises into account. You will be in a room and it will be fine and then they will switch the air conditioning on and they might as well have turned on a band as far as I am concerned. I have lost all conversation. I suspect that many deaf children are in that position.

Q126 Mr Stuart: Basically, the major environmental aspects which are brought in by specialists in that are being taken out at the last minute because of the capital cost element. Have any positive changes been made to incentivise their introduction? I have heard from pump manufacturers that at that last minute the category A pump specifications are taken out, which has a transformational effect on the amount of carbon produced by the building over its life cycle. This is an issue not just for those with a hearing problem, but for those with a concentration problem who are the most vulnerable and the most likely to end up as NEETs. I know from being a governor of a school where I had to work for years to get the open plan classrooms closed off again that ensuring that such children could hear is pretty essential too. Can you respond to those two points?

21 January 2009 Ian Fordham, Sunand Prasad, Dr Richard Simmons and Graham Watts OBE

Sunand Prasad: On the first point, again when we describe those sustainability measures that were taken out we are looking at a previous regime. You are talking about before the money was made available—up to £500,000 per school—precisely to do this. That is great news.

Q127 Mr Stuart: So they will all be category A pumps in every school from now? Can I be absolutely confident about that?

Sunand Prasad: I wish I could go out and mandate that right now.

Mr Stuart: I wish you could too.

Sunand Prasad: Again, let us stick to outcomes. Rather than category A pumps, are we getting energy or carbon reductions? That is what the target for that extra investment is. We should see that coming through and that money being spent. On acoustics, there is always some learning. I do not think that anybody fully understood what the impact of open plan schools would be when the first ones were built.

Q128 Mr Stuart: That change is 25 years old, and I would have thought that we would have learned, 25 years on, and in a multi-billion pound specified programme, not to have open plan classes in which kids with hearing difficulties, for example, or those who have been alienated from school, cannot hear the teacher if they are more than 3 ft away.

Sunand Prasad: That would be bad design, and there may be some examples of it, but I could show you plenty of examples of open plan that actually works.

Dr Simmons: I guess that you are really talking about the whole point of the programme, which is the young people who are going to be learning in the school. Something as basic as the Disability Discrimination Acts require that you consider the needs of disabled people first. The process needs to do it: it is that simple. The question then is how you achieve a number of different objectives. Personalised learning has many dimensions, one of which is ensuring that particular needs are met. It needs to be clear in the briefing process that those needs are critical and that they need to be put first. In our experience, the private sector is very good at

solving problems if you ask it the right question, so you need to ensure that those questions are right up front in the briefing process.

Q129 Chairman: We do not underestimate the complexity of the matter. I have recently been to some schools where I was absolutely enthused about the new ways of teaching and learning through IT. The BETT exhibition—it is the biggest educational technology exhibition in the world—opened up many new ways of learning that I am enthusiastic about. I have visited two schools in Warrington that are piloting small computers that children take home, run around the school with and use in open space. The head said to me: “If you are building a school with a computer suite now, you are out of date.” What do you think about that?

Sunand Prasad: I agree: IT is changing dramatically. There is an idea that IT should be ubiquitous—that, wherever you are, you have access to IT and that it is not fixed to a building and plant and so on. That is the direction for the future. IT will enable different ways of using space.

Dr Simmons: It depends on your educational vision. That type of IT will allow more personalised learning, and it will reduce the heat load on the school, because such devices produce less heat. However, I was at a school that is bidding to be an arts college last week. It has put a suite of Macintosh computers in because it wants to do fairly complex graphics and design work. At the moment, you probably would not risk people running around schools with Macintosh laptops. It depends what you are trying to achieve, and you have got to have a bit of flexibility.

Chairman: I was trying to illustrate the complexity and imagining the struggle for a deaf child, which may be different. That was fantastic. Will you remain in contact, because this matter is of ongoing interest to the Committee? Also, we are minded to go out and have a look at things again. When we go out, we need a cluster, and we are quite happy to go out to someone’s constituency to see interesting things there. We would hold a formal session outside so that we can really get through to the people who are using a school, and we might even do it in Harwich. Thank you very much.

Supplementary memorandum submitted by Graham Watts OBE, Chief Executive, Construction Industry Council (CIC)

ORAL EVIDENCE—SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS AND BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence to your committee earlier today. I'm sorry that we over-ran our time slot but suspect that this was inevitable given the range of issues discussed.

There were a few brief additional points that I would have wished to make as concluding remarks to my evidence had the time been available and I am therefore sending this supplementary written submission to deal with these residual matters.

DATA

In my evidence, I referred briefly to some early data which indicated that examination results and student attitudes were seen to be improved in relation to a few of the completed BSF projects. For completeness, I give below the headline figures quoted in evidence which show that the BSF is making a difference in the few schools that have been completed long enough to show indicators of improved educational and environmental outputs:

EXAMINATION RESULTS AT GRADES A–C

— Oxclose	41% to 62%
— Bristol Brunel Academy (BBA)	19% to 34%
— Chaucer B&E College	18% to 22%
— All Saints	record number of university places achieved

ATTITUDINAL SURVEY AT BRISTOL BRUNEL ACADEMY

— Students feeling safe	up 30%
— Students feeling proud	up 33%
— Vandalism	down 51%
— Bullying	down 23%
— Intention to stay on in sixth form	up 13%

In his response, Graham Stuart MP referred to the latter issues as “anecdotal”. (Q113) I think it is important, for the record, to say that the data is the product of an independent research study by NFER for PFS and therefore, by definition, not anecdotal. The headline findings were presented to the Strategic Forum for Construction (hosted by CIC and chaired by the Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP) at a meeting on 11 December 2008 by Partnerships for Schools. The slides were cleared for circulation and so I have no reason to believe that the information is confidential but it may be appropriate to check with PFS before these are published.

The point is, of course, that with only 42 schools completed and open by 31 December 2008 (with over 1,000 more now engaged in the process) it is far too early to make hard judgements on the success or otherwise of the BSF programme in improving the educational experience for our children. My point was merely to indicate that the early reliable indicators—as opposed to anecdotal conjecture—is that both the educational experience and attainment are improving as a result of the process.

POST-OCCUPANCY EVALUATION AND A RESEARCH/FEEDBACK LOOP

Although the issue of POEs was briefly touched upon, I'm concerned that there was no time to return to this vital potential component of the programme.

In my view, virtually every issue that the Committee raised with the panel of witnesses pointed to the inescapable fact that a programme of this size and significance must have a proper and robust framework for post-occupancy evaluation and—most importantly—feedback. In this context, the POE needs to be much more than a stand-alone post-mortem on each project, taken in isolation, but much more an ongoing life support system for the programme as a whole. Lessons learned from one project should be capable of being fed into BSF projects further down the line. To achieve what is needed is a process carrier—or framework—that enables various feedback methodologies and techniques (such as DQIs, BREEAM, occupant satisfaction surveys, detailed energy assessments etc) to be utilised by project teams to inform design and construction.

This ongoing research should be co-ordinated for the whole of the BSF programme and needs to be adequately resourced. The concept of a “soft landings” process for schools fits well as a means of ensuring a calibration of all aspects of the building’s services in the early months of operation.

I hope that these additional points are helpful in augmenting the oral evidence given earlier today.

January 2009

Supplementary memorandum submitted by Ian Fordham, Deputy Chief Executive, British Council for School Environments (BCSE)

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

BCSE feel strongly that the government needs to commit funding from its £94 million research and development budget, or the £200 million colocation fund, to tackle some of the systemic issues that effect the school building programme. A research programme that tackles fundamental issues of lighting, furniture, acoustics and the integration of services need to be prioritised and any consequent knowledge shared rapidly with local authorities, schools and professionals to improve the design and construction of schools. If this research and knowledge sharing stage is avoided, it is the view of our members that problems will be “hard-wired” into schools with a negative impact on the health and well being of teachers and pupils and the success of the schools and the system in which they work.

In addition to this research programme, the DCSF guidance on extended schools (Designing Schools for Extended Services) is now almost three years old and is in need of urgent updating, given the wealth of good practice at local authority and school level in integrating services, and the need for schools to respond to the Community Cohesion agenda.

THE IMPACT OF BSF ON PEDAGOGY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

The PwC Evaluation of BSF identified a gap in the system around the link between capital investment and pedagogy, flexible learning spaces and teaching practice. This is an area where the BCSE have developed a particular expertise. At the end of our witness session, you suggested that it would be useful for committee members to visit schools or locations where best practice is happening on the ground.

We are currently working with a global expert in pedagogy and teaching and learning, Dr Kenn Fisher from the University of Melbourne, who ran a series of seminars for the BCSE in December 2008. He is due to be back in the UK at the end of March and we would be happy to set up a session for the committee with Kenn to help identify and clarify these issues and work on how things can be improved. Kenn has a wealth of experience from his work around the world to show how starting with clarity about the pedagogical model, and designing spaces to support delivery of that model, can have a positive impact. He can also talk about how innovation has been embedded in the design of schools in South Australia.

GREAT SCHOOLS INQUIRY

As part of our work to share best practice in school design and construction, we are about to launch a major campaign called “Great Schools” which aims to ensure that we maximise the impact of the major school building programme on children and young people’s life chances, particularly those in the most disadvantaged areas. A key part of this work is a *Great Schools Inquiry*, which will call for evidence from BCSE members and key groups nationally including young people, teachers and school based staff, headteachers, local authorities and professional working across the education sector and beyond.

The inquiry will explore best and emerging practice across the system in five areas: teaching and learning; design and process; health and well being; sustainability and integrating services. The inquiry aims to develop a rigorous and “open source” evidence base that can be used by schools and local authorities across the country and help support the government’s ambition to transform education. We will report back regularly with its findings on each discrete theme as well as drawing findings and recommendations together in a major report in Autumn 2009. We hope that we will be able to share the emerging findings of the inquiry with you and at the next and future select committee sessions.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by Tim Byles CBE, Chief Executive, Partnerships for Schools

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

I am writing to provide you with an update on the progress of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. BSF is the largest single schools capital investment programme for over 50 years. As well as addressing the historic underinvestment in our secondary schools estate, it is designed to help transform education by providing 21st century learning environments for all young people and teachers. As such, BSF is more than a building programme; it brings together communities to deliver modern teaching methods and facilities to over three million young people and teachers, and so deliver a better choice of secondary school to parents.

BSF began in March 2004 and to date, represents annual capital investment of around £2.3 billion in schools. Over the past two years improvements have been made to the way in which this programme is delivered, accelerating the pace of delivery at the same time as ensuring that the new schools being built help catalyse a step-change in educational attainment through design and innovation.

Forty-two new BSF schools have now opened, and over 1,000 secondary schools are currently engaged in the programme. At least 50 new schools will have opened by spring 2009, rising to at least 200 new schools every year from 2011. The current Comprehensive Spending Review allocates £9.3 billion to the BSF programme over three years. Despite some very challenging economic conditions, the Chancellor's most recent Pre-Budget Report confirmed that this spending commitment remains in place and that it is "business as usual" for BSF.

BSF presents major long-term business opportunities for the private sector and over the past few months alone a number of new private sector players have entered the market. The 25th deal in BSF reached Financial Close at the end of November, demonstrating that the programme is continuing to deliver. These are, however, challenging times and it is clear that lending conditions in the PFI market have tightened considerably. We are working extremely hard to minimise any delays and are exploring a range of options to manage the current challenges.

From early 2009 major changes in the delivery of the BSF programme will enable all those local authorities not yet engaged in BSF to join the programme as soon as is practicable. This will provide an opportunity to bring forward targeted funding for the most deprived schools in all of these areas. Local authorities that have not yet started their BSF projects were invited to submit their interest in participating by the end of November, with the order in which they will join BSF to be published in 2009.

December 2008

Witnesses: **Tim Byles CBE**, Chief Executive, Partnerships for Schools, and **Rt hon Jim Knight MP**, Minister for Schools and Learners, Department for Children, Schools and Families, gave evidence.

Chairman: I both welcome you and apologise—this is a demonstration of how difficult it is in this room if you have a hearing difficulty. We all know that the acoustics in this building, lovely though it is, are not very good in many of the rooms—and it was built by the finest architects.

Jim Knight: Absolutely—it is an excellent use of Portland stone.

Chairman: After that commercial, welcome, Minister and Tim Byles. It is good to have you here. Apologies for the slight late running. There was a small crisis in the Committee and we had to discuss something quite important before we got started. Let us get straight into questions unless, Minister, you want to say something to get us started. It is up to you.

Jim Knight: Particularly given the time, I am very happy to go straight to questions.

Chairman: I am going to ask Andy to open.

Q130 Mr Slaughter: We have looked at the transcript from the last time we talked about this issue, and we have looked at the annual report, but

could you give us a verbal update on where the programme is for BSF schools: how many are open and how many are expected to open?

Chairman: Can I warn you that we only got the PricewaterhouseCoopers report at 9.30 this morning, so we have not had a chance to read it.

Jim Knight: That is unfortunate. You did not get it yesterday?

Chairman: No.

Jim Knight: Apologies, if that is anything to do with us.

Chairman: I just wanted to warn you that we do not have much of that information.

Jim Knight: I was delighted yesterday to open the 50th BSF school, Sedgemoor School in Lewisham, which was an excellent event. It is a wonderful inspirational school for 1,700 pupils in Lewisham. In terms of where the programme has got to in its scheduling, obviously we had the slippage in the early years, but particularly since Tim has taken over at Partnerships for Schools, although the slippage that Tim inherited remains—it is difficult to iron out of the system—we have not had any further slippage, and indeed we are slightly ahead of where

we thought we would be when we re-profiled the programme, which is a very good thing. That is broadly where we are at the moment, which I am very happy with.

Q131 Mr Slaughter: So 50 are open; but what about the numbers for this year, next year and beyond that?

Jim Knight: Looking to the future, by 2011 we should be opening 200 schools a year.

Chairman: Per year?

Jim Knight: Per year—that is BSF schools. There will be other schools that will open as well—primary schools, and so on—but this would be secondary BSF schools. We remain as committed as we have always been to the programme. We remain committed to refurbishing and replacing every secondary school in England in 15 waves. By and large that will split as half being rebuilt, and half being refurb.

Q132 Mr Slaughter: I am sorry; I missed the total number.

Jim Knight: Every secondary school is being refurbished or replaced.

Tim Byles: Three and a half thousand schools overall.

Q133 Mr Slaughter: Just for completeness, on the interim period: you were saying 50 by this spring, 115 in the next financial year, then 165 in 2010–11.

Tim Byles: Those figures are still correct, a trajectory rising to 200 in the years following. But we are running slightly ahead of target for this year, having opened our 50th school, as the Minister said, yesterday, against a target for this year of 47.

Q134 Mr Slaughter: In terms of those which have opened—you say 50 have opened—is that 50 new or 50 new and refurbished?

Tim Byles: It is a mixture.

Q135 Mr Slaughter: What is the lowest level of refurbishment you are talking about?

Jim Knight: You might have very limited refurbishment. Obviously, if you have got a pretty new building you are not going to just spend a load of money on it just for the sake of it. It really is dependent on the condition but also upon the school organisation, decisions that the local authority has made, and how the educational transformation that is at the heart of BSF is supposed to work. It may end up being more about IT than buildings in some cases. There is a big spectrum.

Tim Byles: The rough split that we work on is 50% of the floor area being new build, 35% substantial refurbishment, and 15% more minor.

Q136 Mr Slaughter: It is still relatively early days in terms of occupancy. You presumably give it a period of time, but you are going back and doing these post-occupancy reviews. How are they going?

Tim Byles: They are going well. We have just had the results back from our first post-occupancy evaluation of Bristol Brunel Academy.

Q137 Chairman: The very first one?

Tim Byles: Yes, that is right; you do the evaluation a year after the opening. The results have produced some positive messages. There are one or two areas of detail that some of the users would like to see—one or two whiteboards put in a different place—but generally speaking the scores from users, parents and teachers were very high indeed.

Q138 Mr Slaughter: So you are saying that there have been 50 opened, but you have only gone back and looked at one to see whether it is working or not.

Tim Byles: That is right. You open the school, then a year later you check whether it is delivering what is required.

Q139 Mr Slaughter: I understand that, but given that, as you say, you now have this accelerated programme, there must be lessons to learn. Do you not think that you should be picking those up?

Jim Knight: We are learning lessons all the time. We made some changes last year to reduce the length of time the procurement process takes. There are different stages that we keep reviewing and there are also plenty of people externally who want to review the programme and give us the benefit of their advice, not least the Committee. But obviously, in terms of post-occupancy, we cannot rush that, because if the building has not been open long enough to properly review it there is nothing that we can do about that.

Q140 Mr Slaughter: I understand that. But there is a potential problem there, isn't there?

Tim Byles: Yes. Just to clarify that, there is a technical process that looks at design quality indicators and the technical performance of the building against its original specification. Of course, we have other research, including attitudinal research. The National Foundation for Educational Research did once such piece of research in Bristol Brunel—our first local education partnership-delivered school—during the year, which gave a number of helpful attitudinal indicators in terms of behavioural and aspirational change in that school. We want to use a range of research tools to help us. I was answering your question in a technical sense about post-occupancy evaluation.

Q141 Mr Slaughter: Let us look at both those areas, then. There are things you certainly need to do, first, in terms of the sustainability of the building. We all know that among the schools we have are Victorian schools that are in fine fettle and schools built 30 years ago that are falling down. We would hope that your schools are going to come into the former category rather than the latter. Let us deal with that point first. How are you going to assess whether some of the quite innovative methods are actually working in terms of producing durable buildings?

Tim Byles: There is a whole set of design quality indicators. We are encouraging every school to set out clearly what its—it sounds like jargon—benefits realisation state is: what it is trying to achieve through the school in an educational sense and in a

performance sense, in respect of sustainability, for example. Then we measure those things specifically and technically and ask, “Is the building consuming the amount of energy that was expected and are the circulation spaces working well?” We want to add to that process and ensure that the building is operating well as an educational institution by asking, “Is it being effective in helping to raise educational standards, is it allowing circulation and are vandalism and bullying declining?”, and so on. That is the kind of thing that we are adding to the technical post-occupancy evaluation to try to give a complete picture.

Jim Knight: The other thing that I should like to add is that we do not think about BSF schools completely in isolation. Some 1,100 new schools have been built since 1997. We have some award-winning schools in respect of the construction industry and architectural awards. For example, Westminster academy was short-listed for the Stirling prize. We have some fantastic examples of great schools that we can learn from in the BSF programme as well.

Q142 Mr Slaughter: My constituency is in the early stages of the programme. Acton High School, a completely rebuilt PFI school, is an excellent example. It is early days, but I hope that you will look at it. On the attitudinal work that you are talking about—you seemed to stray into that at the end of what you were saying about building design—when will we be able to see some of those conclusions?

Tim Byles: We published, two or three months ago, the results of the first attitudinal study by NFER. It is available through our website. It is our practice to try to publish this research as it arrives, because there is a large community of interested people, who are developing proposals, want to share best practice and the lessons that have been learned. We use our website for that as well as a programme of seminars and workshops around the country.

Q143 Mr Slaughter: What concerns me is that in my constituency, particularly in the inner-city areas, much of what is happening will not be new build on greenfield sites, because there is so little space, but refurbishment. I am talking about things such as the leasing of commercial buildings and extensions. I do not know whether you were here, but the previous panel talked about the need for green space and play space. Those things may well be on the cards. Will your evaluation include all of the different types of projects, and not just the very nice-looking new buildings?

Tim Byles: Yes, that is right. We are looking at every school, whether it is a refurbishment scheme or an overall new build. The school that was mentioned in the previous session was not a BSF school. We want to ensure that all of the schools that are delivered through this programme provide adequate access. It may not be on the specific site that the school occupies. Whether they are in an urban or rural setting, there will be adequate—in fact better than adequate—space for recreation, sport and learning.

Q144 Mr Slaughter: Clearly, you also want local education authorities and partnerships to learn from what is happening in their areas. Are you still going ahead with this interruption to the phasing so that there is a project, or more than one project, going on in each local authority area, or that something can be done in advance? There is a long wait until our expectations are met. If there is a sudden splurge of activity, and they have not got it quite right, they will make all the mistakes at once.

Tim Byles: If I may, Chairman, we are trying to deliver the view of the educational strategy, or transformation strategy, across the whole local authority area. The way in which schools are built and competed for tends to be in stages, particularly for larger authorities. Only a few authorities will go for all their schools in a single bite as it were. That gives two advantages. It gives the opportunity to balance the resources of the authority against the challenge of the procurement, and also ensure that lessons are learned as projects are rolled out across the authority itself.

Jim Knight: Those authorities are in the latter waves of the BSF. Most of them have access to a one-school pathfinder. That enables them at least to have the experience of procuring and building a secondary school, which is not something that many authorities have great experience of, so they are also learning lessons through that.

Q145 Chairman: That is true up to what wave now?

Jim Knight: Sorry, what is true up to what wave?

Chairman: The single school—

Jim Knight: The one-school pathfinder? There are about 40 of them.

Q146 Chairman: Where are we in waves, Minister?

Tim Byles: We are operating in wave 6. The Minister will be announcing waves 7 to 15 at Easter.

Q147 Chairman: Are the waves still important, because other comments you have made in other places suggest that what seemed to be tidy waves—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; going on like that in an orderly fashion—seem to be a more open process? If a local authority is ready, it can jump forward in the queue. Is that what is happening?

Jim Knight: We have certainly listened to the Committee to ensure that we get this right. There were examples of very early waves when getting plans around transformation agreed across the authority was extremely frustrating. There are examples where we have put plans on hold while we get things sorted, rather than rushing to procure and investing hundreds of millions of pounds yet not achieving what we all want. Waves are therefore breaking at different times, but that sequencing is still helpful to us because it means that, in terms of my oversight, I can see how long an authority has been in the programme and where it is with regard to getting schools open, and that is ultimately what we want, because we want this generation to benefit, but we must get it right.

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Q148 Chairman: But Minister, as you know, we have had a session on this—Tim Byles was here. You know that this Committee, in its first major report, was not too worried overall about a slow start to the project as long as we got it right. However, our witnesses suggested, and seemed to agree, that there was something of a financial crisis that might undermine the whole BSF programme. It was difficult for them to find private sector partners to provide the investment that would allow the programme to go ahead. Is there a crisis from where you sit? Should an intervention be made at the Prime Minister's and Chancellor's level? If money is drying up, the whole programme will halt, will it not?

Jim Knight: Let me start, and then Tim will take over with some of the detail, because he has been doing extremely important and useful work in dealing with that. Undoubtedly, the current global financial crisis and our problems in respect of lending have an effect. We built the use of PFI into aspects of Building Schools for the Future alongside conventional design and build funding. However, it is not the case that the money has dried up. A deal was done last week in Newham, and one was done the previous month. We are expecting another deal in London today; deals are still being done. Tim has been able to secure interest from banks that were not previously interested, but want to come into the scheme. We would like to scale up the level of their interest. He has negotiated, in principle, involvement in Building Schools for the Future by the European Investment Bank to the tune of £300 million. Although the current financial climate means that we must think about how to do the job differently and find alternative sources of funding, that job is being done. The feedback that we get is that that particular aspect of public sector investment—investment in public sector buildings—is probably the lowest risk of them all. We are probably the last to feel the difficulty, and the heightened risk attached to it. We are dealing with it, and I am also optimistic that we will be one of the first to come out of it. As is demonstrated by the fact that new lenders want to come in, this is a relatively low risk and people want to get involved.

Tim Byles: That is exactly right. We see new institutions wanting to lend to BSF for the first time. As we mentioned last week, Norwich Union is expressing an interest in doing so, and you have heard about the European Investment Bank. Six conventional lenders have reaffirmed their support and interest in investing in BSF since the beginning of January, and some further expressions of interest are coming in this week. The big difference between where we are now and where we were last year is that the size of debt in which a bank is prepared to engage on a single scheme has decreased to about £20 million to £30 million at a time. If I am looking to fund a £200 million BSF scheme, I need six banks or so, whereas previously I might have needed two. Much more syndication is going on. We need £1.2 billion-worth of senior debt for PFI in BSF in this calendar year, £600 million of it in the first half of the year, but the size of unit that we are looking for in the early part of the year, with one exception, is

generally one to two schools, or up to about £50 million at a time. That lends itself well to two-bank syndication. We have yet to sign one of those physically, so we are not out of the woods yet, but the early indications are more positive than we had expected at this stage of the process. Clearly, there is a medium-term issue. The resources that I have described so far are for 25-year money. There is much more funding available in the seven to 10-year range. It is a Government-wide issue that the Treasury and Government are thinking about as a whole. It might be that one of the keys for future PFI funding is to look at how refinancing risk in years seven to 10 of a 25-year project gets managed as a risk balance between the public and private sectors. That needs to be thought through, because more short-term money than longer term money is available.

Q149 Chairman: There is an interesting tension here. A global financial problem is having an impact, but there is also a domestic imperative to get the programmes moving ahead to stimulate the economy. If that were to become a problem, would this go to a higher level and involve the Treasury and the Prime Minister?

Jim Knight: It is important for the Committee to understand that Building Schools for the Future is largely unaffected by the Government's fiscal stimulus work because of the lead-in times, with which the Committee is familiar. If we were to try to rush spend through this year and next by bringing projects forward by two or three years, it would be very difficult to get things right, such as the involvement of the school's pupils and stakeholders in the process of designing the new school and getting planning consent. It is much more difficult to get all those things right for large secondary schools than for primaries, for example. The Department's contribution to the fiscal stimulus and our discussions with the Treasury that culminated in the announcements in the pre-Budget report have largely been about how we bring forward spend in the primary rather than the secondary capital programme, because of the difference in lead-in times. Also, local authorities have more experience of building primary schools. They can get money spent in the local economy much more easily for primaries.

Q150 Chairman: But Minister, you recognise that there is a feeling out there that if schools do not get in quick and get their scheme agreed, they might not get it—that there is a time frame in which it is important to have capital spend to help the economy. To give a parallel, you probably know that the Learning and Skills Council faced an enormous surge in demand for capital funds for major projects for further education. In that case, many people were concerned about not only the financial and economic systems but, of course, the fact that the LSC will cease to be in 2010. They are nervous about the system that will replace it. Overall, if you look at the education estate, including further education, there are some real challenges, are there not?

Jim Knight: There are challenges, but, as we heard from Tim, they can be overcome in this sector. He is right to say that we are not yet out of the woods, but the record to date of being able to deal with the situation has been strong. The Government are absolutely steadfast in their commitment to BSF, so schools should not be concerned that they will lose out as long as this Government remain in office. Obviously, they might have some political concerns about others who propose taking £4.5 billion out of the BSF programme to put somewhere else, but that is a different issue.

Q151 Chairman: The initial priority was to deal with the worst schools in the most challenging circumstances. Will that still be the case? I find even in my own area of Kirklees that there are great pressures over funding. Apparently, the imperative is to push for rebuilding and reinvigorating the schools in the leafier suburbs with higher numbers of pupils before the ones in the urban, more deprived areas. That is a real problem. Is it a problem in most cases?

Jim Knight: There is a misunderstanding. I do not want to get involved in the issues around the proposals in Kirklees.

Q152 Chairman: I gave that as an example, but I hear from other people that there is some pressure in the financial package in each local authority. It is the schools in the leafy suburbs that are being pushed forward, not the ones in the more challenging areas. I only mention my local authority because I know it well.

Jim Knight: Chairman, there is a misunderstanding. Yes, we have put more of an emphasis on deliverability than we did initially in the criteria for the reprioritisation of BSF for waves 7 to 15. I shall be making some announcements about that once I have considered advice. However, educational transformation, and how we deal with those who are most disadvantaged and most need the investment, remain a priority.

Q153 Chairman: A priority, not the top priority?

Jim Knight: No, that remains the top priority, but we will also be considering deliverability, because we do not want more of the Stokes and Hulls of this world. They are right at the beginning of the BSF process and still have not built any schools.

Tim Byles: The priorities that local authorities have been asked to express for waves 7 to 15 are entirely along the lines of highest priority first to give the opportunity to more authorities to start higher priority projects earlier than they might otherwise have been able to do. Announcements about that are yet to come, but every authority in England has submitted expressions of interest against that model. It is not about leafy and big, but high need and deliverability.

Q154 Mrs Hodgson: I shall change tack slightly. I am very passionate about the lunchtime experience of children in schools in catering and dining facilities. This is obviously a once-in-a-couple-of-generations chance to rebuild the whole school infrastructure,

and I should like to hear how responsive the design would be. Pilots have been announced for universal free school meals and schools are being asked to bid for them. If a school wanted to take advantage of such a pilot, would it be envisaged in the design that it might want to feed and house a whole school at the same time—I am talking particularly about secondary schools? A lot of the schools that I have visited, even like the ones that you have opened that have already been through the BSF, such as the fabulous Oxclose Community School, would have difficulty feeding and housing the whole school at the same time. If a school wanted to take advantage of one of the pilots, would that difficulty be considered in the design?

Jim Knight: There are a number of issues. Tim may know some of the technicalities of the specifications that apply to BSF, but it is undoubtedly the case that when we involve pupils in the design decisions for their new schools—with their acting in many ways as the client—through work such as that done by the Sorrell Foundation with *Joinedupdesignforschools*, in most cases the spaces that they are mainly concerned about are corridors, toilets and dining halls. They are social spaces, in effect. It means that there is quite a lot of focus on how the dining spaces work within the specifications of the design standard that Tim can talk about. Separately from Building Schools for the Future, through our targeted capital fund, we have allocated a significant sum—I do not have it at the forefront of my mind, but it might come to me, or I will write to the Committee. We have set aside money for authorities to bid to build kitchens in schools that had their kitchens taken out of use back in the '80s, when it became fashionable to get rid of them. We have now also offered authorities the opportunity to bid for money to build kitchens as teaching spaces so that we can improve the appreciation of preparing food as well as consuming it. We are yet to make announcements about the allocations of those particular bids, but we have made sure, as part of the package on school food, that we have allocated specific money—separate from the BSF money—in respect of school kitchens.

Tim Byles: There is a range of options regarding the design. It really depends on how the school wants to operate. I can think of few examples of a single dining space for young people at one point in time. Some larger schools have a schools-within-a-school approach and use different sittings and have different styles of food available at lunchtime to suit the needs of young people. We want to be flexible and to provide the opportunity for every young person to get a good meal at school—in many cases, before, if appropriate, at breakfast clubs and so on—that suits the way in which the school itself wants to manage its business and the preferences of the young people.

Jim Knight: An example is Brislington Enterprise College, a BSF school in Bristol. I strongly commend it to the Committee as a community school. It has a fantastic new learning environment. It has schools within a school. It has a central “street” as part of its design and one or two different

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food outlets along the street as well as a main eating area. That does not necessarily mean that everyone will sit in one place at one sitting, but it deals in many ways with how many of us now go about grabbing our lunch.

Q155 Mrs Hodgson: How flexible is the procurement process, especially with regard to ICT? Having read through some of the available papers, I think that it used to be more rigid. Another example from my constituency is a Catholic school that was going through a rebuild. Obviously, it had a lot of money, with access to other sources, because it had been in hand for a while. It wanted to access some BSF funding, but found that it was so rigid about the ICT package that it would have had to take that it ended up not accessing the BSF funding, because the ICT spec that the school wanted could not be obtained from the companies through which it would have had to go with the BSF funding. Have we moved on, especially with ICT? It is changing so rapidly. If you have really talented people in schools, which we have, they know exactly what they want. They want to be able to access that, and not be told otherwise.

Jim Knight: Let me start on a general point. I shall preface it by saying, unambiguously, that ICT procurement does not mean one size fits all for every school on BSF. In general terms, with this sort of programme, you are always finding a balance between creating procurement that is big enough to generate savings and to be attractive to the market—in which case, you are looking for scale—and dealing with schools' individual requirements. In ICT, there are lots of people who have great belief in their expertise and are absolutely sure that they know what is best. However, according to the evidence that we have seen through early waves and as the programme has developed, those that have gone through the ICT procurement through BSF have had a good standard for what they obtained—there have been some exceptions—and a better standard than if they had done it separately. They have been able to achieve these savings. We have also achieved a consistency of provision across the area, which is extremely helpful as children move between schools. Things like online reporting have been developed, sharpening up the relationship between home and school. If you have some consistency across an authority area, you have consistency with platforms and some of the software used, which helps to generate relationships between home and school, using that technology.

Q156 Chairman: I think you went to the BETT fair last week, did you not?

Jim Knight: I opened it—for the third year running.

Q157 Chairman: That means you went. It has become bigger and more dynamic—everything has moved on. This is a very fast-changing area. A number of us went out to look at several of the pilots for some of the IT and handheld systems being used. I found some worries about that. Obviously they are important, if the Government are serious about personalisation. On the other hand, the two that I

went into in Warrington were not being evaluated, as I understand, so are the five pilots—in five schools and involving five different suppliers—being evaluated, monitored and assessed or not?

Jim Knight: All sorts of activities are going on. This country is the international leader in the use of technology in education. That is why—

Q158 Chairman: Are we checking it is any good?

Jim Knight: That was why 65 education Ministers from around the world were in London last week at the learning forum and to visit the BETT fair. We are evaluating things. The Learning2Go project in Wolverhampton and a number of other areas have used handheld devices to fantastic effect—I first saw that three years ago. In Warrington, the proof of concept trials around the use of devices at home as well as in school have been evaluated as part of our work on home access by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency. I can get you the detail on the individual evaluations of some of those things. We are looking very closely at how they are working. As part of our work on personalisation, we have seen the use of not only handheld and other personal devices, but voting buttons in conjunction with interactive white boards, which are being rolled out much more across the country. That is also part of personalisation. I am thinking in respect of our home-access initiative, which starts to roll out in Suffolk and Oldham next month, and of looked-after children and national—

Q159 Chairman: All this should impact on the design of the school. Tim Byles heard my comment on this: when I went to Warrington, I was told that anyone who has a computer suite is out of date.

Jim Knight: I heard that question towards the end of the last witness session, to which I heard a good response.

Q160 Chairman: A good response in agreeing on this side. On design, someone said that you need Apples—Macs.

Jim Knight: Some schools want to do some of the CAD-type teaching or very high-spec media work using the Mac platform—when I visit schools, I often see the use of that platform. The power in a handheld device might not be sufficient to do such work, but it is enough for some purposes. I have seen young people animating their science experiments on handheld devices and embedding their learning in a very engaging way—particularly so for some children with special educational needs—and in a way that works brilliantly. At the heart of how you use technology and the design of the building is how you want to do the pedagogy and what sort of courses you want to do. Undoubtedly, you have to think about design. We have heard this morning about the effect of ICT choices on energy use. That is exactly why IT, design and construction are embedded together in BSF.

Tim Byles: A key point about the managed service is that it is not a one-size-fits-all solution; it is tailored to where a school is and what its ambition is—whether it is specialising through Macs or

whatever—to move everybody up, not to get everybody down to a single level. Concerns have been expressed by a small number of schools that regard themselves as exemplary in this area about whether it will slow them down. I can say unequivocally that it will not. It is designed to help people extend. Some leading schools that are now engaged with BSF and using the managed service are strong advocates of this approach, because it is helping them to leap forward in ways that they could not before with their own resources. It allows them to share resources, it aids the career development of technicians, who can operate on a wider basis, and it allows them to realise their ICT vision much more quickly and effectively.

Jim Knight: May I help Sharon with this: £150 million over three years on school kitchens.

Q161 Paul Holmes: As you say, 10% of the budget of a BSF school goes towards ICT—obviously, it is essential to the school, so a big part of the school budget. However, there is a lot of concern about what is happening. Yesterday, after the PricewaterhouseCoopers report came out, the Association of School and College Leaders gave all sorts of examples of concerns about ICT. For example, it said that the rigidity of ICT managed services places lots of limitations on schools. It has many concerns about the affordability of those ICT managed services through the local education partnerships. It said that a lot of schools were under pressure to make a significant contribution from their revenue budget as a result of the partnerships being imposed on them. In the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, it says the same thing—that the biggest negative, when asking heads in the completed schools, was in response to the local education partnership managing the ICT provision.

Jim Knight: I know that this is an issue for heads, who raised it with me when I spoke at the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust conference. Tim met recently with the Association of School and College Leaders to discuss the concerns that it has raised with us and you. One of things that I have discussed with Tim and that we are offering is an alternative procurement model that people can use for ICT. In essence, that says, “These are the outputs that we can deliver through an area-wide managed service. If you want to do it differently, we are happy to look at that as long as you can meet the output specifications.” We are not being as rigid as some people think, but we are clear about the outputs that we want regarding the use of IT in schools.

Q162 Paul Holmes: But if 80% of local education partnerships are privately owned and managed, is that where some of the pressure comes from? They will obviously look at their profit margins and profit levels as opposed to what is best for individual schools.

Jim Knight: No, I do not think that they are motivated by that.

Tim Byles: As the Minister said, the whole project is geared to ensure that the scale of investment allows everyone to raise their game. The larger the

investment in ICT across an estate, the more that can be done efficiently and effectively. It also needs to improve year on year—that is one of the key contractual elements of the local education partnership. The early evidence is that each of our LEPs manages to make that continuous improvement in terms of both buildings and servicing the ICT. We provide revenue each year to help support ICT in schools. Some schools want to go further—they wanted to before they were in the BSF programme, and they want to after. We must balance the resources from what is available, but it is not just about capital coming from the Government in supporting ICT. In some quarters there is some resistance to change because people are more comfortable in managing their resources within an individual school. I want to encourage people to go on a journey and explore what the managed service can deliver, and to look at the experience of others—including leaders in ICT—who are strong advocates of this approach. It is a change in where schools are starting from and that process needs managing and to be understood. There are some misconceptions, and that is why we are currently meeting with people to discuss them.

Q163 Paul Holmes: So, if PricewaterhouseCoopers says that this is the biggest individual concern of the programme and the biggest negative, is that because it misunderstands it?

Jim Knight: I would agree that it is the biggest concern that is raised with me. That can mean that there is a problem that needs sorting out, or that there is a communication issue. My belief is that it is the latter and not the former, but we will continue to talk to people. Our record over the lifetime of BSF so far shows that we have been pretty responsive to people’s concerns. Many of the criticisms that the programme receives are an effect of the long lead-in time, and are matters that we have already made changes to try and address. We have been listening to what people are saying.

Q164 Paul Holmes: But you cannot be more up to date than yesterday’s report from PricewaterhouseCoopers, which says that this is a big issue.

Jim Knight: As I said, people have raised this issue with me and we are trying to deal with it.

Tim Byles: Perhaps I can add something in support of what the Minister has said. A number of the concerns that have been expressed are to do with a system that used to be in place for the procurement and is no longer in place—Jim Knight mentioned the alternative business case approach, for example. There are myths out there suggesting that if someone does not sign up to the managed service they will not get any BSF money. That is just not true. There is a communication challenge, and frankly, some people do not want to hear that a solution through a managed service will be acceptable. We must ensure that there are no misunderstandings.

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Q165 Mr Stuart: I will focus on the report from PricewaterhouseCoopers which, while listening enrapt to the evidence, I managed to flick through this morning. There is no mention of the environment. This is a second annual report. There has been all that fuss in Parliament, quite rightly, about the huge investment and the desire for direct publicly controlled investment to contribute to our carbon reduction targets, but there is not even a mention of that in this report. How is BSF performing on that front?

Jim Knight: It is relatively early days, as you have heard. We have one post-occupancy evaluation, at the point of which we should get a lot of information about outcomes in terms of sustainability.

Tim Byles: The Government have made their position clear for new schools going forward. We mentioned that last time we were here. There has been a 60% reduction in the use of carbon, moving to zero carbon from 2016, two years ahead of the Government-wide standard on that. There is a carbon taskforce under the chairmanship of Robin Nicholson, which looks at the practicalities of how to get to zero carbon for new schools by 2016. At the moment, all our designs for new build schools meet the 60% challenge at design stage, and we must ensure that that is followed through in the post-occupancy evaluation. The Government have made additional resources available to ensure that the kinds of investment that you referred to earlier, are made appropriately.

Q166 Mr Stuart: Can you give me the reassurance that previous witnesses could not that there will not be a single, category A, heat-pump?

Jim Knight: I noted how concerned you were about the categorisation of heat pumps.

Mr Stuart: They are one of the largest generators of carbon in the life cycle of a building.

Jim Knight: I appreciate the importance, but I think that Sunand's response, that if we start to get too obsessed about those sorts of inputs then we lose sight of the outcome that we are after, was right. We should be clear about the outcome; we have put in £110 million over this three-year period in order to resource the projects to be able to reduce their carbon output, so let us measure that.

Q167 Mr Stuart: That is fine. Moving on, if I may, what is the purpose of Building Schools for the Future?

Jim Knight: Ultimately, the purpose is educational transformation. That is at the root of Building Schools for the Future as a programme.

Q168 Mr Stuart: So it is pupil attainment?

Jim Knight: Pupil attainment, and the motivation of pupils and staff being improved in terms of their teaching and learning.

Q169 Mr Stuart: If motivation of pupils and staff was improved then we would expect that to be reflected in attainment. So the purpose is pupil attainment? Yet in the PricewaterhouseCoopers report it says that our results mirror the existing

literature in not finding a strong correlation between capital expenditure and pupil attainment. The results, as a whole, suggest a positive impact, but the magnitude is likely to be very small.

Jim Knight: I appreciate that you have not had a chance to read the report thoroughly.

Mr Stuart: I have given it a pretty good go.

Jim Knight: Some of the newspapers that reported on it this morning had not had the chance to read it thoroughly. You will find that that section refers to these delegated formula capital grants, rather than Building Schools for the Future. These are much smaller sums that are being allocated to schools, although it is a huge increase on the amount that was allocated 10 years ago. But a lot of that is being spent on buildings rather than on education. It is no surprise to me that that is the finding. I am absolutely confident that we will find a different result when Building Schools for the Future is being measured. The GCSE results at Bristol Brunel Academy, for example, which was mentioned earlier on, rose by 10%, or even more, last year. Oxclose Community School, to which Sharon referred earlier, is a brand new school whose results soared. I am sure that the effect of the environment is a part of that story. It is not the only part of the story; it still remains the case that the involvement of parents, the leadership of the school and the quality of the teaching are the key determinants of the attainment success of a school.

Mr Stuart: Perhaps—

Chairman: Let us get the answers first, because Tim wants to answer.

Mr Stuart: I just want to press the Minister if I may.

Chairman: Hold on for a moment.

Mr Stuart: I would rather press the Minister.

Chairman: Go back to the Minister. Carry on.

Mr Stuart: That is very good of you.

Chairman: I called you especially so that you could be given this chance, so just get on with it.

Mr Stuart: Have you finished, Chairman?

Chairman: If you get on with the questioning, then I have finished, but if you do not carry on with the question I will not call you again, so please get on with it.

Q170 Mr Stuart: That is entirely within your powers, Chairman.

I think that perhaps you have not had the chance to read the report as closely as you might wish to. The report uses the words, "In the case of open BSF schools, there is no evidence to date suggesting that the design of new buildings, including flexible teaching areas". There is evidence in the report that teachers do not think that the teaching areas in BSF schools are flexible.

Jim Knight: The key phrase there is "to date". We have had one school with a post-evaluation report. Much of their work in that report is around four schools. That is not statistically significant enough to draw any kind of useful comparison.

Q171 Mr Stuart: You were happy to give anecdotal evidence from schools just now, pointing the other way, yet you want to dismiss the findings of this report which is there to review this very issue.

Jim Knight: The key point to make is that, in respect of their finding around the effect of capital investment on attainment, they are not referring to BSF.

Chairman: Would you mind if I called Tim Byles?

Mr Stuart: I would be very happy.

Tim Byles: The main thrust of the report is looking at the impact of capital, pure and simple, non-BSF. It makes a couple of references to BSF, but the Minister is right—the whole idea of BSF is that it brings together the various strands that lead to educational transformation. The average increase in GCSE performance in open BSF schools last year was 10%, against a national average of 2.5%. That was drawn from a small sample and it is early days, but there is a clear illustration of the impact a combined approach can have. As I mentioned the last time I appeared before the Committee, the leading learning project allows school partnerships to work with the Department, the Training and Development Agency for Schools, the National College for School Leadership and Becta to try to look forensically at work force reform, the use of technology and at aspects of design and environment that together produce the educational transformation that the Government seek. When you get those ingredients right, there is no doubt in my mind that you produce a significant increase going forward.

Q172 Mr Stuart: It says “all the literature”, and it is not as if this is the first investment in school buildings anywhere in the world, or indeed in this country. As the Minister said, a large number of schools have already been built. All the literature suggests that there is precious little correlation between capital investment and pupil attainment. If the purpose is pupil attainment, that brings this programme into question.

Jim Knight: I would like to be able to talk you through what has been done. I met with 65 other Education Ministers last week and tried to talk to most of them. The scale of investment and the nature of what we are doing is unprecedented internationally. Other jurisdictions are investing heavily in their school buildings, but I do not think that any of them are doing so in the same way or on the same scale. What marks our approach out is that we are doing it authority by authority, rather than school by school, and it is genuinely an education investment rather than a building investment. Previous experience has largely been about investing in buildings, rather than education. By taking a whole authority and looking at the school organisation, structures and governance, agreeing on those sort of issues and then reflecting that school by school in a design that is informed by the pedagogy, the use of ICT and the environment to improve attainment, you will find that we have made an appreciable difference to education through that investment. That is what makes it unique.

Q173 Mr Stuart: I understand that one of the reasons why we might be unique is that there is no correlation between that capital investment and improvement in pupil performance, so other Ministers might decide that they would rather spend the money where it will make a difference to those young people who do not end up in education, employment or training. Despite a doubling in education expenditure, there has been no movement or progress at all, and those people end up hopelessly failed by the system at age 16, 17 and 18. We have evidence in the report from PricewaterhouseCoopers that head teachers have said that neither the staff nor the buildings have changed. We understand that it would be lovely if investment by working, thinking of pedagogy and the rest of it, together with the buildings, was to lead to a transformation, but is not there a danger that the language and the visions will not lead to that? We have had people before who had a largely vested interest in such programmes and who talked about transformation and vision, and they visited on us the tower blocks of the 1960s and the resulting social failure. No one would suggest that this investment will blight us, but we might not be able to justify this vast—some might say disproportionate—expenditure on buildings at a time when we are failing to transform pupil experience, not least the experience of those at the bottom of society.

Jim Knight: I appreciate that you might not be enthusiastic about this investment, but if you read the comments made yesterday by Malcolm Trobe from ASCL, you will know that, although he had some criticisms, he was hugely welcoming of this level of investment in our education system and could see its value. I do not know whether you have yet managed to see the diploma programme in operation, but I certainly suggest that you go to a school such as Sedgehill, which we visited yesterday, or the Bristol Brunel Academy, or Brislington Community College, or any of the others that are benefiting from the extraordinary transformation that has taken place. The education authority in Bristol was first off the block in getting its LEP agreed and then getting its schools built. I defy you to come back from that and not believe that that is the right thing to do.

Q174 Mr Stuart: Ministers in all Administrations have set such tables and talked about particular areas where their vision has been realised. You use such examples because they give a cool overview, but they do not mention in the report the increase in GCSE results because they obviously do not think that it is statistically reliable. They are saying that there is no such correlation. Right now, we are talking about fiscal stimulus, trying to help the wider economy, and whether we can bring things forward, but you have said that is impossible. Following the effort at stimulus, we are going to move to an era of austerity. I would love to believe that this investment could help to make a transformation. My constituency neighbours Hull, and I have seen them build the Endeavour School there. They spent £15 million on it, but it has led to the worst education

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results of any school in the country. Now, a few years on, they want to close the damn thing and build another school, so I am a bit of a sceptic about the idea of buildings alone transforming the educational outcomes of those who are being failed most by our system. I am trying to tease out of you how you would respond when we move from this era, when we get through this panic and the stimulus, to the era of austerity. All these bills will have to be paid, and it looks very likely that this country will be distinctly poorer and more indebted. Any Administration is therefore going to look very closely at this expenditure, and there will need to be overwhelming proof that it is delivering for those we are currently letting down if it is to survive—whoever is in power.

Jim Knight: I am sure that people will have noted your scepticism. That is your opinion. I visit many of these schools, not just on the day that they are opened, and I talk to people who work in schools. They see a huge effect, with this sort of investment, in young people, who derive considerable benefit from it. That is not only from having the wow factor at their school, and having the motivation to get up in the morning and turn up in an environment in which they feel valued. It is not only about giving them the feeling that someone values them sufficiently to want to invest tens of millions of pounds in their environment. It is also about getting good results on attendance, behaviour and, ultimately, attainment. I am confident that that will happen, and I am confident that it will be difficult for any future Administration to want to cut this programme, even if that is their commitment now, because local Members of Parliament and councils up and down the country will be up in arms if they see this opportunity lost.

Chairman: We are running out of time, but we have two quick questions—one from Fiona and one from John.

Q175 Fiona Mactaggart: It is fun to follow a colleague who is providing the alibi for planned future cuts in this programme by the Conservative party. I am concerned about why personalisation has not been driven more clearly through this programme. I have listened to what Ministers have said about educational transformation, and I am struck by the fact that we requested, in our August 2007 report, that the Department provide a clear vision of what it wants from personalisation, with guidance on how it might be realised in BSF projects. That was followed by Professor Hargreaves's evidence to us, in November 2008, when he said that the "Department has just produced new guidance on personalised learning", which he had had for only a week, and that the "very sad thing is that it has virtually nothing about BSF in it." The PricewaterhouseCoopers report says that there has been some progress on personalisation, but it seems equivocal, probably because it does not have a large enough base. I think the reason why there is not a clearer result, in terms of the personalisation of learning, is because the work to help schools to use this programme to extend personalisation just has not been put in, and I wonder when it will be.

Jim Knight: We require every local authority to address personalisation at every stage in their BSF, but particularly in the early stages when they are putting together their strategy for change. They have to set out their vision for personalised learning and how it relates to assessment and tracking, the use of ICT, flexible timetabling and partnership working. We very much expect the relationship between personalised learning and flexible accommodation to be reflected in the design briefs.

Q176 Fiona Mactaggart: But in the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, flexibility seemed to score lowest.

Jim Knight: As you say, we will have to see how the successive evaluations go as the programme rolls out, but we have certainly sought to embed it right from the outset. As I said earlier, I have a strong belief in PARs—in the use of technology in helping to deliver personalisation in the classroom. It has been a very important aspect of BSF from the word go that ICT should be integrated with the design and the construction programme, so that you can realise some of those things. Perhaps we need to do better in highlighting the personalisation, in spite of it being embedded, so that people can really see it working, but I am happy enough with how we are doing on that.

Tim Byles: It is worth recognising, when discussing BSF, that there are at least three angles to look at it from. There is the past, the history; there is what is going in now and the fact that the development of the strategy for change that Jim Knight has just been referring to has now been running for two years, but the schools themselves are not yet open to evidence that key change, which happened at that time; and there are the plans that we have in place for the future. Some of the conversation today has been looking at issues very early on in the programme, and the sorts of analysis you have just been talking about do not yet take into account the impact of changes made in 2006, which will now be coming through. It is a programme whereby we are continuing to learn and make changes with that learning. That is quite an exciting part of the programme—working with people from design as well as construction and teaching in order to make sure that investment is effective.

Q177 Mr Heppell: Before I ask my question, I want to flag something up. When Graham was talking before, I was quite alarmed at some of the things he was saying, as I had not had a chance to read the PWC report. However, I did manage to see that there is a qualifying paragraph at the end. It is almost the authors saying, "This is our result, but . . ." It says that "It should be noted, however, that this analysis is more generally of school-led investment, not specifically of investment in the BSF programme and therefore not systematically linked to educational transformation." I would like to read the report now. That statement does cloud the view you expressed on it. There is a qualification in the report, and I need to read the report. I want to ask about the fact that the DCSF is now talking about

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lots of extra services being provided in schools. There is the idea of perhaps bringing in health facilities and family learning. I hear a lot of talk about that, but in my locality I can see plenty of examples where health centres are now operating with the local authority and housing services are brought in. Lots of things are being brought on to one site, but I see no real examples of schools where that is happening—where those things are being brought in. Is that being taken into account now with the local authority bids for Building Schools for the Future? Would people get plus points for it if that was the case?

Jim Knight: There are some examples. I think in Knowsley there is one involving health and school co-location. There is something similar in Wigan. I remember visiting the co-location of a children's centre with a primary school in Sandwell. We are seeing some of that, but we have not yet published the details of the £200 million co-location fund that we have committed to and how people can apply to that. As ever with this, it is relatively early days, but certainly in terms of delivering the vision that we set out in the children's plan and refreshed in the *One Year On* document last month, we want to see local authorities being able to co-locate services more.

The idea of the co-location fund is to allow budgets to be pooled more easily. It is to motivate that pooling of budgets, because the thing that in the end gets in the way of co-location is different budgets being held in different places, with people being measured in different ways in relation to them. Driving your way through that to get something that on the ground seems like good common sense can sometimes be difficult, so we decided that we needed to take it one step further by creating that fund, which we will make more announcements about fairly soon.

Chairman: Satisfied?

Mr Heppell: Yes.

Chairman: Minister, Tim Byles, this has been a good session. We could have gone on longer. We are always a bit pushed when we have a double session, but thank you very much. You heard some of what was said—Tim certainly was here for the whole of the earlier session. If there is anything that you would like to communicate to the Committee, please write to us. We will be going out and about and having a good look at some of the BSF schools now that we have 50 to choose from.

Jim Knight: Go to Bristol.

Chairman: Bristol sounds like a good idea.

Supplementary memorandum submitted by Tim Byles CBE, Chief Executive, Partnerships for Schools

In follow up to your Committee's recent session on BSF, I am writing to pick up on two specific points which arose. First, "Smart" PFI and second, the current economic climate and how it impacts on BSF.

1. "SMART" PFI

You will recall that during the session, representatives from the RIBA and BCSE both emphasised their support for an alternative model of procurement, whereby design is not competed through the BSF procurement process. Given that the Committee did not question the Minister or myself on this issue, I thought it would be helpful to put on record our position on this matter.

As part of the Procurement Review carried out in spring 2008, PricewaterhouseCoopers explored the concept of "Smart" PFI and as a result the new process around design within the procurement process has been modified to deliver many of the same outcomes, notably:

- a clear articulation of the project in a client design brief;
- a clear statement around issues such as design quality; adjacencies within the building; how the building relates to its geographical and social community and the development of an output spec;
- selection of site; confirmation around delivery issues such as planning, an affordable solution and a stakeholder management strategy; and
- a knowledgeable and enthused stakeholder community who are equipped to engage with a design procurement.

The key element of the "Smart" PFI approach that we disagree with relates to design being developed prior to procurement. This is because the design process is a proxy that tests partnership working more broadly. In short, this is about more than simply determining the design of the schools: it is about testing the ability of partners to work together with each other and with individual schools.

Proponents of Smart PFI, where architects would simply not have to bid for work through the normal processes, cite significant cost savings, the price of that may be effective partnership working. These cost savings are claimed to arise from removing the need for the user groups to interface individually with each of the bidding teams. Our experience to date is that it is precisely this interface that is crucial to differentiate between bidders and identify a suitable partner.

Furthermore, we have also received legal advice from Bevan Brittan, strongly advising us that sampling is retained for BSF procurements as "both necessary and advisable". In addition to the key benefit of testing partnership working, the legal advice points to the advantage of sampling assisting in demonstrating compliance with statutory obligations relating to public expenditure and provides strong evidence that value

for money and good use of public resources has been thoroughly assessed at the outset. The legal advice goes on to point out that sampling also significantly helps to meet potential procurement law criticism that a contract has been awarded without a sufficiently robust or transparent assessment of costs.

I would be more than happy to share the legal advice with the Committee if you feel that would be helpful.

2. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Although the Committee focused in some detail on the current economic conditions and any consequent impact on the BSF programme, I thought it would be useful to set out the latest state of play.

As was conveyed to the Committee, despite what continue to be very challenging conditions, 2009 has begun on a more positive note for BSF than anticipated, with over half a dozen banks indicating they are in the market to finance senior debt in BSF schemes. In addition, we are seeing interest further afield than the banking sector, with Aviva keen to enter the market.

We have also secured a commitment in principle from the European Investment Bank of £300 million support to BSF schemes that have a PFI component, and are in ongoing discussions with EIB about extending this level of support, including to smaller schemes.

In addition, we are exploring with HM Treasury and DCSF the option of accessing the shorter term debt market to support PFI schemes. This would involve refinancing at seven or 10 years. Reflecting the reality of the marketplace, this may include some sharing of risk between public and private sectors, so that taxpayers get best value for money.

Against this backdrop, BSF continues to deliver. Deals have closed throughout the autumn and pre-Christmas and now on into the New Year, with the latest deal to close at the end of last week in Tameside, a BSF scheme that includes PFI funding of £50 million. This is the third BSF scheme to reach Financial Close this year, bringing the total to 29. Nearly a third of all secondary schools in England are now engaged in BSF, and with our 50th school having now opened, we are ahead of our delivery schedule for the current financial year.

I hope you and your Members find this a useful addition to the evidence session. As ever, I would be happy to update you in person if you would find that helpful.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

KEY POINTS

- High quality acoustics in the classroom are vital for all children to be able listen and learn effectively. For children with a hearing impairment, high quality acoustics are crucial.¹
- Building Schools for the Future is a major opportunity to ensure that all schools have excellent acoustics. Given that the majority of deaf children are now taught in mainstream schools, any classroom could be one in which a deaf child is taught.
- However, NDCS has encountered evidence that some new schools are being built with poor acoustics. NDCS is particularly concerned that there is no requirement to test the acoustics of newly built schools or any central monitoring of compliance with acoustic standards.
- Strengthening existing standards and ensuring robust quality assurance will ensure better value for money of existing schools' capital expenditure and also provide assurance to parents of deaf children.

INTRODUCTION

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) is the national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. We represent the interests and campaign for the rights of all deaf children and young people from birth until they reach independence. There are over 35,000 deaf children in the UK and three more are born every day.

Figures provided by DCSF show that deaf children are 42% less likely than all children to achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C. Given that deafness is not a learning disability, NDCS believes that such an attainment gap is unacceptable. NDCS believes that poor quality acoustics is one of a range of barriers to attainment for many deaf children.

¹ http://www.primaryreview.org.uk/Downloads/Int_Reps/9.Teaching-learning/RS_6-1_report_160508_Built_environment.pdf

LEGAL POSITION

The Building Regulations 2000 (as amended) state that:

“Each room or other space in a school building shall be designed and constructed in a way that it has the acoustic conditions and the insulation against disturbance by noise appropriate to its intended use.”

DCSF have indicated that this requirement can be met by compliance with the guidance document, Building Bulletin 93. This came into force in July 2003 and applies to all newly built schools in England and Wales, including schools built under the Building Schools for the Future programme. Compliance with Building Bulletin 93 can be achieved simply by submitting a set of plans to a Building Control Body.

KEY CONCERNS

1. Building Bulletin 93 contains no requirement to actually test the acoustics of a newly built school. This means that some problems are not being picked up until too late.
2. Derogations from Building Bulletin 93 are permissible, with the consent of the local authority. There is concern that this is being used as an “opt-out” by many schools.
3. There is anecdotal evidence that new “modern” designs are causing specific problems for deaf children. For example, the prevalence of open-plan teaching spaces with large numbers of children can be a hostile listening environment for many deaf children. The acoustic standards for open-plan teaching spaces are less stringent than for classrooms.
4. A lack of focus on the acoustics in schools results in wasted and poor value for money:
 - The large sums of money allocated for Building Schools for the Future are not meeting the needs of all pupils.
 - There is a cost for having to make corrections to the acoustics of a school building for problems that have been identified. These are costlier to fix post-build.
 - There is a cost of alternative or out of authority placements for deaf children in cases where poor quality acoustics mean that the local authority’s choice of school for a deaf child is inappropriate.
5. There has been no major review of Building Bulletin 93 since it was published to ensure that it results in high quality acoustics, both in theory and in practice. A limited review is currently underway by DCSF and CLG officials—but this has restricted itself to minor drafting changes. DCSF have not conducted any central monitoring or quality assurance checks of acoustics. This would have cost nothing had it been built properly into the design.

EVIDENCE OF NEED

NDCS regularly encounters examples of poor quality acoustics from parents of deaf children through our network of Family Officers around the UK and our legal casework team. In a number of cases, our legal casework team have supported parents who have sought an alternative placement for their child because of poor quality acoustics in the local authority’s choice of school.

Leigh Academy in Dartford is an example of a new build school that is not compliant with Building Bulletin 93. The premises were completed in January 2008 and is a state-of-the-art facility. It has a hearing-impaired unit for deaf children as part of the school. Following concerns from NDCS, the CEO of the academy has been made aware of the issues regarding the acoustics of the school and an experienced audiologist was asked to conduct tests. The tests confirmed large parts of the building are not compliant with Building Bulletin 93. The CEO has said he will raise the issue with the contractors. However, complications remain around who should pay for what may now be a costly retrofit. These issues could have been avoided if Building Bulletin 93 had been followed at the outset. NDCS is working closely with the CEO and will be monitoring the situation, but remains concerned that if this is a regular occurrence throughout the BSF programme, large amounts of money will be wasted.

In addition:

- In a PricewaterhouseCoopers review of the existing schools estate, over two-fifths (41%) of headteachers indicated that acoustics and noise levels in the teaching spaces negatively affected teaching and learning.
- A NDCS survey of parents in 2008 found that 34% of parents had concerns about their deaf child’s school building in terms of acoustics and adaptations.
- There has been strong demand for the NDCS Acoustics Toolkit which allows professionals to assess the quality of acoustics in schools. An initial print run of 500 was quickly exhausted, forcing NDCS to seek funding to reprint a further 1,000 copies. Prior to this, NDCS is unaware of any such toolkit being made available to assist teachers and other professionals on Building Bulletin 93.

NDCS RECOMMENDATIONS

DCSF introduce a statutory requirement that all schools are tested for acoustics post-build, with the results published and disseminated.

DCSF agree to review and audit the quality of acoustics in a small sample of newly built schools, and commit to an annual monitoring going forward.

DCSF and CLG commit to a wider ranging review of Building Bulletin 93 (than the one already underway) to ensure that it is effective, both in theory and in practice.

Possible questions to raise:

- On what basis can the Department be confident that Building Bulletin 93 ensures high quality acoustics in schools built under Building Schools for the Future for all children, and particularly for children with a hearing impairment? What review or audit has taken place of the acoustics in schools already built under Building Schools for the Future and since 2003?
- Does the Department have any plans to guarantee that all schools built under Building Schools for the Future and other new built schools will have acoustic tests?
- In light of the evidence the Committee has heard, what assurance can be given the money invested in Building Schools for the Future is not being spent on schools which are acoustically not fit for purpose?

January 2009

Written evidence

Memorandum submitted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

INTRODUCTION

Since the Select Committee published its report last August, Building Schools for the Future (BSF) has moved on quite considerably; both in terms of progress on delivery, and also in the evolution of the processes supporting that delivery. Good progress is also being made in taking forward the development of the primary capital programme.

Thirteen BSF schools have now opened their gates to students, teachers and the local communities that they serve. This number will more than double in September, and we anticipate that by the end of the financial year, around 50 schools will have opened. That trend continues to increase until 2011 when we expect that around 200 new schools will open every year.

Overall, around 1,000 schools are now engaged in BSF, the Academies programme and One School Pathfinders. Seventy-two local authorities are fully in BSF. Eighteen of these authorities have selected their private sector partners (covering 20 deals) and have signed deals worth around £2.5 billion of capital investment that will help transform education in their local areas. Taking into account future investment in subsequent phases of BSF in these cases, this figure increases to over £3.5 billion.

A range of support and guidance packages has been developed to help local authorities and their stakeholders prepare to hit the ground running as soon as they join BSF. Partnerships for Schools (PfS) with their partners 4ps and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) are now helping ensure that local authorities have done the necessary preparations before entering the programme, including sufficient work on the initial visioning. As well as increasing the certainty that BSF will produce genuinely transformational learning environments, the new approach has resulted in reduction of up to six months in the pre-procurement timetable for delivery.

The procurement phase of BSF has been reviewed and, when implemented this autumn, the new process will deliver a reduction of up to two months in the timetable for delivery. The reforms to the procurement phase are also expected to reduce bidding costs by up to 30%—equivalent to around £250 million savings across the programme. More detail on this is provided below.

We are pleased to inform the Committee that the responsibility for managing the contracts with 4ps, NCSL and CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) which help support the delivery of BSF has now transferred from the DCSF to PfS, positioning PfS as the single gateway delivery agent for the programme. We are currently looking at ways in which these arrangements can be streamlined further, and be more explicit about the contribution from each partner. PfS' role has also broadened out, working with local authorities prior to their joining the programme and then throughout the process and into the operational phase.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING AND APPROPRIATE PREPARATIONS

As the Select Committee acknowledged in its report, BSF is designed to be so much more than a “bricks and mortar” initiative. It is not about simply replacing old schools with new versions. It is about creating flexible schools that inspire and engage young people, their parents, community and teachers. The input of young people and their teachers is absolutely critical.

Early engagement and consultation with the whole school community is an important part of the development phase of a BSF project. When a local authority joins BSF, it must produce a “Strategy for Change” which demonstrates how the secondary school estate can support the educational aspirations for the area. The authority also needs to demonstrate that in preparing the strategy, it has carried out proper consultation with its stakeholders and the resulting strategy has been accepted and is supported by all these groups.

As part of the local authority's work to produce its Strategy for Change, each school will also be required to start developing its own School Strategy for Change, showing how it will support the delivery of the objectives in light of its own needs and circumstances. The local authority must provide the appropriate support for schools to do this. Further support is available from NCSL and from the workshops on offer for students through the Sorrell Foundation. However, we recognise that more work needs to be done to explore how schools can ensure students and parents are involved in the planning process. PfS is currently producing guidance material on preparations for BSF, which will include pupil engagement and local consultation.

Together with the readiness to deliver assessment and the Memorandum of Understanding (which all local authorities now sign with PfS, clarifying respective roles and responsibilities), the Strategy for Change has resulted in a robust platform for local authorities to begin their BSF projects, providing greater certainty that the investment will help deliver educational transformation and a reduction in the BSF timescale.

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

In the autumn of 2007, PFS commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to carry out a review of the procurement phase of BSF to explore whether there are ways to make this even more efficient, with a particular focus on three aspects: the role of design, ICT integration and Local Education Partnerships.

The resulting recommendations have recently been approved by the Department and are likely to result in significantly reduced costs for bidders and a reduction in the timetable for delivery by up to two months.

Key changes include:

- a reduction in the overall procurement time—down to 75 weeks from the current 82-week model;
- more comprehensive pre-qualification of bidding consortia;
- two lead bidders selected earlier in the process, after 29 weeks rather than 44 weeks;
- time and cost savings in the design process, with sample schemes only required for two projects, and a re-focusing of time for detailed development and completion of design work; and
- more focus on effective partnering issues throughout the procurement process.

The new process will be implemented for authorities in Wave 5 and beyond this autumn, and will maintain and improve competition across the programme. It will also increase the certainty that individual projects will help deliver educational transformation.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

A key responsibility for PFS is to identify and then share good practice between authorities and to highlight any pitfalls to avoid. This is being done in a number of ways:

- Review points at key milestones for every BSF project—carried out by the PFS Project Director and shared at both a regional and national level with other Project Directors.
- Facilitating a range of workshops, conferences and seminars for local authorities and their stakeholders in the early engagement phase.
- National Learning Network—a network of local government BSF lead contacts that enables the exchange of information between local authorities, the private sector and PFS.
- Chief Executives Advisory Group—set up to exchange views at the most senior level between local authorities and PFS.
- Encouraging private sector bodies, such as the PPP Forum and the Major Contractors Group to engage with the bidding community as a group.
- Reviews—PFS have already carried out a review of the procurement phase of BSF and are about to embark upon a similar review of the effectiveness of Local Education Partnerships in operation.
- PFS Website—recently re-launched with dedicated “lessons learned” pages; a multi-media compendium of information about BSF; individual pages for every local authority in the country, charting their progress; and user-focused content for teachers, students, local authorities and the private sector.
- PFS quarterly publication, *Insite*—providing the latest news and updates.
- Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey—carried out by Ipsos MORI—identifying areas of focus for PFS.
- Establishing links with *Teachers TV* and *Sec Ed* to target the teaching profession directly.
- Independent evaluation—the Department commissioned PwC to carry out a three year evaluation of the impact of BSF on pupil achievement, including early lessons that can be applied to later projects.

4ps and CAFE also provide advice and support to local authorities in order to support BSF delivery. They have an important part to play in disseminating lessons learned from early phases of the programme.

4ps

4ps provide advice and support for authorities to help them review and develop their procurement expertise and knowledge and prepare members and school leaders. They have an important function in ensuring that some of the lessons learned during the early waves of BSF are effectively communicated, such as: the need to commit to and adequately resource programmes; develop robust governance structures; and gain corporate understanding of the private finance aspect of the programme, including the preferred BSF procurement model (the LEP).

They deliver these messages through their Expert Client Programme that includes:

- training and briefings for authority staff and school leaders;
- membership of local boards; and
- facilitation of Gateway reviews and skills audits.

4ps are in contact with BSF authorities early in the pre-procurement process and are able to report regularly and feedback on emerging issues likely to influence the BSF programme and the Department's Capital policy. They also provide an early indication of challenges in BSF local programmes in the pre procurement stage.

CABE

In terms of supporting local authorities in becoming “good clients”, CABE “Enablers” (architects with good track records) have been commissioned to provide up to 20 days advice on school design issues. CABE also holds one-day design workshops with each short-listed bidder during the design development stage, and forms a Schools Design Assessment Panel to look at bidders' proposals for sample schemes.

Standard specifications

The Department and PfS have worked with leading architects and suppliers to develop a suite of guidance publications on standard specifications, layouts and dimensions. The aim is to help disseminate best practice and avoid reinventing the wheel every time a school is designed, so that consistently high quality environments can be delivered, offering best whole life value for money—but without compromising design flair.

Standardised approaches will support the move towards more off-site construction, which should drive improvements in health and safety, reduce waste, and deliver quicker and more sustainable solutions. To help encourage take up, the guidance will become the standard in the BSF programme documentation and we will expect it to be adopted in the majority of situations where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so. Whilst we would expect projects to comply with the standards, other solutions—possibly based on new products or technologies, or reflecting local factors—may equally comply with the specifications and could be used. We do not want to stifle innovation by being too prescriptive.

Though principally aimed at secondary school building projects delivered through the BSF Programme, the specifications and solutions may also apply to other educational buildings.

PFI AND CAPITAL FUNDING

The Select Committee raised concerns about the risks associated with PFI as a funding method. In BSF, PFI is generally used for building new schools or schools requiring over 70% refurbishment, where it has been proven that it offers value for money. Far more projects are built on time and cost than with traditional procurements—research suggests that 88% of PFI projects are finished on time and on budget compared to 30% of local authority run projects.

It is important to note the robust pupil place planning that local authorities now have to undertake under BSF. Authorities must take account of how many pupils they will have for a 10-year period to ensure that they are rebuilding schools that reflect demographic data and trends. This will help minimise any risk that BSF schools that are being rebuilt are less than fully utilised.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Department is also making good progress in taking forward the development of the primary capital programme. The 23 pathfinder authorities remain on track to deliver their exemplar projects by September 2009. We are also working with pathfinders to develop case studies and good practice on approaches to delivering sustainable 21st century primary schools.

Following a successful trial with pathfinders last summer the Department issued comprehensive guidance on arrangements for the national roll out in 2009–10. Among other things, the guidance sets out the core information requirements, the arrangements for monitoring progress and emphasises our expectation that local authorities should adopt a suitably joined up approach to planning, procurement and funding.

To access the additional funding earmarked for the national roll out all authorities will prepare and submit to the Department a Primary Strategy for Change showing how capital investment will be used to support the delivery of key national policy priorities, as set out in the Children's Plan. This is essentially a light touch version of the approach taken in relation to BSF. The Department will assess each strategy against the core requirements set out in the guidance and notify local authorities of the outcome by the end of September.

FURTHER EDUCATION

The approaches towards sustainable development adopted by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the DCSF within their respective capital programmes are now better aligned. Versions of BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) have now been developed for further education (BREEAM was adapted for schools in 2005), and both organisations provide additional funding for sustainable development. At the time of the Select Committee's report, the LSC allowed an additional 5% of building costs to be ring fenced and used for Sustainable Development. DCSF is now making a similar level of additional funding available to reduce carbon emissions from school buildings. Additional funding of £50/m² is being allocated to new schools within BSF, Academies and One School Pathfinder programmes to reduce carbon emissions by 60%, and we expect local authorities to use their capital funding to meet this reduction in carbon emissions for all other new school buildings (eg within the Primary Capital Programme).

The Select Committee commented on the usefulness of the LSC checklist and encouraged its wider use. The checklist includes a number of technical considerations, all of which are addressed within Departmental guidance (Building Bulletins, etc) and many of which are considered and incentivised within BREEAM assessments for schools.

EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Our previous response confirmed that the development of a Strategy for Change in each local authority was designed to capture both the educational vision and what this will mean for the school estate. Schools are also required to develop their own individual Strategies for Change. PfS has developed and issued guidance which sets out those elements we expect to be addressed to ensure that schools can transform teaching and learning and achieve better educational standards. They are also supporting and challenging local authorities in the development of their Strategies for Change to ensure that improvement targets are included, and that it is clear how the associated key performance indicators (KPIs) will be measured.

At a national level the Children's Plan sets out a vision for all services for children and young people, and provides the context for the development of a vision of what a 21st century school should look like. Work is underway in the Department to define that vision in more detail, and to look at a wider range of performance indicators which might be used to measure progress towards that vision. PfS is also working with partner organisations in the education sector to reach a clearer understanding of the contribution that BSF can make to a 21st century education. By the end of 2008 national KPIs and targets will be established to monitor the extent to which the strategic delivery objective of educational transformation is being achieved.

LOCAL DECISIONS VERSUS GOVERNMENT POLICY

BSF is a national programme of investment that will help improve the life chances of millions of young people. For BSF to achieve its objective of educational transformation, national policy must reflect local needs and aspirations (and *vice-versa*). The Strategy for Change process is a mechanism to do this. An early remit meeting with local authorities sets out at the outset what is expected, for example, ensuring that the choice and diversity mix is appropriate to the local circumstances. Against this backdrop, innovation is encouraged and we are seeing many local authorities being very creative with their proposals for BSF, including using BSF as a centrepiece for wider regeneration or social cohesion within a local area.

Both BSF and the Primary Capital Programme provide local authorities and their partners with opportunities to bring together additional sources of funding to develop facilities that enable the co-location of other services on school sites.

As outlined in the Children's Plan, the Department is committed to "... run our capital programmes in a simple, coherent and consistent manner to help local agencies to further increase co-location". We have established a project to investigate how we can improve the management of all our capital programmes. We will be developing ideas to further simplify our processes and support to local areas to co-locate services, so we make the most of available funding, local expertise and good practice. To ensure that this work takes into account the views and needs of local authorities and their partners, we have appointed 16 local authorities as "pilots".

DEVELOPING THE USE OF ICT

There is no intention to create a "one size fits all" ICT solution. The ICT specification and procurement process in BSF is deliberately designed to ensure that the purchase and provision of ICT resources and services is tailored to the needs and specialisms of individual schools. A local authority is not allowed to proceed to procurement unless its ICT Output Specification contains specific School Enhancements for each school and these are shown to be linked to the schools' aspirations as set out in their Strategy for Change. Although we are taking a more hands-off approach in relation to the Primary Capital Programme, guidance on the requirement to prepare and secure DCSF approval to a Primary Strategy for Change emphasises the need to ensure ICT supports the overall aims for teaching and learning.

The BSF programme challenges schools and local authorities to develop an aspirational Strategy for Change and to show how the innovative use of ICT will support this. This approach places transformation at the heart of the process, linking in ICT in a way that no other national scheme has so far been able to do. Additionally, the ICT suppliers have responded to the challenges and opportunities presented by BSF by developing and bringing to market a range of new products and services. For example, there is substantial investment in the development of “next generation” virtual learning environments—software systems designed to support teaching and learning in an educational setting.

There is standardisation to the extent that we want to ensure that every school can offer a high-level of ICT to support teaching and learning through BSF funding—but that is certainly not saying that the solution is the same for every school.

FUTURE PROOFING

The Select Committee recommends that there should be a Post Occupancy Review for every school within the BSF programme to ensure that a proper assessment can be made of what has worked well and what has caused difficulties. We can confirm that all schools in BSF are required to complete a Post Occupancy Evaluation as part of the Design Quality Indicator for Schools process. Post Occupancy Evaluation typically takes place after the building has been through a cycle of one summer and one winter and so we expect the first evaluations to take place towards the end of 2008.

PERSONALISATION

The Department has commissioned a research project to gain a better understanding of how the design of schools can support personalised learning. In order to gain a practical understanding of this, several “live” building projects will be studied.

We will develop tools, processes and advice, suitable for use by all schools. This will enable schools to look at their own practices and to translate these into building needs and solutions. A key aspect of this project is a communications strategy that enables the sector to benefit from the on-going research findings as they emerge.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CARBON FOOTPRINT

The Children’s Plan, published in December 2007, reinforced our commitment to school buildings with high standards of sustainability and energy efficiency. The Plan announced our ambition for zero carbon new school buildings by 2016, and we have now appointed a Task Force to advise on how this goal can be met. The Task Force will develop a roadmap to zero carbon, setting targets and milestones along the way. They will focus on the technical, design and construction challenges of zero carbon school buildings, as well as cost, benefits and affordability. Whilst the initial focus will be on new school buildings, they will also consider the potential for substantially reducing carbon emissions in the even more challenging field of refurbishment projects.

As the Select Committee is aware, we are taking action now as we work towards the zero carbon goal by setting an immediate requirement that new school buildings will achieve a 60% carbon emissions reduction. About 235 schools in BSF, the Academies programme and One School Pathfinders will benefit from additional funding of around £113m for energy efficiency and renewable energy measures to support the delivery of this requirement. We expect local authorities to use their devolved funding to meet the same standards in other school buildings, for example those in the Primary Capital Programme. This builds on our requirement that all major school projects are subject to a BREEAM assessment and expected to achieve a minimum BREEAM Schools rating of “very good”.

In terms of measuring success in reducing carbon emissions of school buildings, we have developed a simple piece of software—the “carbon calculator”. This allows users to test combinations of technical solutions and provides initial estimates of carbon savings and capital costs. The carbon calculator requires minimal input to assess the likely carbon reduction, thereby allowing a large number of design options to be tested at an early stage in the project. Its outputs are based on a number of default assumptions to help to make some early fundamental design choices. Users can refine these assumptions as the design progresses, and more detailed information becomes available.

The use of the carbon calculator will be monitored during the design and procurement stages of BSF, and will be the means for ensuring that new school buildings meet the requirement to reduce carbon emissions by 60%.

In order to avoid unnecessary duplication, we are exploring options to monitor the actual energy used by new schools through the Department for Communities and Local Government’s requirements for energy performance certificates and display energy certificates.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

In its report, the Select Committee asked for a response on whether we consider that using 30% of recycled material in construction would be cost neutral and, if so, whether we will consider raising the level required. We have discussed this with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) who have advised that setting a high target for recycled content may preclude some options for sustainable design (eg it is easier to recycle concrete or steel than wood, and a high target may exclude the option of timber construction for schools, even though many aspects of timber construction are environmentally sustainable).

WRAP are satisfied that a minimum requirement of 10% is achievable for all construction methods. They recommend that it is retained as a minimum requirement and that any additional content will be achieved wherever viable. WRAP have drafted a clause for inclusion in the BSF standard output specification, together with a proposal that a requirement be introduced for construction teams to use WRAP's waste toolkit for school projects.

MANAGEMENT OF BSF

In its public response to the Select Committee's report the Department set out the division of responsibilities on BSF: the Department has responsibility for the development of policy, while PfS is responsible for the strategic management and delivery of the programme, including day-to-day management of individual projects. The Department has plans to further develop PfS's management role and to streamline the delivery-side arrangements further.

The suite of BSF contracts with third-party support bodies has now been transferred from the DCSF to PfS, creating a single gateway for BSF. These contracts cover work carried out by 4ps, CABE and the NCSL.

How will we know if BSF has been a success?

The overarching objective of BSF is to transform education in every secondary school in England, and in so doing, improve the life chances of young people. The Department has commissioned a three-year longitudinal study to help assess the success of BSF. Its first year report published at the end of 2007 highlighted the extent to which headteachers already believe BSF will have positive impacts on teaching, learning and community involvement:

- only 20% of headteachers think that current school buildings raise pupils' aspirations;
- 87% of headteachers said BSF will promote/accommodate a wide range of learning styles;
- 84% of headteachers said BSF will improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school;
- 56% of headteachers think their current building doesn't create a sense of ownership by community; and
- 44% of headteachers think parents are not proud of the current school.

PfS commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to carry out research on the impact of a new environment on students and teachers at one of the first BSF schools. Amongst the most significant findings, the proportions of students:

- who said they felt safe at school most or all of the time increased from 57% to 87%;
- who said they felt proud of their school increased from 43% to 77%;
- who said they enjoyed going to school increased from 50% to 61%;
- who perceived that vandalism was at least "a bit of a problem" in their school decreased from 84% of respondents to 33%;
- who perceived that bullying was a big problem decreased from 39% to 16%; and
- who expected to stay on in the sixth form or go to college increased from 64% to 77%.

14–19 DIPLOMAS AND RAISING THE PARTICIPATION AGE

The Committee has asked for comments on the need to cater for the 14–19 Diplomas and the joint working that will involve, and for the proposal to raise the participation age for education and training to 18.

Every local authority BSF Strategy for Change plan needs to make specific reference to how it is helping to deliver 14–19 reforms. This includes the delivery of Diplomas and the raising of the participation age. There will, of course, be different approaches and different levels of need across the country, dependent upon the quality and range of existing facilities, the current levels of participation and of NEETs (Not currently engaged in Employment, Education or Training), and the projected growth or decline in population levels. As well as the scrutiny provided by PfS, the local Learning and Skills Council looks at every BSF proposal so that building plans across the area can be aligned.

We are currently in the process of producing design guidance for local areas, showing a range of facilities that demonstrate good practice in terms of Diploma delivery. This guidance will further help local areas to decide what they need to build in order to achieve our aim of "world-class" facilities for every learner.

Raising the participation age will mean that the proportion of young people participating in education will increase. However, because of a projected decline in the population of students of sixth form age, there will not be a large rise in the actual number of learners. The Department is in the process of refining its modelling so that we have a firmer picture of where the smaller amount of extra learners will be—in terms of where in the country, on what qualifications, and in what type of institution—so that those areas can respond as necessary.

REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF FUTURE WAVES OF BSF

The Committee has also asked for comments on the public consultation on the management of BSF waves 7 to 15 that we launched on 9 May.

At the outset of BSF, the two key criteria determining the order in which local authorities joined the programme were academic attainment and social deprivation. The first six waves have included those areas with high educational and social need. Now that around half of local authorities are engaged in BSF, it is timely to reflect on the lessons learned from the early waves.

Proposals in the consultation include using additional criteria to prioritise projects, and starting all authorities off with at least one priority project as soon as is practicable. It also explores barriers to cross-border working and delivering co-locational services in BSF projects. It also seeks views on allowing local authorities to join BSF when they can demonstrate they are ready to do so, rather than in “waves” made up of a number of authorities at a time. This would mean more local authorities benefiting from the programme earlier than was previously possible, as well as supporting market capacity as projects would come to the market on a rolling basis rather than in large groups.

Following the consultation, we will invite authorities to revise their expressions of interest for inclusion in the programme. Guidance on this will be informed by the consultation. We will announce the revised national programme early in 2009, and announce the next authorities to start in the programme shortly thereafter.

In addition to the consultation, it has been our intention for some time to fast track a select number of projects within local authorities that can demonstrate they are ready to join BSF ahead of the original timetable for delivery. Authorities in Waves 7 to 9 were invited to consider whether they are in a position to take advantage of the opportunity to enter BSF earlier than currently scheduled. We recently announced that a further eight local authorities have been invited to come forward and enter BSF.

The Department has also cooperated with the National Audit Office in its evaluation of Building Schools for the Future.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by 4ps

1. 4ps, local government’s partnerships and project delivery specialist body, was invited to present evidence to the Committee when it first addressed the Building Schools for the Future programme in December 2006. 4ps receives funding for its programme of support for BSF from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and works closely with the Department’s national delivery body, Partnerships for Schools (PfS). Since April 2008 PfS has taken over responsibility for administration of this funding.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 There are two key areas on which 4ps now wishes to comment at this further stage of the Inquiry, on:
- How the experience of those in the early waves is being disseminated, and
 - Government announcements about “acceleration” and “streamlining” of BSF and its implications for the delivery of the project as a whole.

3. 4PS COMMENTS

How the experience of those in the early waves is being disseminated

3.1 Through its Expert Client Programme (ECP)—an integrated programme of skills development, knowledge transfer, and peer and independent reviews, 4ps has been uniquely in a position to facilitate and enhance the process by which lessons from the experience of those in the early Waves are captured and disseminated. 4ps ECP is offered to authorities before and as they enter the BSF programme and is delivered through a range of approaches—sharing best practice of those that have gone through the programme—over the course of the project cycle.

3.2 BRIEFINGS AND AUDITS

Briefings

The early projects have highlighted the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of and understand the scale, objectives, benefits and challenges of BSF. Recognizing the importance of corporate buy-in, commitment and leadership from the most senior officers and elected members to the success of the project, 4ps provides briefings to senior management teams and members aimed at raising awareness of the key issues and detailed aspects of the challenge of BSF early on in the process, and often prior to the authority's entry to the BSF programme. This initial briefing to the corporate team is also made available to wider stakeholder groups (eg governing bodies and headteachers) if requested and is augmented as necessary by specific and detailed briefings on LEP, PFI, governance arrangements and structure, and the schools' stakeholders role (how and when they can get involved) in the BSF process.

Skills and Resources Audits

Following findings from Gateway Reviews, 4ps has introduced Skills and Resources Audits. These audits provide an excellent opportunity to pass on the experience of previous projects with regard to resources requirements and management arrangements. Audits can be conducted at different stages in the programme to assist the "readiness to deliver" process and on-going change management. 4ps conducts these and provides a confidential report to the Project Owner, addressing typically:

- staffing numbers and skills distribution;
- missing elements of the team;
- reporting and governance arrangements;
- links with other teams;
- links and involvement with other (Corporate) Departments;
- complementary role of all types of external advisers;
- accommodation arrangements;
- training needs;
- staffing models;
- succession planning; and
- procurement budget.

3.3 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Project Team Training

Capacity-building is the core function of 4ps Expert Client Programme, and this is principally done through delivery of a programme of standard Project Team Training modules. These have been developed specifically to address BSF needs from a substantial skills development programme provided by 4ps across local government sectors, delivered locally and timed to have maximum effect. PFS Project Directors contribute to the design of the modules and the programme as a whole is regularly updated to capture policy changes and requirements, as well as lessons learned. In addition, PFS Project Directors are invited to attend and add their expertise in the delivery of the training.

Project Board training and support

In BSF, the role of the Project Board is fundamental to ensuring the delivery of the transformational agenda.

However, Project Boards are inevitably a mixture of people who are involved in developing and running schemes as part of their job and are therefore familiar with all the details of the proposals, and people who represent stakeholder groups but have little or no direct involvement with the management of the scheme from day to day. This latter group of people often find it difficult to engage fully with discussions at Board meetings due to uncertainties regarding their role and accountabilities. They may also be unfamiliar with the tools available to help them. Consequently it may take them some time to develop the confidence to participate fully in the work of the Board or they may become disengaged, to the possible disadvantage of some stakeholder groups.

Project Board Training enables Board members to explore their roles, responsibilities and approach to the management of the overall project and programme. It is a bespoke event specifically aimed at the members of new Project Boards.

School leadership team training

4ps offers “School Operation under BSF” training for groups of school heads, deputy heads, governors and authority representatives, highlighting the differences between conventional relationships with contractors and those used in the BSF programme. The training event is based on real examples and highlights best practice to adopt and pitfalls to avoid.

3.4 NETWORKING

Regional BSF Network Meetings

Peer to peer networking is an important activity and the six regional BSF network groups (North-East, North-West, Yorkshire and Humberside, East, Midlands and London) established between 2006 and 2008 provide an invaluable platform for accessing a wealth of information, experience and expertise. The network groups meet on a quarterly basis. The meetings are well attended and permit BSF authorities from all Waves and those not yet in the programme to exchange views and best practice, and to contribute to 4ps guidance (see below). They offer a mix of formal presentation by “experts” on topical issues and informal discussions with members. 4ps convenes these meetings and invites a different authority in the region to host each event.

4ps Communities of Practice (COP)

This is a professional networking resource across local government, hosted by 4ps through the medium of password-protected web forums. A COP for local authority schools PFI projects, mostly used by contract managers, has been operational since 2007. A BSF COP is due to be launched in early July 2008. The rationale is a simple one: free from the constraints of physical networks, the BSF COP will provide continuous access to advice and support from colleagues in the BSF sector, live discussion with peers and interactive knowledge sharing. The site will be monitored by 4ps Schools Team and enables emerging issues/themes to be picked up and taken forward for a formal response.

Conferences

4ps makes regular contributions to national conferences with BSF-related content, reaching representatives of authorities and the market who may not otherwise have access to the experience of the programme. 4ps also hosts conferences such as the recent joint LGA/4ps Conference Engaging with Building Schools for the Future (June 2008) with keynote speakers that included Tim Byles (Chief Executive, Pfs) and the President and Vice-President of the Association of Directors of Children Services. This provided a valuable opportunity for authorities (particularly elected members who were well-represented) to hear the experience and views of colleagues within current Waves. Presentations and discussion topics included:

- “the strategic role for local authorities in delivering transformation”;
- “keeping stakeholders engaged”; and
- “role of the school in its community”.

In addition, BSF is a regular stream at the annual 4ps Conference which is aimed at all local authorities in England. Developments in BSF are highlighted and practical workshops provided demonstrating best practice in the programme.

3.5 PEER REVIEWS

Gateway Reviews

4ps conducts the mandatory and other Gateway Reviews for the BSF programme. It has published two editions of lessons learned from BSF Gateway Reviews (on 4ps website), and has included these in training events for Authorities, and in presentations at numerous national conferences and other events. The recommendations of reviews inform the priorities of members of the 4ps Schools Team in the support they give to Authorities.

One of the key elements of the gateway review process is the use of a review team that includes independent and experienced local authority and external consultant reviewers to conduct the review of the project. 4ps trains senior staff from Local authorities for this role, providing a pool of experienced reviewers who are then able to pass on tips in other reviews, and bring back valuable experience to their own authorities.

3.6 LESSONS LEARNED AND PUBLICATIONS

4ps conducted a survey of the key learning points flowing from the Pathfinder and other early projects in late 2007, and produced a document summarising these. One of the key findings from Authorities was an expressed demand for more information to be disseminated about the experience so far of operational LEPs. Perhaps understandably, for commercial and other reasons, little had been made available at that point. A particular aspect on which 4ps is qualified to advise is that of best practice arrangements for the operation of the client-side organization. It has been clear that many Authorities have failed to appreciate the importance of establishing an effective client structure to relate to the LEP once it becomes “live”. Consequently, it has been agreed with PfS that 4ps will publish guidance on this topic, intended to be available in September 2008, and follow this up with workshops and training activity as appropriate.

4ps started publishing in 2007 an occasional “Best Practice Bulletin” for authorities sent by email and on 4ps website. It has published the first joint publication with PfS of a revised “Introductory Guide to BSF” which follows up the 4ps booklet produced in 2005, of which 6,000 copies were distributed. It is considered by many to be an invaluable handbook.

The second question on which 4ps wishes to comment is:

Government announcements about “acceleration” and “streamlining” of BSF and its implications for the delivery of the project as a whole.

4.1 The streamlining of the procurement process for BSF being introduced by PfS during 2008 implies that LAs must be even better prepared for BSF, or, “ready to deliver”, before gaining entry to the programme. From our experience of supporting local authorities delivering BSF the insufficient ownership of projects at a local level can lead to significant problems with delivery. 4ps currently helps Authorities to prepare through its ECP (detailed in 3. above) and plans to provide even more preparation/support to capacity building, which is likely to be needed as a result of more stringent expectations on “readiness”. In particular, 4ps will continue to provide early elaboration of issues that will have to be understood and owned by a range of stakeholders.

4.2 Other changes under consideration (in the planned review of criteria for selection from Wave 7 onwards) suggest that more Authorities may gain access to the BSF programme earlier, as from 2009. There is also a likelihood that smaller initial projects will become the norm, leading to a need for projects to be amalgamated in some way that will ensure continuing market interest and maintain viability of the LEP concept. This in turn may generate official encouragement for joint authority procurement, an approach that has few precedents in the programme so far, and has generated some experience of difficulty and potential for delay. To mitigate any problems arising, 4ps is preparing guidance for Authorities on best practice approaches to joint procurement, due for publication in September 2008.

4.3 A potential result of an increase in the number of smaller initial projects might be to water-down ambitions at local level for genuine transformation of the approach to secondary provision. 4ps would hope to support PfS and DCSF in ensuring that this does not happen. This may also have implications for increased levels of support, and the need for PfS to continue to be supported by activities included in 4ps’ Expert Client Programme.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by Intellect

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This submission has been prepared by Intellect in response to the press notice issued by the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on 22 May 2008.

1.2 Intellect is the UK trade association for the IT, telecoms and electronics industries. Its members account for over 80% of these markets and include blue-chip multinationals as well as early stage technology companies. These industries together generate around 10% of UK GDP and 15% of UK trade.

1.3 This memorandum focuses on the development in the procurement and design of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) element of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. It follows the evidence that Intellect submitted to the Education and Skills Committee’s inquiry into Sustainable Schools for the Future in June 2006. Nick Kalisperas of Intellect presented oral evidence to the committee on 5 July 2006, which was referenced in the final report.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Intellect supports the BSF Educational Vision, which was published by Partnerships for Schools in November 2004. This vision states that the mission for ICT in schools is: “To help all children achieve their full potential by supporting every school in England to become a centre of excellence in the use of ICT for teaching and learning and for whole-school development.”

2.2 Intellect and its members wholeheartedly believe that 21st century schools need 21st century technology. However, we have a number of concerns about BSF and ultimately about the programme’s ability to deliver its vision of education.

2.3 Our main areas of concern, which are detailed in the next section of this document, are that the BSF procurement approach:

- has limited ICT choice;
- has yet to create a vibrant market; and
- does not always support the transformational aims and objectives of the programme.

3. BSF PROCUREMENT APPROACH—LIMITING ICT CHOICE

3.1 The consortium procurement approach, which brings together construction, facilities management and ICT into a single contract and which is favoured by Partnerships for Schools, places a greater emphasis on the construction element of each programme than on the ICT element. This is because the consortium scoring criteria give relatively little weight (c.15%) to ICT in the decision making process. As a result, BSF programmes may get the ICT service that happens to be linked to a particular constructor, rather than the one they would choose and regardless of whether it meets their needs.

3.2 In order for suppliers to offer genuinely innovative ICT products and services, the choice of the ICT supplier should be based on their educational vision, rather than the consortium that they happen to be part of. While raising the threshold level for ICT suppliers and giving more weighting to ICT in the decision making process would help to achieve this, the most effective means of encouraging suppliers to offer innovative solutions would be to separate procurement as part of a multi-stage process.

3.3 The consortium approach does concentrate accountability for delivering a BSF programme at a single point. However, Intellect members believe that, with the adoption of appropriate interface agreements between constructors and ICT suppliers, the value of free choice of ICT supplier outweighs this benefit.

4. BSF PROCUREMENT APPROACH—HAS YET TO CREATE A VIBRANT MARKET

4.1 Whilst many of Intellect’s members (large and small) have expressed interest in BSF, only a limited number of ICT suppliers are actually participating in the BSF programme. Some members—particularly the larger generalist ICT suppliers—report that they are not participating because of the procurement model, and in particular the consortium nature of it.

4.2 Bidding for the ICT element of a BSF contract has considerable resource and cost implications for suppliers due to:

- the complexity of the procurement process;
- an inability to leverage economies of scale (since individual bids are for relatively small groups of schools); and
- the frequent lack of adequate due diligence and preparation by local authorities (which ultimately means the supplier takes on additional risk).

4.3 The high level of investment required to participate in this process is difficult for suppliers to justify, particularly when they have little control over the factors that determine a bid’s success or otherwise, and when the end result is determined by their choice of consortium partner rather than by their bid’s merits.

4.4 This is compounded by the terms and conditions (Ts & Cs) imposed by the BSF procurement process. We believe that the contractual terms and conditions—which in some situations result in an ICT supplier having potential liabilities that exceed the value of the contract—prove a significant disincentive. Liabilities of such a scale have not been reported in contracts for projects of a similar size and nature and for similar customers.

4.5 Moreover, Intellect and its members share a concern that small companies frequently have little choice but to accept unquantified risks, which may pose considerable problems in the future (for those companies, the schools and the programme).

4.6 Without changes to the procurement model, it is unlikely that the programme will attract more suppliers: particularly when the potential return on investment is considerably higher for other work. There is a significant risk that some tenders will attract bids from two or fewer suppliers. This will lead to capacity issues for those suppliers who remain in the market, but will ultimately mean that schools will receive lowest common denominator ICT and will be unable to deliver the intended educational outcomes.

5. BSF PROCUREMENT APPROACH—DOES NOT ALWAYS SUPPORT THE TRANSFORMATIONAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

5.1 Intellect members have broad experience of delivering transformational change enabled by technology. Transformation requires more than simply ICT; it also requires well-executed change management that takes a holistic view of the people and processes.

5.2 To be able to select truly transformational solutions for their schools, local authorities must understand the full range of options available to them at the visioning stage and be capable of communicating a clear and coherent vision to all stakeholders. This will often include a requirement for a significant change management programme.

5.3 The supplier community has considerable experience in this type of change management, which could be utilised to support the delivery of BSF's educational vision. An adequate revenue stream should be made available for change management, as it is undoubtedly a major success factor for the programme.

5.4 Additional clarity is needed on the sustainability of the programme given that it is based on a capital funding model. Intellect recommends that careful consideration be given to the longer-term operational funding requirements: failure to secure the future of BSF schools risks undermining the credibility of this transformation programme.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Intellect and its members strongly support BSF's educational vision and the role set out for ICT within it. However, we are concerned that the procurement approach adopted will not get the best out of the market for BSF schools. Crucially, we believe that the procurement approach limits ICT choice and has failed to encourage new suppliers to create a vibrant and competitive marketplace. As a result, it is not making the most of the skills and experience available in the supplier community to support the real transformation of education and learning.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 Intellect is happy to provide additional evidence to the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee and to explore the issues discussed in this submission in greater detail.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The attached detailed submission from Knowsley follows on from the evidence gathering visit of the Select Committee to the Borough on the 15 January 2007. The submission directly addresses the specific areas of interest highlighted by the Committee in its announcement of the 22 May 2008 and also provides more general comment on the BSF programme. In our detailed submission we address the following:

- (i) The extent to which the programme remains a focus for education transformation in the context of the challenges of the 21st Century. We observe that the broader objective of education transformation for all is being redefined to focus on educational attainment in deprived areas thereby running the risk of the programme becoming parochial rather than national and global. We observe that education transformation remains undefined.
- (ii) The challenges presented by maintaining the performance of existing institutions while creating new institutions to meet widespread expectations. We attest that the place of BSF in meeting wider educational policy objectives is now less clear than at the outset.
- (iii) The importance of exchanging best practice and knowledge and the benefits that are emerging. We highlight both formal and informal networks.
- (iv) The issues that have prevented more rapid implementation. We comment on the extent to which the inflexibility of mechanisms such as PFI restrains local authorities and construction companies in achieving innovative solutions
- (v) The experience of procurement of an early BSF local authority. We set out the national and local issues that affected our progress.
- (vi) The progress we feel we have made in translating a radical vision into practice. This links directly to legislation and policy that emerged subsequent to Wave 1 status being agreed and our approach to accommodating this within a locally agreed vision.

- (vii) The criticality of pedagogy in driving design. Why new and emerging pedagogies require radically different approaches to design.
- (viii) The importance of being flexible in a fast changing education policy environment.

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

1.1 The broader BSF debate (particularly its initial aim around education transformation) appears to have been dissipated with the focus falling on failing schools in deprived areas. It appears from the proposals out to consultation on BSF Waves 7–15 that future investment may be further targeted at this policy area. The potential consequence is that it runs the risk of a broader conclusion being drawn that BSF investment is no longer a national policy on education transformation and that the only problems are in so called deprived areas.

1.2 We feel that this assumption stands apart from the original transformational intention of BSF as the vehicle that made all English secondary schools fit for purpose in the 21st Century. We feel this runs the risk of misunderstanding the global nature of the challenge.

1.3 It is crucial that young people's needs and fears about "the future" are actively listened to by parents, teachers, fellow students, and politicians. In educating for the 21st century, active listening to young people's voices questions the appropriateness of educational agendas and in a world in which local, national and global conflict is a daily fact of life, it is all too easy for children to become fearful, to lack hope and to believe that they are powerless in the face of forces larger than themselves. Few things are more empowering to young people than the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes which enable them to resolve conflicts peacefully, and to work creatively for changes.

1.4 Through working with Microsoft, key academics and organisations and through analysing a broad base of evidence we have come to take a view of our BSF programme in a national and global context. We feel this is entirely appropriate given the scale of the endeavour. As such, and consistent with the views of local stakeholders, Knowsley's BSF vision is fundamentally predicated on a system of education that adapts readily to economic and social change. The shift away from national and global thinking that we felt BSF represented and toward a more parochial outlook is of real concern.

1.5 As the Select Committee will know, Knowsley's BSF programme is unique in that it is the only programme in the country to replace all of its provision with a new school system. While this was lauded at the outset (quoted in the Schools White Paper of 2005) it has perhaps gone from being unique to being an anomaly.

1.6 National Challenge illustrates this well. Five of the national challenge schools are existing Knowsley schools and, as such, will be closed in the coming months as part of our BSF programme to be replaced by new institutions. Government is aware of our proposals and has agreed them—yet we are once again caught up in a new policy initiative—the central challenge of which we feel we have set out clearly how we intend to respond. It is difficult at this stage to establish the position of BSF in Government's strategy around educational reform.

1.7 We feel that there is much to learn from the Knowsley BSF programme. The possibility that it is now considered an anomaly should not prevent this. In January 2008 NESTA published a report entitled *Transformers: How local areas innovate to address changing social need*. Knowsley's BSF programme is a Case Study in this report which highlights the criticality of innovation at the local level if deep rooted problems are to be resolved. In our view this is what BSF was always intended to do.

1.8 In summary, we appear to have been caught in a debate as to how (working class) young people can achieve better educational outcomes and the role, or otherwise, of local authorities in this endeavour.

1.9 Perhaps as a consequence of the above context we do not feel that Building Schools for the Future has a high enough national profile. Granted that delays in implementation do not help in enabling Ministers to point to its obvious merits but given the scale and ambition of this and the investment in primary schools it should feature more prominently. To achieve this the finding in the Select Committee report of 2007, that it is better to get it right rather than do it with undue haste, needs to be constantly reinforced.

2. THE RATE OF PROGRESS THAT IS BEING MADE IN BRINGING PROJECTS TO THE CONSTRUCTION STAGE

The following summary outlines the progress of the Knowsley programme from OBC to on site construction.

Timetable for the period from Outline Business Case to Financial Close for the Knowsley BSF Programme

Outline Business Case (OBC) Submitted	February 2005
Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) issued to shortlisted bidders	December 2005
Bids Submitted	April 2006
Evaluation of Bids completed	August 2006
ITN resubmission due to change in scope evaluated	October 2006

Approval of Preferred Bidder and Soft FM Provider	December 2006
Commencement of Advanced Works Agreement	May 2007
ICT Managed Services contract reached Financial Close	July 2007
PFI Contract reached Financial Close	December 2007

2.1 Mainly as a result of changes to the Programme during the procurement process, the date of Financial Close slipped from January 2007 to December 2007. A number of the key changes which summarised below could be associated with being a Wave 1 BSF authority:

- (i) as at the date of submission of the OBC the Council was progressing detailed discussions with the DfES as to how and where one of the Learning Centres would be developed as a City Academy. As a result of the feasibility study, this route was not taken forward. At the time that the feasibility study was being undertaken, this would have been the first Academy to be procured under the BSF programme;
- (ii) the Outline Business case was submitted on the basis required by PfS that funding for the community schools only would be supported by PFI credits, with the voluntary aided sector schools and the ICT Services Contract being funded by traditional funding. However, the impact to the Council of having Supported Borrowing rather than PFI Credits was severe due to the Council being a "Grant Floor Authority" which did not appear to have been taken into consideration during the initial stages of our procurement. This was later reviewed by PfS and a second Project Review Group submission, resulting in funding by PFI credits for the seven Learning Centres;
- (iii) the Council reviewed its demand for places which resulted in the early closure of one secondary school and a reduction from eight to seven new Learning Centres;
- (iv) throughout the commercial negotiations, at the request of PfS as a pilot exercise for the BSF Programme, the Council considered the implications of proceeding with Credit Guarantee Finance (CGF) or a private finance solution. Whilst the CGF route would have provided a Unitary Charge saving compared to a bank debt solution, further discussions with the Treasury, DfES and PfS, the Council determined that, mainly due to anticipated timing implications on the overall Programme, the Council would prefer to adopt the bank debt solution; and
- (v) at a later stage of the commercial negotiations, the Council reconsidered its funding route and determined that a bond solution would be the most economically advantageous approach. Again, this was a new funding route at the time for schools PFI in England and therefore there was a lack of standard documentation to support this funding route which the Council invested time and resources to develop. However, the timing of our Financial Close was during the early stages of problems associated with the Sub Prime market and the bond solution was deemed not to be feasible.

2.2 Despite the changes to the Programme and the impact of changes due to commercial negotiations, the costs have been contained within the Council's affordability target and have not significantly impacted upon either the deliverability or the principles of the Knowsley Programme set out in our Strategic Business Case. This has been assisted by entering into an Advanced Works Agreements from May 2007 to ensure that the construction programme remained deliverable within the required timescales.

2.3 Construction as at July 2008 is on target, with the first Centre for Learning due to open in January 2009 and all seven complete by January 2010.

3. HOW THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE IN THE EARLY WAVES IS BEING DISSEMINATED

3.1 Knowsley is a member of the Merseyside Learn Together Partnership which includes six local authority members. The objective of the Partnership is to work collaboratively on areas of major policy and strategy and it has instigated workshops to disseminate BSF experience among its members.

3.2 Knowsley has been invited to address a number of conferences on BSF specifically and in the context of wider education debate at both regional and national level. This includes seminars supported by the Select Committee itself.

3.3 We have responded to requests from other Local Authorities across the country to conduct sessions on our BSF experience and we have obliged in almost every circumstance.

3.4 We have received visits from Local Authorities to Knowsley to examine our progress, particularly the relationship between pedagogy and design.

3.5 As mentioned elsewhere in this response we worked with NESTA as a case study on its report on system innovators which we found highly positive and enlightening. A common theme emerging out of this work was that local authorities looking to innovate their way out of deep rooted problems found that the Government regulatory and inspection frameworks were too rigid to cope with new approaches and the authorities concerned were "found against" as a result.

3.6 Knowsley is one of a group of Local Authorities (Sheffield, Sandwell, Kent and Knowsley) working with Microsoft on developing a simulation of a Personalised Learning Environment (Microsoft BSF Showcase) that has influenced ICT Managed Service Providers in developing their BSF product. This work is now continuing, with Microsoft further developing the concept with the resulting solutions being brokered with the market to explore possible integration opportunities.

3.7 Directly linked to BSF Wave 1 status, Knowsley and Sheffield are working in partnership with the Innovation Unit and other national agencies to share and promote innovative practice that supports education transformation. The Innovation Zone partners are:

- Partnership for Schools (PFS),
- The Training and Development Agency (TDA),
- BECTA,
- The National College for School Leadership (NCSL),
- National Strategies,
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), and
- The Innovation Unit.

3.8 Both Knowsley and Sheffield have formed Strategic Action Teams from among the above partners. In addition a representative from Microsoft attends meetings given the links outlined above. Strategic partners are currently scoping out how they can best work with Knowsley and Sheffield to support the transformation process.

3.9 In Knowsley an induction programme for the new Centre for Learning (note that Knowsley has opted to use the term Centres for Learning within the titles of their new BSF investment as a replacement for the term school) Principals has been planned and implemented with colleagues from the Innovation Unit. Planning is currently underway with the Centre for Educational Leadership for induction programmes for second and third tier staff, a development that will be conducted with the TDA.

3.10 QCA in particular are working with Knowsley in supporting the implementation of the QCA “Big Picture”. A QCA representative is working with one school in particular to support its transition into its new Centre for Learning. This work is focusing upon providing support for the young people in exploring the future of teaching and learning for their new centre. The work will support the development of a common language for learning that will be shared with representatives from other Centres for Learning in order for further sessions to be developed across other schools.

3.11 Knowsley and Sheffield are feeding back progress to date at the next meeting of the Innovation Zone in London in July. The clear challenge to the authorities concerned and the national agencies is to direct the shift from the old to the new ensuring that performance is not affected in the process.

4. HOW THE VISIONING PROCESS IS BEING DEVELOPED/IMPLEMENTED

4.1 As Knowsley is the only Local Authority replacing its entire system of secondary education it presents novel and unique challenges. Progress in key areas is highlighted below.

4.1.1 *Governance*

Knowsley has been actively exploring new models of Governance that will support system reform that delivers education transformation. This work has been supported by the Innovations Unit. What has emerged is a model that looks to deliver all aspects of Government policy and legislation, bringing together the prospect of Trust based arrangement with the objectives under Every Child Matters and linked strongly to neighbourhoods and communities. This is proving a major task. Local consultation on new models is ongoing as is discussion with DCSF around the fine detail of the legislation. While progress is being made it can be stated that satisfying all relevant aspects of Government policy and legislation in our context while staying true to a local vision is a major challenge.

4.1.2 *Leadership*

An induction programme for the new Centre for Learning Principals has been planned and implemented with colleagues from the Innovation Unit. The sessions have focused upon developing a collegial team of Principals who will support each other in their preparation for migration to a new way of working. Time has been spent exploring pedagogy and curriculum innovation with a focus upon the associated continuing professional development requirements for the whole workforce.

Planning is currently underway with the Centre for Educational Leadership for induction programmes for second and third tier staff, a development that will be conducted in conjunction with the TDA.

This area is intriguing and the National Challenge announcement concerning the existing institutions in Knowsley has raised local sensitivities at a critical time for the Knowsley programme.

4.1.3 *Pedagogy*

Knowsley has developed a Pedagogical Framework that is currently being used to support the workforce in transforming classroom practice, founded around our work on “pedagogy and practice” and “pedagogy and personalisation”. The document contains a delivery framework and highlights a set of pedagogical principles against which the proposed curriculum models for the new learning centres can be tested for their fitness for purpose.

The document identifies the need to reframe pedagogy so that the learner is very much at the heart of education and points to the paramount importance of the daily learning experiences both in and out of the classroom in shaping young people’s engagement with their learning. It suggests that the reframing of pedagogy is essential if we aspire to address the cognitive, affective and social aspects of learning.

The document explains how the Pedagogical approaches provide a crucially important bridge between “what are we trying to achieve?”, and “how do we organise learning?”. These approaches exemplify the ways in which the curriculum is translated into personalised experiences for all learners. For this reason the pedagogical framework is the bond between what we are trying to secure for our learners, and evaluating if this has been achieved.

4.1.4 *Test Model Environments (TME)*

In preparation for migration to their new Learning Centres, teachers in Knowsley have the opportunity to supporting students to learn within 21st Century learning environments. The Test Model Environments (TMEs) will allow teachers to work in a realistic learning environment that will reflect the type of learning spaces that are being built under the Future Schooling in Knowsley (FSK) programme.

The concept of developing the TME (within our Excellence in Cities funded City Learning Centres) is to prepare teachers, students, Support Staff and Adult Education tutors for colonising the new Centres for Learning, before they are built. The TME are a simulation of the “Home Base” approach that is an integral part of the design of our BSF Centres for Learning that Years 7 and 8 will colonise upon migration to the Centres for Learning and will allow teachers time to try out new ways of working in “real time” with hands-on support.

The TME comprises of flexible working spaces and are fully wireless enabled allowing the use of various portable devices. Teachers and students will be able to locate their activity in a place that suit their needs and requirements for the lesson.

The TME will enable teachers to “test drive” the learning spaces before embarking upon full scale habitation of their Centres for Learning by trying out new approaches to learning and testing out the types of furniture, technologies and space layouts.

4.1.5 *Role of Microsoft*

One of our existing schools, Bowring Community Sports College, has been participating within a global network of Microsoft Innovative Schools that are all working towards education innovation within their respective national education systems. The half yearly meeting with colleagues from the network reinforces the vision of education transformation and has supported the Knowsley school in further developing its own practice.

One of the activities to have emerged from this link is the Innovative Teachers programme. Teachers from Bowring have developed their classroom practice to embed the use of new technologies in the learning. Teachers use Microsoft One Note to develop an integrated planning package that links together student material, classroom resources and additional learning.

4.1.6 *Partnering with BSF Contractors: Transform Schools /RM*

Education Advisers from RM have been working closely with teachers and educationalists in Knowsley in developing the Knowsley Personalised Learning Environment (PLE). The PLE will support new ways of working by allowing students access to “anytime, anywhere” learning whilst giving formative feedback on progress that can be viewed by students, teachers and parents.

The Reviewable Design Data (RDD) process, carried out between Knowsley and its BSF providers Transform and RM, has caused all stakeholders to be mindful of the vision for flexible and adaptable learning spaces. Throughout the process there has been frequent discussion about the direction of future learning and the need to maintain the intent of the design to facilitate new ways of working.

Science staff in particular, did have concerns over the innovative design for science working with reduced number of laboratories. Locally procured use of consultants, who are themselves engaged within the DCSF “Faraday Project”, have successfully demonstrated to the Knowsley science community, new ways of working that have supported their future thinking about learning.

Clearly, it was not going to be easy to take teaching and learning from a typical classroom environment into a series of new learning environments and appropriate compromises are being made along the way but the general direction of travel, that classrooms are not the only viable day to day learning space, is intact.

5. HOW THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS IS WORKING

5.1 Knowsley is aware that the shift from negotiated procedure to competitive dialogue is changing the context radically and, from what we hear, for the better. Clearly competition is potentially subject to low priced bids being driven up during the commercial negotiation period. A lengthy negotiation period, such as ours, will inevitably bring increased project team costs which fall to the local authority.

5.2 Procurement costs met by the Council during the procurement process were in excess of £4 million. In addition, Bid Costs included in the bid of the appointed contractor were of a similar level. In addition, the Council is meeting significant further costs during the implementation process with particular emphasis on investment in the development of transformational education.

5.3 A number of issues which arose during our procurement process could be said to be as a direct consequence of being a Wave 1 BSF Authority. These are set out in more detail in an earlier answer to a question above.

5.4 The table below sets out some of the additional key issues which arose during the negotiation process:

Key issues arising during commercial negotiations

- (i) Lack of standard documentation available to the Council as standard documentation related to Local Education Partnership contracts only, thereby resulting in extensive negotiations and derogations due to:
 - (a) Interface issues due to a separate ICT Managed Services contract; and
 - (b) Interface issues arising from the provision of in house Soft Facilities Management services.
- (ii) Managing an Advanced Works Agreement alongside commercial negotiations resulted in capacity problems for the Council.
- (iii) The introduction of an Advanced Works Agreement reduced the extent that the Council was able to influence design development pre construction start and pre Financial Close. This has led to a significant number of design development changes and Specialisms requirements during the construction period. Furthermore, there were significant legal discussions around which party had responsibility for CDM for during the Advanced Works period as specific guidance did not appear to exist.

5.5 Despite the above and extensive other negotiations and the impact of scope changes referred to earlier, the Council ensured that its vision to develop transformational facilities and education was sustained.

6. PROGRESS ON REDUCING SCHOOLS' CARBON EMISSIONS AND ON ACHIEVING ZERO CARBON NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS

6.1 Building Schools for the Future Standard Form sets out acceptable requirements for Contractors in this regard and the Council's Technical Advisor at design stage was required to ensure robustness in terms of the Output Specifications for the implementation, construction and operational phases to reduce carbon emissions of the new construction and their operations once complete.

6.2 Additionally the Payment Mechanism employed for the contract has a built in performance regime in terms of efficiency targets and the Council has its own internal policies covering its own obligations providing the Soft Facilities Management and Catering, which again are aimed at reducing the carbon emissions of the Centres.

6.3 All the Centres for Learning are new buildings and will therefore reach the maximum cost effective energy efficiency in order to comply with Building Regulations (as opposed to refurbishments) which aim to reduce carbon emissions but are not standards for achieving zero carbon emissions.

7. HOW PERSONALISATION AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES ARE GUIDING THE DESIGN OF NEW SCHOOLS; AND

7.1 In a complex interdependent world, there are arguably important implications for curriculum design and practice in preparing for the 21st Century. For teachers and schools, there are important choices to be made about whether to broaden imaginative horizons and to infuse a global perspective by learning from other cultures. Knowsley has listened and this has impacted on the design of our centres for learning and the pedagogical approach that has been taken.

7.2 This area has explored in some depth in Knowsley. Our education blueprint carried out in 2005 looked ahead to future pedagogies and concluded that it would be highly unlikely that learning would continue indefinitely to be delivered in traditional classrooms of 30 children. Our research pointed toward the need for space to become more flexible and be able to accommodate learning that was 1 to 1, in project groups, in standard classes, in specialist areas, in lecture groups etc. Alongside this we perceived the need to formalise the use of technology and have worked with RM to develop Personalised Learning Environments delivered through a ration of 1:1 portable devices.

7.3 This debate emerged directly out of our conclusions around de-schooling. In this sense it is clear that we wished to establish authentic 21st Learning Environments rather than cleaner and shinier versions of a 19th Century fordist construct. We fear too many schools have yet to make the break away from the institutional model.

7.4 The outcome of this was that we looked to procure buildings that would respond to the challenge. This is not easy as you have to accommodate both the present and also the future and they do not always look the same. The result of this is a series of compromises with existing practioners that will enable us to move toward new practice while acknowledging that the shift from ubiquitous classrooms to more democratised space and flexible approaches will take time.

7.5 To support this shift we have developed two projects. One of our schools is a designated Microsoft Global School of the Future Pathfinder. Under this students have been working with teachers in ways which informed our education vision. Early evaluation is emerging and the results are extremely encouraging. To the surprise of some, pupils have taken to group work, independent learning and a greater degree of trust in a highly encouraging way. In addition, we have developed 'Test Model Environments' in existing City Learning Centres which mimic the environments that will be established under BSF enabling existing pupils and staff to trial new ways of working. Again, the results are encouraging.

8. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROCUREMENT AND DESIGN OF ICT FOR SCHOOLS

8.1 Our ICT development plan is closely aligned to our BSF programme looking at our current infrastructure, hardware and software and enabling where we need to be which incorporates curriculum models, CPD, test model environments, the e-government strategy, personalised learning, family, community and partnership engagement.

- ICT Development grants are now aligned to enable more flexibility eg Harnessing Technologies providing opportunities for strategic development aligned to the overall vision.
- Developments for the Child Index, ContactPoint, eCaf provide an opportunity to align "information" systems with the developments across Children's Services.
- A number of financial frameworks have been established nationally to support competitive pricing models
- Development of "mobile" learning is now well established through Computers for Pupils and Home Access programmes.

8.2 This emphasis on mobile learning has been expedited through the Computers for Pupils (CfP) in Knowsley providing a test modelling opportunity for the Future Schooling in Knowsley programme and is part of a wider strategy to draw back into the new strategic role outlined by Government and to work closely with private sector partners to look at the wider delivery of public services around personalisation and people focused delivery for residents, whilst seriously considering the role of technology in promoting change and the development of modern skills linked to employability.

8.3 The connectivity solution provided for Computers for Pupils is T-Mobile 3G and although flexible, providing anytime anywhere learning, it incurs a significant annual revenue cost, preventing sustainability and longer term rollout of provision. Knowsley is therefore proposing to test model a sustainable wireless solution to further extend home access provision for Children, Young People and their Families utilising the Access to Technology at Home funding.

9. HOW THE NEED TO CATER FOR THE 14-19 DIPLOMAS AND THE JOINT WORKING THAT WILL INVOLVE, AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE PARTICIPATION AGE FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO 18, IS BEING ADDRESSED IN BSF PROPOSALS; AND

9.1 This perhaps illustrates the problem of how rapidly changing policy environments impact on investment. BSF Wave 1 was perhaps "policy light" in many respects and those participating local authorities were required to fill the gap. Consequently much has depended on whether the anticipatory abilities of the Local Authority concerned are acute. In Knowsley we were unable to forecast with absolute certainty so adopted a policy of maximum flexibility. This presents problems for Government officials who are accustomed to hard and fast regulations, particularly in areas such as BB98.

9.2 In respect of diplomas, staff preparing for the introduction of the Diploma in Creative and Media and ICT, have been using the Test Model Environments to develop their approaches to pedagogy. Some of the delivery sessions from September 2008 have been timetabled within the TMEs so that flexible spaces can

be utilised in advance of colonisation of the new Centres for Learning. Knowsley is fortunate in that its long established 14–19 Collegiate allows significant numbers of students to undertake vocational study at Knowsley College and this long standing arrangement has long been a factor of our BSF approach. Our approach to Diplomas is central to the work of the 14–19 Collegiate and we expect them to be central to our future planning. At the same time we hope that our flexible approach to design in BSF allows us to respond flexibly to this and other emerging policies but further investigation and testing will be required.

9.3 The picture in respect of post 16 is complex. As part of the “system” reform within Knowsley, Post 16 organisation is also undertaking a radical review. In response to the history of underperformance Post 16 in Knowsley our 14–19 Executive responded with a review to identify options for a systemic reform of 16–19 provision.

9.4 The Review recommended two strategic provision options proposing radical changes to the current arrangements to bring about a step improvement in Level 3 participation and attainment. The options take account of the intended transformation in the borough’s secondary education provision as set out in the Local Authority’s Building Schools for the Future programme.

9.5 Strategic options are:

- (i) establish a New Sixth Form College for Knowsley learners; or
- (ii) establish Roby Sixth Form College as *the* first choice Sixth Form College for Knowsley learners;

The two proposals are to be consulted upon during October/November 2008.

9.6 The Executive has agreed that although there should be one institution delivering post-16, there should be delivery taking place in the North, South and Centre of the Borough to maintain the presence of post-16 provision in all areas of the authority. This will enhance the links between the new Centres for Learning and post-16 provision.

9.7 Discussions have taken place between the College and the two existing sixth forms with the resulting proposal that there will be a North Campus (Kirkby Catholic Centre for Learning), a Central Campus and a South Campus (Halewood Centre for Learning) delivering academic level 3 provision. The North and South Campuses will be 11–16 schools in terms of Ofsted and performance tables but will continue to have “on site” post-16 provision of broadly similar numbers to current provision.

9.8 Each Campus will have specialist curriculum areas and will take the lead in developing those specialisms, wherever they are delivered within the borough.

9.9 The Campuses together will offer a very wide ranging curriculum including A levels, the new Diplomas and National Diplomas. If the demand for a particular provision grows within a geographical area, the provision will, wherever possible, be delivered in that locality.

9.10 The provision will be managed by the College and delivered by Centre for Learning and College staff.

10. THE GOVERNMENT’S ANNOUNCEMENT IN APRIL ABOUT THE “ACCELERATION” AND “STREAMLINING” OF BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT AS A WHOLE

10.1 The consultation on Waves 7–15 conspicuously avoids debate on the impact of proposed changes on the ethos and delivery of the wider programme instead focusing on the mechanics of procurement. While this is undoubtedly necessary it might have also taken the opportunity to review the extent to which the programme was delivering wider educational, social and economic objectives.

10.2 Proposals to enable Local Authorities to work more closely together are certainly welcome but this should not be limited to procurement. Clearly local authorities and their schools in similar contexts would have as much to gain from working together on educational objectives.

10.3 Under the consultation it appears that the term “Academy” is now taken as shorthand for education transformation. As we argue elsewhere in this response, this is perhaps a limited view.

10.4 We welcome the decision to explore in greater detail the potential to co-locate services for children, young people and families. We have endeavoured to do this in Knowsley but against technical limitations which presumed that a school was the limit of our ambitions. Given the fact that the Children’s Act was on the statute book in 2004 and in 2008 we are looking at the practical implications of this on a major programme of capital investment demonstrates a basic failure to join up policy at a national level.

10.5 The intention to broaden and streamline Waves 7–15 should avoid the past mistakes of failing to link transformation with building and specific processes should be put in place that ensure that “new old schools are avoided”.

10.6 The continued failure to establish a cross sector national group of all the major interests to oversee BSF remains a fundamental omission. Without such a representative voice to guide the work of PFS, DCSF, Local authorities, schools and contractors an overall lack of coherence persists. While the performance of PFS has clearly improved enormously we still feel that a national forum would bring many benefits.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by Learning Through Landscapes (LTL)

1. SUMMARY

- (i) LTL has demonstrated that school grounds can contribute to the transformation of young people's experience of education that BSF seeks to achieve.
- (ii) There is a lack of new build schools that demonstrate good practice in school grounds.
- (iii) Nine out of the 10 authorities visited in an LTL survey did not include grounds in their educational vision or seek to ensure their BSF investment delivered outdoor spaces that would inspire learning.
- (iv) Most surveyed authorities had considered the importance of their grounds for sport and social spaces, but only 10% had considered their grounds to be potential learning environments.
- (v) The design assessment approach does not tackle the inadequacies of new school designs in relation to learning, social activity and play in the school grounds.
- (vi) Local authorities felt that PfS guidance and processes do not make explicit reference to external spaces unless it is in relation to sport and PE. They thus felt that investment in outdoor spaces was not a priority.
- (vii) Generally neither schools nor local authorities were proactively engaging with transformative educational opportunities in the grounds (63% of the school estate), both were waiting for the subject to be raised elsewhere and nothing was moved forward.
- (viii) Landscape architects are not brought into the procurement process in time for them to ensure that the new schools can make a real asset of their grounds. In addition there was little knowledge of the specialist support and expertise of schools grounds organisations such as Learning through Landscapes.

2. BACKGROUND TO LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES

Learning through Landscapes helps schools and early years settings make the most of their outdoor spaces for play and learning.

What we do

We believe all children have the right to enjoy and benefit from well designed, managed and used school grounds. LTL undertakes research, gives advice, encourages action and supports all those who care about making the most of these vital spaces.

Where possible we encourage young people to have a say in the way their grounds are used and improved. As a result they learn to create and look after something valuable; their self-esteem grows and their behaviour improves, along with their potential to learn and achieve.

We work with and through central and local government, with other charities and businesses, and run a number of programmes for school communities and early years settings throughout the UK.

Why do we do it

Young people who do not have access to decent school grounds get a poor start in life. Many children have few opportunities to learn and play outdoors. Good school grounds encourage healthy exercise, creative play, making friends, learning through doing and getting in touch with the natural world. Without the work of LTL, many children could miss out on a chance to be healthy and happy in their formative years and to gather the experiences they need to be healthy and successful adults.

Our surveys of schools who have improved their grounds demonstrate the benefits:

- 65% reported an improved attitude to learning;
- 73% said behaviour had improved;
- 64% reported reduced bullying;
- 84% reported improved social interaction; and
- 85% said that healthy active play had increased.

School grounds can play a significant role in the delivery of *Every Child Matters*. ECM sets out five outcomes for the delivery of services to children: be healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well being. LTL has demonstrated that school grounds provide safe stimulating environments where children and young people can learn, explore, play and grow. They can help to raise achievements and self esteem, improve behaviour and health, and help children and young people to develop a wide range of skills.

Who do we do it for and with

Our ultimate beneficiaries are young people, though we usually work through and with those adults involved in using and developing school grounds.

3. LTL'S INVOLVEMENT IN BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

Since being established in 1990, LTL has worked directly with over 10,000 schools, raised over £20 million for grounds improvement, contributed substantially to school grounds research and to new legislation and good practice. During this time we have developed tools and techniques that support sustainable, participative and holistic design and use.

Based on this experience LTL has developed a considerable track record in supporting the integration of school grounds into the design and development of new schools through BSF and similar programmes:

- (i) LTL contributed the specific DQI's for Schools that set out the role of school grounds in serving the full curriculum needs of pupils. These are instrumental in setting design standards as required by DCSF and PfS. CABE design criteria also require new designs to make "an asset of the outdoor spaces".
- (ii) LTL was commissioned by the DfES to write the Exemplar Design Guide for School Grounds as part of the Building Schools for the Future suite of publications. This was launched in October 2006 and has generated a great deal of interest from local authorities.
- (iii) LTL is a member of the Schools Design Advisory Council and the Primary Capital Programme Advisory Group. These aim to help shape school design, for the capital investment programmes that have a direct impact on the learning and development of children and young people. As a team member of the Faraday Project, LTL worked with designers, educationalists and schools to develop innovative approaches to science learning in the outdoor classroom.
- (iv) LTL is a contributor to the NCSL training for school leaders taking part in the BSF process.

In 2007–08 LTL was commissioned by the DCSF and CABE to carry out an investigation into the role of school grounds within the capital programme. The work was in several parts:

- (i) a search for examples of good practice in new build schools;
- (ii) a survey of the position of school grounds within the strategies and implementation plans of a sample of BSF authorities (Wave 1–Wave 5);
- (iii) observation of the Schools Design Assessment Panel; and
- (iv) analysis of the guidance document issued to authorities by Partnership for Schools.

The findings of this survey suggest that the "education transformation process" made possible by Building Schools for the Future is often neglecting or overriding the opportunities to develop the school grounds:

- (i) there is a lack of new build schools that demonstrate good practice;
- (ii) nine out of the 10 authorities surveyed did not include grounds in their educational vision or seek to ensure their BSF investment delivered outdoor spaces that would inspire learning and development;
- (iii) the design assessment approach did not tackle the inadequacies of new school designs in relation to learning, social activity and play in the school grounds; and
- (iv) the PfS guidance and processes were not seen to make explicit reference to external spaces.

A summary of these findings and draft recommendations are included at Annex 1.

This submission draws on LTL's track record and findings in our recent survey in response to the issues raised by the Committee.

4. HOW THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE IN THE EARLY WAVES IS BEING DISSEMINATED

- (a) Our survey identified that nine out of the 10 authorities surveyed did not include grounds in their educational vision or seek to ensure their BSF investment delivered outdoor spaces that would inspire learning and development.
- (b) Our survey looked at BSF authorities in Waves 1 to 5, but authorities in the later waves were unaware of the problems around the grounds that were emerging from the wave one projects.
- (c) There is a lack of new build schools that demonstrate good practice.

5. HOW THE VISIONING PROCESS IS BEING DEVELOPED

- (a) Initial findings from the survey show that in relation to grounds the issues considered during the visioning stage were site security and sport. Car parking was also mentioned as a concern. Nine out of ten authorities didn't consider learning outdoors at the visioning stage, experience suggests that if this is not built in from the very outset it will be neglected at later stages.
- (b) Where possible schools should be invited to develop their strategic vision as early as possible so as to ensure their evolving vision influences, and is influenced by, the wider authority's vision. This will secure clarity about what BSF can and will achieve for their school, but will need resources and support.

6. HOW THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS IS WORKING

- (a) Landscape architects have a valuable role in ensuring that the whole site, grounds as well as buildings, make the most of what is available. There should be a commitment to involve Landscape Architects from the start and throughout the process.
- (b) One (out of 10) authorities surveyed had proposed to write a brief defining the expectations of a Landscape Architect. There was no guidance available to them to do this. A clear brief for the Landscape Architect should be a requirement of the procurement process.
- (c) Use of specialist school grounds organisations such as Learning through Landscapes should be integral to the procurement process.

7. HOW PERSONALISATION AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES ARE GUIDING THE DESIGN OF NEW SCHOOLS

- (a) There have been a number of developments in government policy that justify positive investment in school grounds, including the Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom, launched November 2006; the Sustainable Schools Strategy, and Action Plan for the DfES launched March 2007, Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives, launched January 2008; the Draft Play Strategy currently under consultation, and numerous developments in the curriculum including the Personalisation Agenda, Secondary Curriculum Review, 14–19 Education and Skills Programme and the forthcoming diplomas.
- (b) The whole school site, buildings and grounds are important vehicles to ensure these policy developments contribute to the educational, health and social development of children. For example, the Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom states that school grounds are, “rich multi-faceted learning resources on the doorstep. They offer excellent opportunities for both formal and informal learning and play.” It has been estimated that over 80% of learning outside the classroom takes place in the school grounds. Within the Sustainable Schools Framework, grounds can support all eight gateways—food and energy, as well as health and transport—as a vehicle for delivering the curriculum, supporting a sustainable campus and as a bridge to the local community. The obesity strategy focuses on actions to help schools foster healthy lifestyles at school including food, sport and healthy activity, and grounds play a key role ranging from the promotion of food growing to the provision of outdoor play and social space. The Fair Play consultation on the Play Strategy emphasises the importance outdoor play in schools for all age groups.
- (c) Despite these drivers, LTL's findings were:
 - (i) Learning outside the classroom—over 80% of learning outside the classroom takes place in the school grounds, yet nine out of 10 authorities surveyed had no plans to integrate this into their vision or implementation of BSF. This is a wasted opportunity, especially as school grounds are on the doorstep and LOTC can take place every day. Learning outside the classroom was not mentioned by any surveyed schools;
 - (ii) sustainable schools—schools and authorities surveyed had a very limited understanding of the breadth of opportunities that grounds can support within the sustainable schools framework. There was no evidence it is being integrated into BSF. Sustainable Schools was only mentioned by one school in our research cohort;
 - (iii) 14–19 agenda and diploma. A couple of the BSF Authorities in the survey demonstrated some awareness that this could be delivered in school grounds. However the Wave 1 authorities had not included plans for implementation even where their building programmes were very advanced;
 - (iv) safe routes to schools / green travel plans—the project found some evidence that these are being integrated eg bike racks, funding to improve road safety in the immediate environment of the school.

- (d) BSF aims to transform young people's experience of education; maximising the value of the school grounds is a key element of this transformation. Young people are intensely curious and should be given the opportunity to engage with the world around them, learning and activity in the school grounds are ideal vehicles for this more experiential approach.
- (e) Local authorities identified significant barriers (real or perceived) to considering the external landscape:
 - (i) lack of positive vision about what exterior spaces can achieve;
 - (ii) not required by the Strategy for Change and PfS guidelines;
 - (iii) affordability and competing priorities;
 - (iv) the speed of the process doesn't allow time for non priority issues (ie landscape);
 - (v) landscape would not be respected by secondary students;
 - (vi) there are no obvious curriculum requirements;
 - (vii) teachers do not understand what is possible from both buildings and grounds; and
 - (viii) the landscape would not be valued by the school as a whole, with consequences for maintenance.
- (f) Underlying these barriers is a message that investing in the school grounds for learning is not a priority. LTL understands this is not the intention behind BSF, and proposes that the DCSF makes explicit statements about the value of investment in school grounds to ensure future waves are encouraged to take a positive approach.

8. ICT

- (a) In discussions with BSF authorities in the survey one or two in the later waves mentioned a role for ICT beyond the building itself. However this was in general terms and there was no evidence that key issues such as access to power supplies outdoors, visibility of screens, security of children when using the equipment, are being considered.

9. ACCELERATION OF PROCESS

- (a) The speed of the process was frequently raised as an obstacle to positive investment in school grounds. If the process is accelerated it must not be used as an excuse to spend even less time on integrating the grounds into educational transformation
- (b) The current process already raises issues for schools who would wish to involve their wider communities, this takes time and shouldn't be compromised by an acceleration of the process.

Annex 1

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE BSF SURVEY

LTL was commissioned by DCSF to work with CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment), on the role of school grounds in the Building Schools for the Future investment programme.

The work was in four parts:

- Developing 10 exemplar case studies of secondary schools (in England, Scotland or Europe) that demonstrate a “whole campus approach” ie not concentrating on buildings and treating the grounds as a backdrop, but approaching the whole site to create accessible and useful learning environments across the whole campus—indoors and outdoors. LTL developed a set of criteria against which case studies could be assessed, and launched a nationwide search to ensure we located the best potential examples of good practice.
- Interviewing 10 local authorities that are going through the Building Schools for the Future process. The aim of the “diagnostic” interviews was to establish the level of focus on the outside spaces at each stage of the BSF process, from visioning and strategic planning, through to selecting the contractor to build the new schools.
- Analysing the documentation and processes that Local Authorities and Schools follow when implementing BSF. This included looking at the guidance and requirements and making recommendations about how expectations could be raised and the external environment could be made more of an explicit priority.
- Observing CABE's new Schools Design Assessment Panel. This expert group was set up by CABE in June 2007 to raise the standard of design within BSF. The panel reviews bidders' proposals for local authorities' sample schools during the competitive stage of BSF, to assess design quality and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each scheme. The assessment reports that CABE then issues help local authorities evaluate design quality, and ultimately inform decisions by the local authority planning committee.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Case Studies

- LTL sought nominations of good practice in new build secondary schools from across the UK and northern Europe, very few (14) were put forward;
- the criteria for selection were comprehensive, however, *no single school was able to demonstrate an all round example of good practice*;
- the lack of an all round exemplar may have been a factor of new build schools where the community has not had a chance to properly inhabit and develop their grounds;
- we found interesting examples of “play” for teenagers, particularly at the Danish schools visited, but also at one non-maintained London school;
- the nearest to good practice was the Everest Community College near Basingstoke, though the school had not started to make use of their outside spaces for learning.

Diagnostic interviews

- We found a lack of positive vision and negligible aspirations for the contribution of grounds to the transformation of education that BSF aims to achieve.
- Most had considered the importance of their grounds for sports and social spaces, but only one authority (out of a possible 10) had considered their grounds to be potential learning environments.
- All said the interviews introduced them to ideas about the role of school grounds that had not previously been part of their consideration, and expressed an interest in taking things further in the future.
- One out of the 10 authorities was beginning to think about performance indicators and a brief for landscape architects.
- All authorities highlighted the lack of specific requirements in the BSF documentation and processes. On the whole neither local authorities nor schools were proactively engaging with transformative educational opportunities in the grounds (63% of the school estate). As a result, both were waiting for the subject to be raised elsewhere, and nothing was moved forward.

Barriers to considering the external landscape were cited as:

- lack of positive vision about what exterior spaces can achieve;
- not required by the Strategy for Change and PfS guidelines;
- affordability and competing priorities;
- the speed of the process doesn’t allow time for non priority issues (ie landscape);
- landscape would not be respected by secondary students;
- there is no obvious curriculum requirements;
- teachers do not understand what is possible from both buildings and grounds; and
- the landscape would be not valued by the school as a whole, with consequences for maintenance.

BSF Documentation and processes

- Grounds and landscape were implicit within the documentation required of local authorities and schools, but the language of the documentation referred to buildings and failed to mention grounds.
- KPI’s related largely to buildings, there was an absence of KPI’s that could be delivered by good outside spaces (eg health/exercise/obesity, community engagement, extended schools).
- Partnership for Schools (PfS, the agency responsible for the delivery of BSF) has expressed a willingness to work with LTL on making external spaces more explicit in the documentation, and for LTL to train their regional education teams.

Schools Design Assessment Panel

- All panel members are architects, there has been a proposal to recruit landscape architects to the panel, but this has not yet taken place.
- Panel members expressed understanding of the importance of outside spaces, but didn’t demonstrate that this “understanding” influenced the ranking they gave the sample schemes being reviewed—schemes with very poor grounds weren’t given an overall “poor” ranking.

- Panel members had a detailed appreciation of the effectiveness of the building and internal spaces, but didn't express the same level of understanding of the effectiveness of outside spaces.
- The lack of details for the outside spaces made it impossible to judge whether the design made an asset of the grounds.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Only one out the 10 local authorities we visited during the diagnostic pilots consider their grounds to be potential learning environments. This needs to change. Our recommendations below promote both a “top down” and “bottom up” approach.

The recommendations cover the key organisations, DCSF, PFS, CABE & LTL, and our target audiences, namely Head teachers, LA BSF teams and bidders.

To influence: Head teachers and BSF teams:

1. Training for Head Teachers and school leadership teams to:
 - raise aspiration through an informed understanding of what outside spaces offer; and
 - give them some using the outdoors to engaging students.
2. Training CABE Enablers. LTL has contributed to three seminars for Enablers in the past year, and would like to develop some tailor made training.
3. Case studies will be available on the CABE website.
4. Exemplar demonstration projects for “seeing is believing tours” for authorities and schools.
5. CABE Space/LTL enabling as part of BSF, including presentation developed by CABE and LTL.
6. Training for CDA's and Design Champions.
7. Publication 10 key design features for excellent school grounds/10 key points for Learning led Design.
8. Develop the Everest school case study—documenting how the school currently uses its grounds, cpd training with staff and monitoring outcomes.
9. SFC 2 section on change management CPD for teachers to include both internal and external accommodation.
10. The whole campus approach should be embedded into new teacher training and cpd.

To influence: LA BSF teams:

11. All standard documentation should refer to the whole school estate not just the buildings—resources should be applied intelligently to the whole school not just a part of it.
12. It should be clear how schools can be involved in the ongoing maintenance of the grounds and give the external works long term flexibility through the PFI/FM contract with the preferred bidder.
13. The funding model put forward in the OBC appendices should be examined to determine the extent of funding actually available to create school grounds outlined in BB98.
14. BB98 should be revised to embrace the whole site and not just the buildings—links between the external and internal should be encouraged.
15. Facilitation for BSF Teams and school leadership teams to encourage them to work together on pedagogy and design and become “one client”.
16. Budgets to be reserved for post occupancy development and maintenance.

To influence: Consortia:

17. KPIs, Output Specs and BB98 to reflect the opportunities for learning throughout the school estate.
18. School Design Panel criteria refined to define what makes good grounds.
19. School Design Panel to include a landscape architect and educational adviser.
20. Requirement that Landscape Architects are part of the team throughout.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by Microsoft

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This submission has been prepared by Microsoft UK in response to the press notice issued by the CSF Committee on 22 May 2008 regarding the follow-up inquiry into Sustainable Schools and Building Schools for the Future.

1.2 Microsoft have been involved in the BSF programme since its inception. Our evidence draws on our experience on both the client and supply side and with Partnerships for Schools (Pfs) and other agencies and organisations involved in the programme.

1.3 We are very supportive of the work Pfs do and enjoy the open and frank relationship that organisation have with us and other companies, competitors and partners alike. That can only be good for the market and ultimate success of the programme.

1.4 We are clear from our engagements with Pfs and the DCSF that they want to see a return on the investment, that over time, will transform practice and outcomes in our education system.

1.5 Our involvement with the education transformation agenda predates BSF and extends globally. Before BSF we worked closely with some authorities who felt the current model of education was under pressure and wanted to discuss the opportunities ICT offered to create a step change.

1.6 Microsoft has been involved in the education marketplace in the UK for over 15 years. We develop technology, tools, programmes and solutions to help address education challenges while improving teaching and learning opportunities. Microsoft has a partner business model which means our extensive ecosystem of IT partners deliver technology solutions adding value to our software.

1.7 To deliver against our Public Sector business mission to “make the UK a better place to work, learn and do business” the Microsoft Education Group works closely with local authorities, educators, educational organisations and industry partners.

1.8 Our evidence focuses, in the main, on the ICT related aspects of the programme but draws on a strong view that ICT holds a significant potential to help stakeholders re-think the nature of a learning experience and the role and purpose of schools as we look forward to a globalised and knowledge based economy. It is often said that education policy is key to a nation’s economic policy. We agree and see this attitude around the world.

1.9 ICT therefore, either directly or indirectly, impacts on all aspects of educational reform including the experience of young people, curriculum and pedagogy, role of the teacher, appropriate configuration and use of space, the culture and organisation of institutions, professional development, ICT seen as an investment not a cost, financial modelling, the wider community—in short the transformation of the education model. This applies at national, area and institution level.

1.10 Fresh attitudes to “partnering” are key and we also draw on the deep relationships we enjoy with a number of innovative local authorities and schools who are already doing things differently and facing up to the challenges systemic transformation brings.

1.11 Microsoft are actively involved in all aspects of the BSF market place on both client and supply sides. We have supported bidding consortia, working closely with the construction industry, ICT primes and a range of consultants. In two instances we have sat as a “critical friend” on the client side team.

1.12 We have also made investments in Showcases and tools to help stakeholders be better informed as they develop their visions and plan for significant programmes of change for learning in connected communities of the future. Our investments have been made in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders including young people to ensure their relevance and applicability.

1.13 The students in our schools deserve the very best that ICT has to offer their learning experience. After all it is the “air they breathe” outside of a place called a school and we have heard young people say consistently “we power down when we go to school”.

1.14 Currently BSF, for reasons I will outline in our evidence, is delivering “just good enough” solutions and not those that will help educators drive a significant change in practice in line with the changing expectations young people have for how they prefer to learn.

1.15 Strong vision and determined leadership is vital. Too few local authorities see BSF as catalyst for much wider reform across their communities. When you begin to re-think the role and purpose of schools in increasingly connected communities BSF has to be set in the context of the outcomes our regions will need to prosper in a global and knowledge based economy.

1.16 Making the transformational goals of BSF a reality is key.

We are encouraged by the consistent views laid out in the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit report *Realising Britain’s Potential: Future Strategic Challenges for Britain* (February 2008), “the defining social challenges of the 21st century—climate change, an ageing population and globalisation—will not be solved by ‘off-the-shelf’ answers. Meeting them will depend increasingly on innovative solutions that raise standards, meet new objectives and improve efficiency . . .”

1.17 . . . and further in *Innovation Nation* from the DIUS where it states, “We must innovate in our public services too. Innovation is as important to the delivery of healthcare and education as it is to industries such as manufacturing, retail and the creative economy . . . We need to ensure that Britain contributes to the innovative solutions and that British business and the British people benefit from the new opportunities and prosperity they create”.

1.18 Turning to the thrust of our evidence it is clear the easy way forward is to build better versions of what we had before. Those involved consistently say that won’t do. While progress has been made, much still remains to be done to ensure BSF is a transformation programme and I will present in our evidence that:

- A fresh attitude to public/private sector partnerships is needed for success.
- We feel there is still too much focus on buildings. BSF should be seen as a change programme that will utilise both buildings and ICT to achieve transformational outcomes.
- The focus has been on compliance, not innovation. The “process” and commercial arrangements make it difficult for those seeking “transformation”.
- We feel that ICT is under-represented in relation to its potential to deliver transformation. Some authorities have found suppliers are bidding low and they have to spend time driving proposals up towards their vision.
- We have concerns about capacity and capability in the market. In particular it is important that local authority and school stakeholders become better informed about future directions and possibilities. We are conscious of the cry, “I don’t know what I don’t know”.
- Funding is presented in terms of buildings and ICT with a notional 90:10 split? These proportions are largely based on a traditional, and arguably increasingly outdated, model of education. If transformation is key, there needs to be enough flexibility to allow for a shift in the funding proportions, if it will provide a better outcome.

2. THE INQUIRY

2.1 The Committee aims to examine progress in a number of areas, namely:

- 2.1.1 the rate of progress that is being made in bringing projects to the construction stage;
- 2.1.2 how the experience of those in the early waves is being disseminated;
- 2.1.3 how the visioning process is being developed;
- 2.1.4 how the procurement process is working;
- 2.1.5 Progress on reducing schools’ carbon emissions and on achieving zero carbon new school buildings;
- 2.1.6 how personalisation and other educational strategies are guiding the design of new schools; and
- 2.1.7 developments in the procurement and design of ICT for schools.

2.2 The Committee is also inviting comments on other issues, in particular:

- 2.2.1 how the need to cater for the 14–19 Diplomas and the joint working that will involve, and for the Government’s proposal to raise the participation age for education and training to 18, is being addressed in BSF proposals; and
- 2.2.2 the Government’s announcement in April about the “acceleration” and “streamlining” of Building Schools for the Future and its implications for the delivery of the project as a whole.

2.3 We will address each of these areas in turn.

3. THE RATE OF PROGRESS THAT IS BEING MADE IN BRINGING PROJECTS TO THE CONSTRUCTION STAGE

3.1 Progress has undoubtedly been made in bringing projects through the process to construction and the recent procurement review by PFS streamlines the process still further. However, we feel this has not helped to raise the profile, and innovative quality, of ICT in the programme.

3.2 The review has reduced bid costs through a more streamlined engagement. This is to be welcomed and is good in terms of getting through the process to construction. However, engagement time is particularly valuable if an authority finds suppliers are bidding low and they need to spend time driving the quality of bids up towards their vision and requirements.

4. HOW THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE IN THE EARLY WAVES IS BEING DISSEMINATED

4.1 It is important that experience is shared and there are many different areas of learning from a BSF project. There are also several audiences and it is important they have access to the learning and experience that is most relevant to them.

4.2 We have expressed a view that ICT is under-represented in relation to its potential to enable many aspects of the transformation agenda. In relation to the scale of the investment and the nature of the opportunity being presented we do not believe.

4.3 In relation to ICT, and its wider potential, we have heard authorities comment on the variable quality of advice they have received or had access to. Technology is a fast moving area but we believe the quality of advice is variable.

4.4 The later waves will have the advantage of some time to prepare, and ensure they are able to look over the horizon, but the main lesson is “start early and now”—even if you are in wave 15!

4.5 We will continue to play a role in contributing to opportunities for sharing of practice through briefings we organise for local authority stakeholders and the occasions when we bring authorities together either at our headquarters in the UK or in Seattle.

4.6 We often get asked to host visits to the few places that, in our experience, have something to offer as exemplars of what educational transformation can be about.

5. HOW THE VISIONING PROCESS IS BEING DEVELOPED

5.1 Vision is arguably the most important aspect of a change programme and should guide activity at every stage. It is also important that all stakeholders are involved to avoid a danger of “it being done to us”.

5.2 A clear vision is critical and central to the entire programme—from initial discussions with stakeholders, to the successful operation of the new schools. Wide engagement is important as we are seeing some teachers not fully engaged with the need for transformation with regards BSF. We do not think that is because they don’t want to but more because they have not had the right opportunities.

5.3 We recognise the challenge to authorities and schools in a world where many believe that:

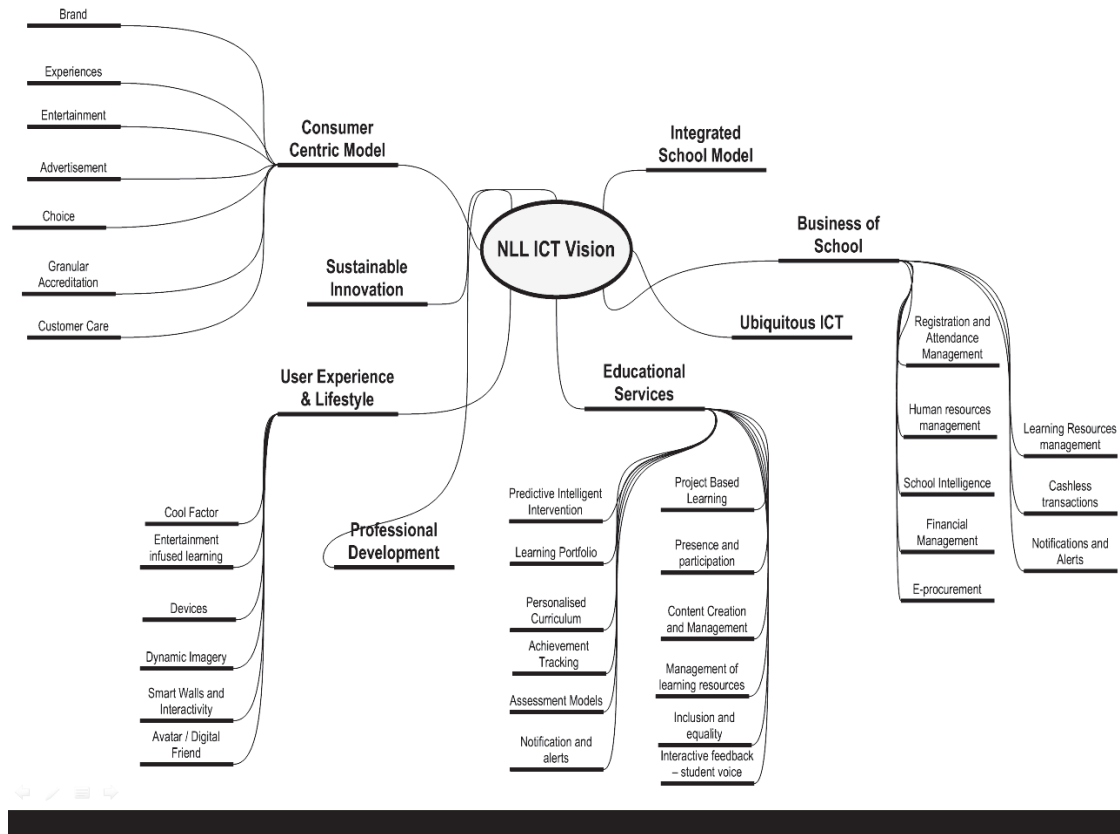
- Within 10 years the nature of schools and learning will be fundamentally different from today.
- Young people’s digital lifestyles challenge the relevance of current education delivery. We must imagine the unimaginable to dream the impossible and think the unthinkable.
- We don’t know all the answers but we know enough to start the journey.
- ICT, as an integral tool, will be a key enabler.
- BSF is a once in a lifetime opportunity to move in a new direction NOT reinforce the past.

5.4 Authorities will get what they procure. Visions show bidders the direction and aspirations of an authority. Visions also need to be reflected in the requirements placed in front of the market. It is imperative the right people are involved in the process, along with the right advice and stimulus to procure the best possible outcome.

5.5 Too often this is not the case. A lack of capacity, largely in terms of time, and capability in terms of the quality of advice are limiting factors in this regard.

5.6 In our view ICT is often seen as separate and a task to be completed and not linked to the other elements of a school of the future. It is not seen or expressed as a “key enabler”.

5.7 I would like to bring to your attention the case of New Line Learning in South Maidstone where we have been involved in developing their vision in the way I described. New Line Learning is a federation of two Academies. ICT vision is at the heart of their overall vision for education and learning. ICT will enable many aspects of the Academies, their operation and how they want young people to learn.



5.8 The nature and extent of the vision is important. BSF is intended to be a catalyst to transform secondary education and further improve education outcomes across the country.

5.9 Sandwell and Knowsley are examples of authorities who see BSF within a wider context of community renewal and regeneration. In Sandwell we have been involved in visioning sessions for their headteachers and then with a much wider group of school stakeholders.

5.10 We have now begun work with the authority to shape that wider vision as expressed in the slide below. Working with a wide group of stakeholders from those organisations represented in the slide, and focusing initially on education and health, we are developing a proof of concept to show what a joined up view can mean for the experience of a young citizen.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



5.11 We are aware of the challenge visioning represents and will continue with our efforts to contribute in terms of exemplars, resources and tools that can help stakeholders be more aware of the possibilities to arrive and more informed views of where they are headed.

6. HOW THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS IS WORKING

6.1 We have been close to a number of procurements and particularly so, where, in the case of Knowsley and Sandwell we have sat as a ‘critical friend’ on the client side.

6.2 From this experience we recognise this is a very demanding process. Without strong leadership and clear vision there is a danger of the goals being lost through all the different workstreams.

6.3 We believe the revised ICT output specification will bring an improvement by encouraging authorities and their stakeholders to be more demanding and set their requirements in terms of their intended outcomes.

6.4 It will be important that the payment mechanism and other commercial arrangements are revised accordingly. We have seen authorities trying hard to drive a transformation agenda but running up against what they see as largely inflexible and outdated payment mechanism documents which assume, for example, the traditional ICT suite model with workstations and requests for the number of student and staff workstations per classroom. For those developing a transformational approach these assumptions are largely outmoded.

6.5 We have heard a frustration where the consequence of transformation and planning to “change the way things are done” means that a local authority wants to see money spent in different ways. We are seeing situations where, to achieve their desired outcomes, authorities may want to spend less on the physical environment and more on the virtual environment. At the moment this is problematic and links to arguments presented in section 8.

6.6 We have seen a healthy focus on the importance of change management which was not present at the start of BSF. This is encouraging but we would like to see a further shift towards R&D to stimulate a forward looking attitude. See the reference to test modelling environments in section 8.

6.7 We are encouraged by the consistent views laid out in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report *Realising Britain's Potential: Future Strategic Challenges for Britain* (February 2008), "the defining social challenges of the 21st century—climate change, an ageing population and globalisation—will not be solved by 'off-the-shelf' answers. Meeting them will depend increasingly on innovative solutions that raise standards, meet new objectives and improve efficiency" . . .

6.8 . . . "and further in *Innovation Nation* from the DIUS where it states, "We must innovate in our public services too. Innovation is as important to the delivery of healthcare and education as it is to industries such as manufacturing, retail and the creative economy . . . We need to ensure that Britain contributes to the innovative solutions and that British business and the British people benefit from the new opportunities and prosperity they create".

6.9 We look forward to a closing of the gap between strategy and practice on the ground.

7. PROGRESS ON REDUCING SCHOOLS' CARBON EMISSIONS AND ON ACHIEVING ZERO CARBON NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS

7.1 We think there is a lot more work to be done in this area. This is an area that Microsoft and the IT industry take very seriously. So far IT and technology has gained very little global attention although Gartner estimate that it is broadly responsible for around 2% of the world's CO₂ emissions, the same as the airline industry. The problem is this does not account for the cost in carbon emissions if IT and technology was not present. It also ignores the potential role of technology as an enabler of positive change in reducing the remaining 98% of CO₂ emissions.

7.2 Again it highlights the transformation agenda and whether we really do mean "doing things differently". It may well be that IT can help bring about reductions in other ways. For example the time shifted curriculum being developed at Hugh Christie Technology College in Kent where Key Stage 5 students go to school at different times could mean a reduction in car journeys involved in the school run. It could also mean, as in that case, less physical space needing to be constructed.

7.3 Another example we hear is in relation to the development of the 14–19 agenda and the need for students to learn in other places than their host institution. There can be a significant cost in transportation to move students around. That need, and the cost, might be reduced by the effective use of ICT to create virtual lessons or distance learning methodology.

7.4 This is an important matter and something Microsoft are committed to continue work on.

8. HOW PERSONALISATION AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES ARE GUIDING THE DESIGN OF NEW SCHOOLS

8.1 The rhetoric is there but our experience is that most conversations too easily start and end with the physical elements of building and ICT. Our view is, and this links to comments already made on visioning, that there needs to be a greater focus on the design of the learning experience that a school and an authority want to develop for its young people within its wider community.

8.2 In this way it is more likely the "future schooling" debate will be led by learning and curriculum and then reflected and enabled by the building and design of space and ICT. The examples I offer to substantiate that view are in Knowsley with the design of their new learning centres and in Kent with New Line learning and Hugh Christie Technology College as illustrated below in this section.

8.3 This does beg the question of what "personalised learning" could look like in the future and how can a project based curriculum offer opportunities for young people to learn in ways they prefer and equip them with 21st Century skills?

8.4 If you don't know what is possible how can you design properly? We are aware of these challenges and invested in the development of a BSF Showcase to illustrate the possible experiences of teachers, learners and parents, who are also citizens, in a connected learning community. We attempted to place the learner at the centre of their own learning experience able to determine appropriate pathways for success. This also draws out issues of less prescription, active learner, co-producer, new teacher/learner and learner/learner relationships, different role for institutions, design of space etc.

8.5 We worked with Knowsley, Kent, Sandwell and Sheffield to develop the BSF Showcase as below and available in full from our web site.

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8.6 New Line Learning and Hugh Christie are examples that show how learning and curriculum can be reflected in the design of schools. They provide evidence and practice that significant reform to the existing school model in all the areas I mentioned earlier, are both effective in terms of improving student outcomes and engagement, and efficient in terms of the use of space and teacher skills.

8.7 Both are built to a design and on a footprint that steps away from traditional practice. In the case of Hugh Christie it is a school with 1,250 students but built on a footprint for a 1,000. It is estimated this reduced building costs by around 18%.

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8.8 At New Line Learning the savings are nearer 30%. Their Learning Plaza design has no corridors and is designed to help facilitate their project based curriculum. In both instances there has been significant reform in the curriculum and project based learning is becoming the norm. Furthermore they are developing, with our help, a business intelligence model that allows them to identify risk on students and plan appropriate interventions as a result. This can apply to an individual as well as to groups of students.

8.9 We believe this is significant because by turning data into dynamic information and presenting it in a visual manner it will be possible to drive a significant change in practice. The slide below explains.

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8.10 We are aware members of the CSF Committee have visited New Line Learning and viewed their Learning Plaza. This is significant as well because in that environment they are test modelling to de-risk the investment and also the reform.

8.11 We are seeing other authorities like Knowsley and Lewisham developing test modelling environments for the same reasons.

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9. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROCUREMENT AND DESIGN OF ICT FOR SCHOOLS

9.1 The BSF procurement approach means that, in some cases, schools will get the ICT service that happens to be supplied as part of the building programme. ICT has little weight in the decision making process (circa 20%) despite the increasing recognition, by a maturing client, of the extent to which it can enable transformational outcomes.

9.2 With relatively little emphasis on the provision of innovative ICT, there is little incentive for existing suppliers to invest in developing products and services that demonstrate these characteristics. There is also little incentive for new entrants to the market.

9.3 We are concerned that ICT suppliers, our partners, will tend to propose ICT solutions that are “just-good-enough” and will focus on selecting the right consortium partner.

9.4 We do not believe there has been any significant change since the Committee’s first inquiry and we are unable to improve on the suggestions made, at that time, by the IT Industry group Intellect, namely,

“we would like to see a procurement process that encourages ICT suppliers to take risks and offer genuinely innovative ICT products and services. This means that the choice of ICT supplier needs to be made on the basis of their educational vision, not which consortium they are part of”.

There are a number of ways that this could be achieved:

- (a) The threshold level for ICT could be set much higher, with the aim of ensuring that all ICT suppliers offered innovative services.
- (b) The ICT element could be given a much higher weighting in the decision making process.
- (c) ICT and buildings could be procured separately as part of a multi-stage process.

10. HOW THE NEED TO CATER FOR THE 14–19 DIPLOMAS AND THE JOINT WORKING THAT WILL INVOLVE, AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT’S PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE PARTICIPATION AGE FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO 18, IS BEING ADDRESSED IN BSF PROPOSALS; AND

10.1 From our work with authorities we do see the 14–19 agenda being addressed in BSF proposals. The 14–19 agenda is potentially “disruptive” in the sense it is requiring a range of institutions and providers to collaborate and think differently about educational provision.

10.2 Where we are closely involved, or otherwise involved in discussions with authorities, we see 14–19 being viewed as something of a catalyst in its own right. BSF does provide the opportunity to re-think in a number of ways. An example from one authority is where they recognise that students will not always be in their host institution, and sometimes in a workplace, and are exploring the notion of virtual registration.

10.3 In section 7 we referenced an example relevant to this question. There can be a significant cost in transportation to move students around. That need might be reduced by the effective use of ICT to create virtual lessons and therefore embodied in both the education and ICT visions for BSF.

11. THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT IN APRIL ABOUT THE "ACCELERATION" AND "STREAMLINING" OF BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT AS A WHOLE

11.1 We welcome the announcements made in this area. We support the broader context within which the BSF investment is being made and therefore the acceleration of the programme.

11.2 Drawing on matters raised elsewhere in this evidence we would like to raise the potential for, and indeed, continuing implications for capacity and capability within the market. This is already being tested within the programme to date and as the programme scales further this will need to be addressed.

11.3 There are also some opportunities as the programme moves forward, some of which may help address the issues I have raised.

11.4 There is an opportunity to bring some fresh thinking to the programme and take some different approaches. The context will have changed for the authorities being accelerated. They will have the benefit of the revisions to the process, including the ICT output specification, and also the benefit of learning from earlier projects who now have experience through to operational LEPs.

11.5 We believe there are also significant opportunities for aggregation. While there will be challenges that need to be addressed when multiple authorities come together there remains the potential to gain from the considerable economies of scale and effort.

11.6 The context has also changed in that other capital programmes have come forward. The opportunity exists for a wider view to be taken from the outset and with the benefits of a joined up approach.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Association of Head Teachers is pleased to be able to submit evidence to the Select Committee on the progress of Building Schools for the Future. The Association is well placed to do this in that it serves members across the whole spectrum of education and in all phases. Its membership encompasses nursery, early years, primary, secondary, special and further education and the Association is able to speak with the knowledge and experience that comes from such a wide-ranging membership base.

2. OVERVIEW

The development of the project is proceeding fairly rapidly though not always with due thought and attention being given to learning from the previous waves. Where these have gone well, schools and their communities are pleased with the new, up-to-date surroundings in which education is able to take place. Where projects have faltered for some reason, school leaders have experienced enormous frustration in trying to solve what should be minor issues. Relative costs are also a major concern in this period of tighter school budgets.

3. VISIONING

Members have expressed concerns over the whole visioning process. Some authorities lack the relevant experience and expertise to guide this process effectively. This results in fruitless discussions and frustration for all parties involved. To be told to "imagine a warehouse, then think what you want in it." as happened in one case, may evoke some interesting replies, not all of them helpful!

It is also true that many contractors continue to see a building—the school community sees it as a school. Getting beyond this difference of views can be difficult. It means that the whole nature of how a school functions can be overlooked and the practicalities of having pupils in the building are not fully appreciated or catered for.

4. EDUCATION STRATEGIES

Government strategies for addressing the need to “narrow the gap” are not necessarily enhanced by the Building Schools for the Future programme, because of the issue raised in the previous paragraph, namely that of understanding the nature of a school. For example, it is the case that a number of schools who have endeavoured to implement Extended Services have had enormous difficulties locating them in the school. Contractors have charged excessive amounts for the school to use the building for “additional hours”. Teachers have been told they are not to go into the school premises during school holidays (including the summer break) without a member of the contractor’s staff to accompany them. This is patently totally unworkable and displays a lack of understanding of the way that school staff work.

The Association has concerns that the changes to the National Curriculum across the Secondary sector are not necessarily catered for in the current BSF schools. This needs to be addressed as a matter of some urgency. However, it cannot be addressed solely by the schools but can only be dealt with by joint working with the authority, schools and contractors. Addressing some of these issues at the point of drawing up the contract for future BSF waves will hopefully resolve some difficulties.

5. FUNDING AND RELATED ISSUES

There is still an apparent shortfall between the funding that is allocated for BSF schools and the final cost to the authority’s and schools’ budgets. Although some progress has been made in addressing this matter from the more serious problem of the earlier waves, the problem still remains and needs to be resolved once and for all.

Schools are having to face what is acknowledged to be a tighter budget settlement over the current comprehensive spending review period. For BSF schools this leads to more problems as the cost of any repair or maintenance work is generally considerably more than if the work was carried out by a local contractor known to the school. The length of time that repairs take is also a cause for concern.

Understanding the urgency behind a repair request is not a skill demonstrated by many of the contractors involved in BSF. For example, for toilets to be blocked in a school with a special education unit is difficult, for the response to a request for repair to take five days is totally unacceptable. As the BSF programme runs out into Primary, this sort of delay, and the attitude/lack of understanding that it shows, needs to be corrected.

6. LESSONS LEARNT?

The Association has reason to believe that lessons from the earlier waves are not being learnt fully. Contractors are selling on the contracts, leaving schools exposed. Local authorities are losing the staff with experience of BSF and therefore are unable to offer adequate support to schools as they go through this process. They are also coming under pressure, allegedly, to agree to placing academies in the authority to ensure it moves up the wave order. Again this is unacceptable practice.

7. CONCLUSION

While the Association appreciates the work that has gone into the BSF programme already underway, it has major concerns that lessons from the early projects are not being used to inform future planning. The building stock has undoubtedly improved because of the BSF programme. However, the issues that it raises bring more problems for schools and their communities for which no-one appears to have ready answers. More worryingly, it may be the case that no-one has the will to find the solutions.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT)

The NUT welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence on the Building Schools for the Future programme and, in particular sustainable school buildings.

Prior to 1997, schools were starved of investment and buildings were crumbling. For many years, the NUT highlighted the need for investment in school buildings; leaking roofs, inadequate lavatory facilities, poor security and lack of space for carrying out preparation, planning and assessment activities, all common complaints from teachers.

This is supported by one of the key findings of the PwC First Annual Report on BSF published in December 2007:

“The report highlighted a number of concerns about the existing school estate. The vast majority of existing schools were found to be old (built before 1976) and were increasingly unsuitable for modern teaching and learning.”

By far the greatest problem that needs to be addressed in relation to the School Capital Stock is the presence of asbestos. This is the NUT's clear priority as it is literally a matter of life and death.

For these reasons, the NUT welcomed the BSF programme with the Government's initial pledge that all secondary schools in England and Wales would either be rebuilt or refurbished by 2015.

QUESTION 1: RATE OF PROGRESS

The Government announced in 2004 that the timescale for the BSF programme would be extended to 2016 and even then many rebuild projects would only be at the planning stage by that date.

This "slippage" in the programme is hugely disappointing to the NUT not least because many reasons for this are down to the inadequate management of the procurement process and, in our view, the reliance upon PFI rather than conventional capital funding routes to deliver the BSF programme.

Another factor is the effect of the Academy Programme and Trust Schools. The NUT opposes the link between Building Schools for the Future funding and the Academies programme. Much-needed resources for school buildings provided by BSF have been used to promote the Government's "choice and diversity" agenda and local authorities have been pressured to include Academies to ensure that their "Strategy for Change" proposals were approved for BSF funding.

The Union has regularly received reports from its local secretaries of instances of this pressure on local authorities, despite assurances from Government ministers that BSF funding is not allocated on this criterion, for instance in the reply by Schools Minister, Jim Knight to a Parliamentary Question by Ken Purchase, MP, on 15 October 2007:

"It is already our policy to fund Building Schools for the Future projects whether or not an academy is included."

The Academies programme is a highly controversial political initiative which has been opposed at national level by educationists, trade unions, governors' and parents' organisations. Individual Academy proposals have stimulated vigorous campaigns by local stakeholders. The Academies programme has not been subject to independent evaluation to ascertain whether the outcomes in terms of pupil achievement are significant, sustainable or value for money. Nor has its impact on the coherent provision of education and local democratic accountability been assessed.

Under the criteria listed in the recent DCSF consultation on BSF, reference was made to schools performing beneath the 30% "floor target" becoming Academies. This is seen as a strategy for addressing under-achievement, despite the fact that the GCSE results of 26 of the existing 83 Academies currently fall beneath that "floor target".

The Government's proposals under the National Challenge strategy have been announced since the BSF consultation. The NUT rejects the purely arbitrary "floor target" referred to above which stigmatises 638 schools as under-achieving. This categorisation takes no account of either contextual value added scores, or of Ofsted's inspection evaluations. These assessments show that 203 of the schools have a CVA value of 1005 or above; that 16 schools were graded "outstanding" by Ofsted; 147 were graded as "good" and 361 were graded as "satisfactory".

The NUT, in particular, condemns the proposals in the National Challenge strategy for an expansion of Academies programme by 70 by September 2010 and for an expansion of Trust schools as a school improvement strategy for the reasons outlined in this response.

The NUT would urge that the development of the Building Schools for the Future programme should not be used to favour diversity of provision through the promotion of two types of school, Academies and Trust Schools, and that there should be a level playing field in terms of assessing local authorities' proposals for inclusion in the programme on the criteria of educational and building stock need, not "diversity".

In the future BSF waves the DCSF, and within it the Academies Unit and the Office of the Schools Commissioner, will need to make it clear in their advice to local authorities that it is not a requirement to include within bids proposals for Academies and/or Foundation Schools with Charitable Trusts. It has been made clear to the NUT by the Schools Adjudicator and the Schools Commissioner that in order to fulfil the 2006 Education and Inspections Act requirements, all that is necessary is to demonstrate diversity in the provision of schools. It is quite possible for a local authority to make a proposal in any secondary reorganisation, for example, which demonstrates that every secondary school can offer a diversity of specialism while maintaining community status. This should be published in the final BSF guidance.

OTHER "BARRIERS" TO DELIVERING THE BSF PROGRAMME

Other factors hindering progress include the shortage of construction workers, and the difficulties faced by local authorities who are inexperienced in handling such vast capital projects.

The First Annual Report on BSF commissioned by the Department and carried out by PwC found that the "barriers" to the process were more numerous than the "enablers" and included:

- workload increases, particularly within SMT at school level; and

- complexity and bureaucracy with expectations that the initiative required a high level of commercial sophistication that was lacking in some local authorities and which jeopardised their procurement and delivery performance.

The Report acknowledges that the Local Education Partnership model (the Government's preferred procurement model for BSF) is still evolving and only acknowledges "some evidence" of good practice. The disadvantages of the LEP model are cited as less value for money, a lack of transparency and the lessening of the local authority's powers.

QUESTION 2: HOW THE EXPERIENCE OF MORE EARLY WAVES IS BEING DISSEMINATED

The NUT shares experience and practice between division secretaries (co-terminous with local authority areas) in the initial waves (1–4) and later "waves" in the BSF programme.

There is little evidence that the procurement body effectively disseminates experience of those authorities in the early waves as evidenced by the First Annual Report:

- there is scope to improve communication (particularly between local authorities and schools) and reduce complexity of management which is perceived as a barrier.

QUESTION 3: HOW THE VISIONING PROCESS IS BEING DEVELOPED

The NUT has long argued that high quality buildings are a key factor in the promotion of teaching and learning and the changing nature of many teaching practices and approaches. In addition, well designed and maintained schools which are "fit for purpose" make pupils and teachers feel valued. Pupils feel proud of their environment and are more likely to respect and look after it.

The NUT is concerned that the "visioning process" may be lacking particularly where new-builds are concerned. This, in our view, is because they are financed through PFI rather than conventional capital spending methods.

The NUT shares the concerns of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in this respect. In July 2006, CABE published a report assessing the design quality of 52 secondary schools built across England between 2000 and 2005. The Report highlights the general poor quality of schools procured using PFI. The Report found that, whilst any procurement route can produce a good result, schools procured through PFI tended to be rated poorly. All but one of the 10 schools with the lowest scores were procured using PFI.

QUESTION 4: HOW THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS IS WORKING

The local Educational Partnership is the Government's preferred model for procurement body.

Local Authority Education Partnerships (LEPs)—NUT Concerns

The NUT has serious concerns about the formation of LEPs, in which local authorities only have a 10% share. We believe that this transfer of power to a LEP, 90% of which is made up of unelected organisations, will undermine a local authority's ability to plan strategically, as well as local democratic accountability.

Lack of Effective Consultation

The NUT firmly believes that the views of local communities, including staff, pupils, governors and parents, should be actively sought and taken account of at the design stage. This would help avoid the sort of avoidable design slip-ups which are so regularly reported in the press. DfES guidance to Wave 2 local authorities, issued in 2004, states that authorities "need to develop a strategy for engagement and consultation with local stakeholders". The BSF.gov.uk website states that staff "will have the chance to get involved in the consultation process on the future design of your school". Despite this advice, NUT local officers regularly report difficulties in obtaining information about contracts and projects. Reasons given for withholding information relate to concerns, real or alleged, about maintaining commercial confidentiality. This lack of transparency does nothing to promote confidence in the process.

PwC in their first report on the BSF programme published in December 2007 identified the "evolving" nature of LEPs as a "barrier" rather than as an enabler to the process.

The Report acknowledges that the Local Education Partnership model (the Government's preferred procurement model for BSF) is still evolving and only acknowledges "some evidence" of good practice. The disadvantages of the LEP model are cited as less value for money, a lack of transparency and the lessening of the local authority's powers.

QUESTION 5: PROGRESS ON SCHOOL'S CARBON EMISSIONS

Climate Change Mitigation

Without comprehensive monitoring of CO₂ emissions from schools it is not possible to assess the overall progress being made on emissions reductions by the schools estate.

However, there is anecdotal evidence of excellent progress towards sustainability being made in a minority of individual schools, described in the Ofsted report *Schools and sustainability. A climate for change?* (May 2008). Much of this appears to be attributable to the commitment and enthusiasm of individual teachers and head teachers.

The NUT welcomes also the agreement by the Secretary of State to the NUT's request that guidance should be sent to schools on teaching about climate change given the uncertainties created by the adverse legal judgement on the distribution of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* to schools.

The NUT supports Ofsted's recommendation that the Sustainable Schools programme should be linked more closely to BSF, not least because of the teaching and learning opportunities that arise when schools contemplate changes to their energy and resource use.

It is important to note, however, that forms of behaviour change being introduced successfully in schools, such as switching off lights and computers, are only effective in minimising waste and unnecessary energy consumption. For significant reductions in schools' CO₂ emissions the focus has to be on changes to building design, energy efficiency improvements and the introduction of renewable energy technology, which can only be achieved through the BSF programme.

The NUT welcomes the £111 million of additional funding, announced in December 2007, for the installation of carbon reduction and renewable energy technology in more than 200 secondary schools undergoing major refurbishment over the next three years as part of the BSF programme.

The Union believes that the introduction of a renewable energy tariff (or feed-in tariff) would complement and enhance this funding by providing a financial incentive to install renewable energy technology which has the additional attraction of providing a source of income from electricity generated surplus to requirements, for example during school holidays.

The Union also welcomes the recent announcement of the Zero Carbon Task Force, set up to "overcome the technical, design and construction challenges" of achieving the Government's long-term goal that all new school buildings should be zero-carbon from 2016 and supports the sentiments of the Secretary of State when he said "I don't have time for critics who will carp that this is impossible. I know that current technology makes zero-carbon schools expensive and challenging to install on many existing school sites. The fact is that we have a clear moral responsibility to future generations to make it happen. We can no longer sit back and wait for the science to catch up with us—it would be a dereliction of duty if we did." (DCSF Press Release 16 June 2008). It is to be hoped that the recommendations from the task force might be implemented sooner than 2016.

Climate Change Adaptation

The Union is concerned that the focus on emissions reductions, while essential, is overshadowing the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change over coming decades. The BSF programme appears to ignore the need for school buildings to be adapted to provide greater resilience and/or reduced vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Defra's *Adapting to Climate Change* (ACC) programme is presently tasked with developing a robust and comprehensive evidence base about the impacts and consequences of climate change; raising awareness of the need to take action and help others take action; and working across Government at national, regional and local level to make sure the need to adapt to climate change is embedded into Government policies, programmes and systems (presentation by Deputy Director of the ACC Programme at a TUC Climate Change conference, June 2008). The NUT firmly believes that climate change adaptation measures should become embedded into the BSF programme, for the reasons set out below.

It is forecast that as a consequence of historical emissions of greenhouse gases, climate change is unavoidable over the next 30–40 years. Newly qualified young teachers therefore face, during the course of their professional careers, the UK continuing to get warmer; summers continuing to get hotter and drier; winters continuing to get milder and wetter; extreme weather events becoming more frequent; and sea-levels continuing to rise. The UK Climate Impacts Programme, 2008, indicates that by 2040, the extreme temperatures witnessed in Europe during the summer of 2003, when 30,000 people died, will be considered "normal".

These near-term impacts of climate change, which are expected to occur regardless of the success or failure of our mitigation attempts, will leave school buildings vulnerable to the impacts of wind, rain, storm, fire and subsidence, and needing new forms of temperature control which focus less on winter heating and more on summer cooling. The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) argues that design decisions based on historical climate data are likely to be inadequate for this future and the NUT believes that this advice should be heeded and building regulations amended accordingly.

According to the ACC programme, “adaptation” can mean a number of things. In the case of high classroom temperatures, for example, adaptation options would include the following:

- Live with or accept change;
(eg put up with overheating in schools)
- Retreat from change—or avoid it;
(eg stop schools opening in July)
- Increase resilience or reduce vulnerability;
(eg build new schools with better ventilation)
- Protect existing systems to prevent change from having an impact on behaviour;
(eg install air conditioning in classrooms)

UKCIP proposes similar adaptation options, including:

- Temporary—do nothing or install window blinds.
- Managerial—siestas or different school calendar.
- Technical—retrofit engineering solutions.
- Strategic—new build as part of a national programme.

The NUT is very concerned about the impact of high classroom temperatures on the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils.

In the absence of a specific legal maximum working temperature, Union policy is that 26°C should be the absolute maximum temperature in which teachers should be expected to work, other than for very short periods.

Without adaptation, schools will be forced to close whenever a threshold external temperature is reached, ie a temperature at which extreme discomfort and health hazard occur. For a threshold temperature of 32°C, UKCIP projects that within five to 10 years the threshold would be exceeded on 10 days per annum. In later decades this frequency would increase.

Closing schools and altering the school day or school year to accommodate future weather patterns have significant repercussions, especially if carried out in an ad-hoc fashion or without proper debate. The NUT strongly believes that the first response to the impacts of climate change should be through the technological and strategic routes of retrofitting solutions to existing buildings and/or building new schools. Hence the significance of BSF to climate change adaptation and the need to ensure that all refurbishments and new builds fully take into account the predicted impacts of climate change between now and 2050.

Climate Change Policy

UK climate change policy also looks set to impact on schools. Once the Climate Change Bill becomes law (currently expected to be autumn 2008), the Government intends to introduce a mandatory cap-and-trade scheme for the UK—the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC)—as a means of achieving its CO₂ emissions reduction target of at least 60% by 2050. The CRC will apply to large non-energy intensive public and business sector organisations (meaning those with electricity use of 6,000 MWh per year).

Defra’s initial proposal for the treatment of schools was a voluntary one, with Local Authorities (LA) taking responsibility for school emissions in those specific cases where the LA paid the energy bill for that school. During consultation, a large number of stakeholders expressed support for a mandatory approach with all state schools being included under the Local Authority portfolio, ie the LA would be the participating CRC organisation and would be responsible for school emissions under CRC regardless of whether they were the counterparty to the electricity supply contract or not.

The following reasons have been offered as supporting a mandatory approach to include state schools:

- In the main LAs do not pay the energy bill for schools and as such the voluntary approach is likely to lead to a variable and patchy coverage of schools across the UK;
- CRC, as an instrument, is well suited to targeting schools as part of the LA estate since LAs exercise a significant degree of influence over the schools for which they are responsible and it would also encourage LAs to provide energy management support for schools;
- The scheme is designed to tackle energy use emissions of organisations with many small emissions sources by placing obligations essentially on the “corporate centre” (which is in a position to direct or influence the conduct of those subsidiary bodies for which it is responsible) rather than individual emitters. The principle is that the “corporate centre” is much better placed in terms of expertise and resources to respond to the administrative requirements of a cap and trade scheme, compared with the individual emitters, Local authorities as “corporate centres” and schools as individual emitters closely follow this model.
- There are significant opportunities for cost-effective energy efficiency savings in schools.

At the time of writing, the Government has said only that it has rejected the voluntary approach for schools. This leaves open the possibility of either a mandatory approach, or the exemption of schools from the CRC.

The NUT is concerned that under this LA portfolio model there is a risk that Academies will not be included, as they are not the responsibility of Local Authorities. The mandatory inclusion of maintained schools in a carbon trading scheme whilst excluding Academies is not a sustainable solution.

Local Authorities which succeed in keeping their emissions within or below their allowances would be able to sell surplus credits and disburse the proceeds back to schools for investment in further emissions reductions. However, failure to keep within the carbon budget would force the LA to purchase additional credits, potentially at the expense of other school expenditure. It is essential therefore that the BSF programme be aligned with the CRC in such a way as to enable LAs to make the necessary carbon reductions from the schools estate.

If Academies are not part of the LA portfolio (and are not included in the portfolio of some other parent organisation such as the DCSF) then they will face no such financial penalty for failure to reduce their emissions. This could lead to what is known as ‘carbon leakage’, in the form of schools choosing to opt out of LA control to become an Academy in order to avoid being subject to mandatory emissions reductions. While this might suit the DCSF’s current education policy it would be completely counter to the Government’s climate change policy.

While the NUT is not convinced that carbon trading is an ideal response to the challenges being faced, it would argue that under the Government’s CRC proposals, the DCSF must find a way of ensuring that Academies are included in the LA portfolio, or that of some other parent body. The only alternative would be the complete exemption of all schools, which would leave the DCSF target of a 60% reduction by schools merely an aspiration and less likely to be met. It would also only ever be a temporary solution.

The NUT believes that the urgency of the situation demands that the Government’s ideological stance on reducing the number of LA schools should be reviewed and replaced with a commitment to sustainability.

QUESTION 6: HOW PERSONALISATION AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES ARE GUIDING THE DESIGN OF NEW SCHOOLS

The current DCSF guidance for BSF rightly emphasises the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the design of all new schools. Advances in knowledge about teaching and learning, as much as Government policy initiatives such as personalisation, mean that the “classroom” for 30 pupils is no longer the most important feature of school accommodation. One to one tuition, such as that currently being piloted in the *Making Good Progress* trial; small group literacy and numeracy intervention programmes; and team-teaching of larger groups of pupils all need to have appropriate spaces within schools in order to be implemented.

It is important therefore that new build schools, in addition to core “traditional” classrooms, also offer a range of smaller and larger rooms which would provide the flexibility needed to be able to personalise the learning experience for pupils.

In addition, such a variety of room sizes is also important if schools are to be able to fulfil their broader functions as defined by the Government’s Children’s Plan, such as acting as a hub for study support activities and a variety of children’s services and engaging parents and the wider community in learning activities. Securing appropriate accommodation for such developments is proving a key issue for existing schools, therefore it should be a prominent feature of new build schools.

The NUT would caution against prescriptive guidance on school design which was predicated purely on the requirements of current Government initiatives, however, as teaching and learning needs change constantly and therefore the spaces in which that teaching and learning takes place will also probably need to change. The school itself, with independent support, should have the greatest influence over design, as it will consider the issue from an educational view first and foremost, rather than give greater importance to stylistic considerations or the need for the new building to “make a statement”, which may be an architect’s prime consideration.

The University of Cambridge Primary Review recently issued an interim report on schools’ built environment.¹ Although it is specifically concerned with primary schools, its findings have far wider implications and the NUT would commend the report’s analysis to the Committee, in particular the way in which factors such as classroom size, ventilation, lighting and noise levels can both individually and in combination impact on pupils and teachers, including on pupil attainment as measured by National Curriculum test scores. It concluded that “the ways in which school design factors impact on children’s behaviour and school ethos is complex, and effects are often indirect or cumulative”. It also noted that the school environment can affect different groups in different ways and recommended that further research was needed to support the Government’s investment in building new schools.

¹ Wall, K, Dockrell, J and Peacey, N, *Primary Schools: The Built Environment*, University of Cambridge Research Survey 6/1, 2008.

Not only are schools the focus of children and young people's education, the buildings and grounds are also their principal social spaces. This aspect of school design has long been neglected, however. Very few schools, either new build or refurbished, have dedicated spaces for pupils to relax and let off steam or to work independently. New (and many existing) Danish schools, in comparison, incorporate student "chill out zones" and "work stations" as an integral part of school design.

In addition, school grounds have been overly neglected in the DCSF guidance on BSF to date, which represents a lost opportunity to maximise their potential usefulness both within the school day and beyond. It also fails to reflect recent initiatives such as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Learning Outside the Classroom, Healthy Schools and the National Play Strategy.

The EYFS for example, which applies to primary schools and "all through" schools as well as early years settings, is clear that access to outdoor play opportunities is essential for the learning and development of young children. It is not, though, a statutory requirement because of the potential impact of such a requirement on the full range of early years providers. It would seem sensible, therefore, for new build provision which offers the EYFS to take the lead in this area and for the DCSF to insist that adequate outdoor play areas, which children can access independently, are included in all new build design briefs.

The DCSF Play Strategy, which is currently out for consultation, says "we want school sites to offer good play opportunities for children in the form of good school playgrounds, playing fields and other facilities to support active and constructive play". It is important that guidance is provided, however, on what constitutes "good" in terms of play. Too often, new or refurbished playgrounds are equipped with metal play equipment on a concrete or tarmac base, which provides few opportunities for children to exercise their creativity in use of the equipment and increases the likelihood of accidents when children fall. Any guidance for schools on the development of school grounds should emphasise the importance of natural materials and landscaping in the design of play areas and more creative alternatives to the "swings, climbing frame and slides" which are traditionally found in such areas.

The NUT believes that changes to legislation may be needed if the Government is serious about enabling schools and local communities to make adequate play provision. Municipal playing fields are not as well protected as those owned by schools, despite the fact that many schools use fields owned by local authorities. In addition, a school's field is only protected if it is 0.2 hectares or more in size, while a council-owned pitch has to be at least 0.4 hectares before consultation is required on any potential development.

The playing fields of schools which are due to close currently lie outside the protective legislation. Through the Building Schools for the Future and Academies programmes, as well as through general local authority school reorganisation plans due to falling rolls, this means in effect that thousands of school playing fields are vulnerable. A tightening of the planning laws is needed to make it much harder for community and school playing fields to be sold off.

In addition, BSF schools and Academies which involve PFI may be limited in the amount of access to recreational facilities they may be able to offer pupils, and the wider community. Academies, for example, are supposed to share facilities with the local community (and other schools) as set out in their Funding Agreements. However, because of VAT regulations (usage must be for relevant charitable purposes for at least 90% of the time), if Academies make their facilities available to local people and charge for this, as the vast majority wish to, they have to pay VAT—so the vast majority choose not to open them up. Similarly with BSF schools funded through PFI, the need to generate revenue for the term of the PFI agreement has led to many managing companies limiting the amount of access the school may have to its facilities beyond the school day, as these are rented out rather than able to be used by the school and its pupils for no cost.

The NUT has previously, in its play policy *Time To Play* (2007), recommended that staff, pupils and parents should be involved in and able to influence the design of BSF schools to ensure that there are appropriate outdoor spaces and provision and that classrooms allow for flexibility within the curriculum, such as role play spaces and for large indoor construction or tactile play opportunities. Many NUT members have reported that they were disappointed with the end results of building projects where their views were not included in the final building design.

The NUT would also recommend that specific advice on planning for play, both inside and outside school buildings, should be included in the DCSF guidance for Building Schools for the Future. In addition, an audit of facilities for play in schools should be undertaken nationally. The findings of such an audit should be used to inform developments arising from the Building Schools for the Future initiative, to ensure that all schools have sufficient space to develop play areas within the classroom, the school and the school grounds.

QUESTION 7: DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROCUREMENT AND DESIGN OF ICT FOR SCHOOLS

One of the biggest problems with schools built or refurbished under BSF has been the widespread transference of estate management functions to the private sector, including ICT contracts. Where a school finds its long-established working relationships with the local authority thus severed, it can often encounter problems in building a successful relationship with the new provider of such services, at least in part because such organisations rarely have any real experience of managing school buildings.

It is advisable to monitor closely the performance of such private providers to ensure that, in particular, health and safety standards are not compromised by a desire to limit financial outlay. Where, for example, final checks are conducted prior to the occupation of a new or refurbished building, confirmation should be sought—and obtained—that such checks are sufficiently robust, and that they are carried out by competent persons.

There are widespread concerns about the suitability of construction materials used by contractors involved with BSF projects. ICT suites may be used by several hundred energetic pupils each day and thus demand a level of durability far in excess of that required in domestic or commercial premises. Fixtures and fittings, too, are likely to be subjected to far more robust treatment than might be the case elsewhere. Many head teachers have been astonished, therefore, to find that their school has been charged for repairs or replacements when the expectation was that the materials should have been strong enough to cope with normal school usage. Items damaged through routine “wear and tear”—or even simply because they have reached the end of their natural life—are often attributed to “vandalism” by the body responsible for facilities management. It can then take a considerable amount of time and effort to resolve the matter satisfactorily. The irony here is that one of the chief benefits of the involvement of the private sector was supposed to be the freeing-up of time for head teachers to concentrate on teaching and learning—not an increased focus on premises management problems.

Where ICT support and maintenance has been transferred to the private sector on a contract basis as part of a PFI-funded programme, there can be financial repercussions for the School involved. Changes to operational PFI contracts were found to cost a total of £180 million in 2006 in a report by the National Audit Office (*Making Changes in Operational PFI Contracts*).

A key issue when considering developments in the procurement and design of ICT for schools is that those who may take lead responsibility for its planning with contractors, head teachers, are likely to lack the technical knowledge and understanding required to make informed decisions. In an NUT survey of its head teacher and Leadership Group members in 2004, for example, 11% of school leaders did not feel confident and an additional 22% expressed mixed views on their confidence in using ICT. In addition, 52% had undertaken training which could have boosted their level of awareness of their school’s ICT needs whilst 48% had not. This would indicate that independent support, which head teachers could access when dealing with contractors, is essential to ensure that the Government’s considerable financial investment is used to support the teaching and learning needs of schools, rather than for the benefit of the contractor.

The NUT believes that the current guidance by the DCSF should be strengthened and that all ICT procured or designed as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme should be subject to basic minimum requirements to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Most importantly, ICT hardware provision should be flexible, in order for schools to maximise its potential as a teaching and learning tool and at the same time offer consistency of technical quality standards, regardless of the contractor(s) being used.

As schools move away from using ICT only in designated ICT suites, contractors must reflect recent changes in pedagogical practice and integrate ICT provision in every classroom or space used for teaching and learning, including staff and student work rooms. All classrooms should be designed to be able to accommodate comfortably a white board and digital projector. As schools move away from desktops and exploit the greater potential offered to pupils by laptops, there must be sufficient power sockets to enable laptops to be plugged in to be used as well as to be recharged.

This flexibility should also include contractors providing wi-fi systems which can be accessed by the whole school community and beyond, where appropriate. This is especially important for schools in rural areas, where the higher cost and difficulty of securing a reliable high speed broadband connection may be used as a reason for failing to provide this essential educational resource.

In addition, contractors should offer schools choice in terms of the ICT hardware purchased, as contractors’ focus on value for money and keeping costs to a minimum may be at odds with the educational rationale for requiring different sorts of ICT resources, for example, offering a choice of whiteboards, as those produced by different manufacturers have specific different features or a mix of Apple Macs and PCs, because of the former’s association with industry-standard graphics and other creative software packages.

As part of the procurement and design process, technical support should be built in as one of schools’ basic ICT requirements. Such support must be able to address the educational purposes of ICT usage, not limited solely to practical “computer malfunction” type issues, which is likely to be the type of support supplied by contractors to business and other private sector organisations.

A particular feature of PFI-funded school rebuild and refurbishment programmes, including BSF, is the limitations placed by the management company on the use of schools’ premises beyond the formal school day. This has particular implications for schools’ efforts to tackle the “digital divide” amongst students from disadvantaged backgrounds and also to enhance community access to ICT, as these activities may be seriously curtailed in schools where strict limits are placed by the management company on out of hours facilities usage. The NUT would recommend that the contracts for all such management programmes should give priority to schools’ pupil support work, including that undertaken using ICT.

QUESTION 8: HOW TO CATER FOR THE 14–19 DIPLOMAS AND THE JOINT WORKING THAT WILL INVOLVE, AND THE GOVERNMENT’S PROPOSAL TO RAISE THE PARTICIPATION AGE FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO 18 IS BEING ADDRESSED IN BSF PROPOSALS?

In its *Strategy for Change*, which is the first formal component of the BSF approval process, there is the intention to capture both the local authority’s strategy for 11–19 education and the requirements that strategy places upon the BSF programme.

In addition, to secure coherent capital investment to support the 14–19, it formally extends BSF and the *Strategy for Change* development to include all settings in which young people learn, including Further Education (FE).

The recent White Paper, *Further Education—Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*, remitted local authorities, in line with their strategic leadership role in delivering 14–19 reform, to ensure that their *Strategy for Change* policy is fully comprehensive in setting out the local facilities to deliver the 14–19 entitlement, including the contribution of FE providers.

It is intended that, for the first time, there is a fully integrated capital strategy which will deliver facilities for 14–19 year olds across schools and the FE system.

BSF is tied up with the performance of local authorities and schools. BSF investment involves meeting objectives set out in the ‘Remit for Change’ given by the DfES to local authorities. The content of this remit may contain, “improvements to provision and outcomes as they relate to particular policy areas—eg 14–19, school under-performance, inclusions, SEN and extended schools”. The criteria on 14–19 provision outlines what local authorities will need to demonstrate in order that the capital funding allocation will support the delivery of 14–19 entitlement. One of these points is:

“How the local authority will ensure collaboration between schools, colleges, other learning providers (including apprenticeships and other work-based provision); Connexions and Education Business Partnerships to support the 14–19 entitlement”. (*Strategy for Change—Guidance for Local Authorities in BSF*, July 2006)

In the *Strategy for Change—the Guidance for Local Authorities in BSF Wave 4*, July 2006—there is reference to the new 14–19 Specialised Diplomas. It states that:

“By 2013, we expect every young person to be entitled to pursue any one of the 14 lines at an appropriate level for them, wherever they are in the country. We intend that the practical element of the diplomas should be delivered by people with real vocational experience in suitably professional environments. This new national entitlement will include a legal duty on schools to secure access for every young person at the school to all 14 curriculum lines. Delivering this entitlement will require profound change in many aspects of provision. As well as being properly equipped for their own vocational specialisms, schools will need to collaborate with each other, colleges and training providers to deliver the full entitlement to all young people.”

The NUT has significant questions to ask on how local authority BSF bids will impact on the implementation of the 14–19 Diplomas. This is unclear in the bidding criteria. These questions are set out below.

- How can schools offering the Diplomas have an influence in a meaningful way on local authority BSF bids?
- How will decisions on major adaptations to BSF schools impact on individual Gateway consortia in their long-term commitment to Diploma implementation and delivery?

The relationship between BSF bids and Diploma implementation needs to be clarified further.

QUESTION 9: THE GOVERNMENT’S ANNOUNCEMENT IN APRIL ABOUT THE ACCELERATION AND STREAMLINING OF BSF AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT AS A WHOLE

The DCSF consultation seeks views on a range of proposals for new waves 7 to 15 should be managed and acknowledges that lessons should be learnt from the early waves.

A summary of the NUT’s response to the department’s consultation is set out below:

- The NUT recognises that as the BSF programme progresses, and areas of significantly greatest social and economic need are addressed, there will inevitably be less difference in need between projects. We do therefore accept that there should be a wider set of criteria for the prioritisation.
- We agree that educational and social need is used as a tie-breaker is a sensible and fair way to proceed. Before this criteria is applied, however, we would want to be sure that all “competing” schools benefit from acceptable basic accommodation, which meets legal requirements, in terms of noise insulation, lighting, ventilation, toilet provision and disability access. We accept that if there are two schools which both meet, or don’t meet, the above requirements, then educational and social need would be an appropriate tie breaker.

Co-ordinated Services

The NUT is in favour of extended schools which meet the particular needs of communities. We believe that the best way of joining-up and co-locating services for children, young people and families is for schools to work together to provide, for example, breakfast and after school clubs, whose facilities can be shared between two or more schools. This will help avoid a situation where the school with facilities on site becomes more popular with parents, thus depriving a neighbouring school of pupils.

New Authorities Entering BSF Programme

We would expect that all authorities new to the project will be able to prioritise a small number of schools where the state of the fabric of the buildings require urgent attention.

Local authorities themselves are in the best position to judge whether more assistance is needed to bring them to the point where they are ready to deliver. We do have concerns that many local authorities lack experience in managing large scale projects and are at risk of being outmanoeuvred by their more commercially astute private sector counterparts. Anything that can redress this balance would be welcomed by the NUT.

The extension of LEPs' remit

We are opposed to the use of LEPs because of their inherent private sector bias. We would not, therefore, wish them to be given an expanded role as we do not believe that the needs of school communities would be served by such an expansion. We note, again, that the main concern seems to be to 'make LEPs more attractive commercially'. This will inevitably be at the expense of pupils and staff. If a project is more attractive commercially to a provider, it is likely to be less attractive, in terms of the finished product, to the end user.

Barriers to co-ordination of services on school sites

Neighbouring schools' admissions can be affected by the location of extended services, for example, breakfast or after school clubs, in one school. Such facilities are understandably popular with parents and can lead to increased demand for places at the 'extended' school, with a knock-on effect on the neighbouring school. For this reason, we prefer that extended services are shared between schools so that more pupils and parents are able to benefit.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

INTRODUCTION

Building Schools for the Future is not simply about bricks and mortar; it is about creating a school environment that enables all learners to fulfil their potential. Similarly, creating sustainable schools is not just about sustaining the physical and natural environment of school buildings; it is about creating a curriculum within the school where learning can flourish now and in the future.

CHAPTER 1

Environment and the national curriculum

1.1 One of QCA's goals is to develop a modern, world-class curriculum that will inspire and challenge all learners and prepare them for the future. The curriculum needs to be living and dynamic, responsive to the needs and interests of young people.

1.2 The new secondary curriculum has three statutory aims which are to create:

- Successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve.
- Confident individuals who are able to live a safe, healthy and fulfilling life.
- Active and responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

1.3 The curriculum is the entire planned learning experience, underpinned by a broad set of common values and purposes. It will secure improved attainment, better behaviour and attendance, civic participation, healthy lifestyle choices and further involvement in education, employment or training. The national curriculum has been designed to broaden the scope of education beyond the traditional narrow focus on subjects and to incorporate issues such as globalisation, creativity and sustainability throughout. It allows links to be made between subjects which makes learning relevant to pupils and helps them to see

how their experiences are influenced by what goes on around them and how they can influence those processes. This thinking is set out in “the Big Picture of the Curriculum” which is attached at Appendix 1.² It is clear that the social and emotional aspects of a child’s development are a fundamental part of the curriculum. The Every Child Matters outcomes are embedded in the structure of the curriculum. It provides the framework for the promotion of wellbeing, the construction of protective factors and resilience in the individual and improving employability.

1.4 The term environment in the big picture of the curriculum encompasses the physical aspects of the classroom, the school and its immediate surroundings (eg playing fields, playgrounds) and the culture or climate for learning in the school. All of these can have a powerful impact on teachers’ and learners’ engagement, expectations, attitudes and morale.

1.5 For example, schools have found that:

- Pupils learn better when they feel comfortable and secure in the physical environment.
- If pupils have space for physical activity at break times and lunchtimes they are more likely to return to lessons ready to concentrate and learn.
- Involving pupils in changing the physical environment improves their morale and self-esteem.
- Displaying relevant posters and photographs around school can inspire and motivate learners.
- Developing the school as a learning community, with teachers as lead learners, creates a positive climate for learning.

1.6 QCA believes that BSF offers significant opportunity for schools to develop a curriculum which really encourages young people to realise their potential and for teachers to demonstrate their professional expertise and become more creative in how they deliver learning to their pupils.

CHAPTER 2

Developing the visioning process

2.1 The House of Commons Education and Skills Committee report noted that “a regular theme in our evidence was that people involved in BSF, particularly at the school level, did not have sufficient time to think about what they wanted for their new school. The participation of teachers, other school staff and pupils in the planning process is vital to the success of school redevelopment projects, and this needs to be acknowledged by all those involved.”

2.2 QCA is engaged with local authorities including Knowsley and Sheffield who are embarking on the BSF process. These two local authorities are the first “innovation zones” for BSF and the QCA is engaging with them alongside other agencies including Becta, TDA, NCSL and Partnerships for Schools (PFS) to shape the rebuilding of secondary schools in their areas. This engagement will help all of those involved in the planning process consider how they want to create spaces for learning that can fully exploit the opportunities provided by BSF.

2.3 In November 2007, two QCA staff and nine teachers from Knowsley attended a “PAL Lab”. The purpose of this 5 day immersive event was to challenge thinking about how teachers teach and explore new approaches to the planning and development of learning particularly in terms of space and time. It explored creative collaborations across disciplines and uncovered new ways of working for the participants. The outcome was that the teachers had developed a vision of how they could work within the new set up which was being planned in Knowsley.

2.4 Knowsley has recently published a document on Teaching and Learning in the Borough which builds on that experience and QCA continues to work with Knowsley staff both to help them and to identify good practice and lessons learned which can be passed on to others. QCA are also supporting Sheffield in its BSF programme. They are, however, at a much earlier stage in visioning process. The experience of these local authorities and their schools in the BSF process will be written up as an innovation project in January 2009 and be available to all BSF areas.

CHAPTER 3

Enabling personalisation and other educational strategies

3.1 There are a number of different concepts of personalised learning but the Gilbert Review *2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group* gave a broad definition in the introduction to the report:

3.2 “Put simply, personalising learning and teaching means taking a highly structured and responsive approach to each child’s and young person’s learning in order that all are able to progress, achieve and participate. It means strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging pupils—and their

² Not printed. See www.qca.org.uk/qca_5856.aspx

parents—as partners in learning.” Personalisation needs to take account of the diversity of society as a whole and of pupils. Pupils might be newly arrived, SEN, gifted and talented, disabled and so on. Moreover, they may be in more than one “category”.

3.3 A pupil for example may be gifted and talented, disabled and a traveller. A personalised system is a responsive one which rises to the challenge of making entitlement work in the best interest of the pupil. For learning to be maximised, the learning offer needs to be personalised so that all children can learn and develop to achieve their full potential. This entails teachers having a good knowledge of individual children, and allowing them to be stretched where necessary and supported where the child faces more of a challenge. Sound and relevant information for each child needs to be collected through assessment methods which are sound and well understood by pupils, teachers and others and passed not only between institutions as the child moves between the key stages of education but also within each institution as the child moves from one year group to another.

3.4 Schools in the 21st century need to recognise the value and contribution of children and young people to society and the different “roles” they play, including:

- As drivers of the economy.
- As potential earners.
- As citizens, both now and in the future, who make decisions and choices about their own lives.
- As carers.
- As consumers of goods and services (including education health and social services).
- As members of communities—virtual, physical and social.
- As a force for change.
- As learners and teachers.
- As drivers of popular culture.
- As custodians of the future.
- As a diverse group of citizens with diverse cultural and social wants, requirements and expectations both of society and of their own lives.

3.5 These may apply to some or all children and young people at different stages in their lives and many have more than one “role” at any one time. There are many others. QCA tries to structure its work around this view of those we serve and believes that the BSF programme offers an opportunity to take advantage of the flexibilities afforded by the new secondary curriculum to address these different facets of young peoples lives.

3.6 In developing its pedagogical framework for its BSF schools Knowsley has taken the concepts of the big picture of the curriculum, together with the Every Child Matters outcomes and personalised learning to enable all young people to fulfil their potential as learners. Knowsley defines pedagogy as having four components: subject and curriculum knowledge; teaching and learning models; teaching repertoire of skills and techniques and conditions for learning. In the framework the role of assessment for learning is seen as pivotal in developing a personalised education and the education professionals need to be flexible enough to respond to the outcomes of formative assessment as well as the student voice.

3.7 The way in which personalisation and other educational strategies are taken account of in the BSF process is also of interest to QCA. This is because it is important to know what learning looks like in order to design the spaces in which learning takes place. Learning spaces can be designed in order to facilitate a learning experience, and to maximise the ability of learning activities to inspire and engage learners. For example, learning experiences in schools of the 21st century may not be suited to a traditional classroom where thirty desks face a teacher. Does space need to be flexible to enable it to be changed as pedagogy evolves during the life of the building? Are small rooms needed to enable independent learning? What does learning look like in terms of the technology used (such as libraries)? What does the structure of the school in itself give to the learning experience (such as carbon footprint, the harvesting of sunlight and water)?

3.8 The QCA is working with the DCSF capital division to undertake joint presentations on curriculum and school design. For example Devon Headteachers will explore how the big picture of the curriculum can be integrated with building design advice from DCSF. A group of head teachers in the North East will be receiving a similar presentation.

3.9 QCA is also engaged with “Leading Learning in London” (the BSF partnership across London) helping them look at how the curriculum is evolving and the different spaces needed to achieve the aims of the curriculum (for example, ensuring that specialist facilities are provided).

3.10 BSF will fundamentally shape the way in which learners are educated in the 21st century, and QCA is engaged with the process in order to ensure that not only the physical aspects of the classroom, the school and its immediate surroundings are considered when planning new schools, but also how opportunities to

create compelling learning experiences can be exploited. QCA will continue to engage with BSF to assist schools in the delivery of a modern world class curriculum that will inspire and challenge all learners and prepare them for the future.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

SUMMARY

- The RIBA is concerned that the design standard of many schools is not high enough;
- We believe that the current delivery framework for the BSF programme has a number of deficiencies and pressure points that are resulting in insufficient design quality, inefficient delivery in terms of speed and cost, and too little support for inexperienced local authority clients. PFS has not done enough to tackle these problems, despite the small but positive recommendations coming at the end of the recent review;
- The RIBA urges that Partnerships for Schools ensures much greater design preparation by the schools as a client before going to market, and further resourcing needs to be available to them much earlier in the process in the shape of dedicated professional advice;
- We estimate that schools can save upwards of £1 million and reduce the time for procurement by six months if they invest more money upfront in the process for design preparation;
- We believe a pilot study should be run to prove that investing earlier in the process brings much greater benefits, in terms of increasing design quality while significantly reducing time and financial cost to bidders and client.

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is one of the most influential architectural institutions in the world, and has been promoting architecture and architects since being awarded its Royal Charter in 1837. The 40,000-strong professional institute is committed to serving the public interest through good design. It also represents 85% of registered architects in the UK through its regional structure as well as a significant number of international members. Our mission statement is simple—to advance architecture by demonstrating benefit to society and promoting excellence in the profession.

BACKGROUND

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme provides an opportunity for the transformation of a major pillar of our society in a manner unparalleled since the post-war reconstruction and the foundation of the welfare state. Both the breadth of vision of the construction programme and the emphasis on educational transformation as the driver are to be entirely welcomed, and the RIBA and its members acknowledge the possibilities the programme provides for innovative design solutions, showcasing the highest standards of educational design.

The RIBA and CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) have been increasingly active in disseminating good practice and improving the skills base of the architectural profession to meet this unparalleled challenge. We are now seeing the fruits of this in some of the finished schools emerging from the pathfinder projects and those that have reached financial close in waves 1–3; a few of these are of an extremely high standard. However, as we approach the higher volume phases of the programme, it is worrying to note that the initial CABE Schools Review Panels raised significant concerns about the design standard of many schools, and there remains no wide-spread evidence of truly innovative solutions coming forward.

The possible causes of this shortfall in design standards include:

- a lack of architects skilled and experienced in this specialist area of school design;
- the demands placed on the involved professions' resources by a bidding system that ties up three teams for several months and then discards two thirds of the design work produced;
- the relatively low scoring given to design in bid evaluation and the lack of relevant skills and experience on the part of many evaluation teams;
- the tendency of some bidders to limit the amount of detailed specification and detail available at bid stage in order to provide greater scope for “value engineering” after Financial Close;
- the ability of bidders to substitute other design teams, possibly of lower quality, for the non-sample schools after Financial Close; and

- the reluctance of many good quality architectural practices to commit time and resources to bids that may be abortive, or to assemble or disband design teams at short notice; this is especially relevant in a buoyant market where practices are already experiencing problems in finding staff.

Partnerships for Schools (PFS) have undertaken a significant review of the procurement process, with a series of recommendations being recently announced. However the changes put forward, while setting the right direction of travel, have been underwhelming in their scope, and together demonstrate an acute paucity of vision.

RATE OF PROGRESS THAT IS BEING MADE IN BRINGING PROJECTS TO THE CONSTRUCTION STAGE

The rate of delivery through the BSF programme has been disappointing. We believe that this is in part due to problems associated with a laborious, inefficient procurement model, and an unwillingness to encourage local authorities to innovate on the preferred model of delivery to suit their own needs and aspirations.

HOW THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE IN THE EARLY WAVES IS BEING DISSEMINATED

We believe that the current delivery framework for the BSF programme has a number of deficiencies and pressure points that are resulting in insufficient design quality, inefficient delivery in terms of speed and cost, and too little support for inexperienced local authority clients. PFS has not done enough to tackle these problems, despite the small but positive recommendations coming at the end of the recent review. Much more needs to be done to capture the issues affecting BSF, to seek to learn from innovative and creative solutions and to return this experience into further waves through continuous improvement of the procurement guidance to local authorities and their delivery partners.

There are already schemes in the pipeline that are close to Smart PFI, and other procurement routes that do not strictly adhere to the “traditional” BSF model. We can learn from these. They also demonstrate that schemes can come forward that are a departure from the standard procurement model. If a willing local authority could be found, a pilot scheme would not be impossible.

HOW THE VISIONING PROCESS IS BEING DEVELOPED

There remain a number of fundamental issues that require further attention. The PFS recommendations stopped well short of what was possible from the review.

There has been no update on the required level of preparations by local authorities, nor how the required improvements to the support available to them during the crucial early stages is to be funded. No amount of tinkering with the bid process can overcome a lack of preparation by the public sector client. Partnerships for Schools has committed to drawing up guidance stating the level of preparation in the pre-bid stage required of local procuring authorities

We believe that PFS have not yet taken the necessary steps to ensure that every client is properly prepared, and have failed to ensure much closer working between the architect and educational client in the vital early design stages.

Therefore we are calling on PFS to:

- ensure much greater design preparation by the client before going to market, and further resourcing available to them much earlier in the process in the shape of dedicated professional advice; and
- bring forward a pilot study to prove the alternative proposal brings much greater benefits, in terms of increasing design quality while significantly reducing time and financial cost to bidders and client.

The RIBA will seek to work with PFS to ensure that the guidance that they give to local authorities about preparing for the procurement process goes far enough, and that it ensures that local authorities do adequate design preparation, and that they are properly resourced and professionally advised at the very outset.

The RIBA believes that it is fundamental that before engaging with the bidding teams the local authority work out what they want. We believe that this requires the preparation of a concept design to test, refine and finalise the brief. However, a narrow interpretation of procurement doctrine is preventing the next logical step from being taken, which is to integrate early design work by the client into the bid process.

This would:

- avoid duplicate conceptual design work by the bidders;
- place greater emphasis on partnering as the key differentiator in the early selection process;
- allow bidders to concentrate on the later, more detailed design work, bringing their own innovation to bear and ensure best value is achieved; and
- guarantee a significant reduction in bid costs.

HOW THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS IS WORKING

During the review's investigation, a number of alternative scenarios, tested and proven in other sectors of public and commercial procurement, were knocked-back in favour of a much less ambitious series of proposals. The alternative solutions placed far greater emphasis on design preparation by the client before going to market, and on ensuring that the client is properly advised by a professional, experienced team from the very outset. These solutions were derived from innovations emerging in more advanced forms of PPP, from the Treasury's latest developments in its own PFI guidance, and from everyday best practice among commercial developers.

Instead of embracing innovation and best practice, what we have ended up with is:

- A reduction in the overall procurement time, down to 75 weeks from the current 82-week model—this compares to a possible saving of six months under alternative procurement systems.
- Two lead bidders are selected earlier in the process, after 29 weeks rather than 44 weeks in the current process—yet there is still a huge burden of consultation placed on the client through costly duplication early in the system. A better solution would be further design development, perhaps in the form of a concept design carried out by the client working directly with a dedicated professional design team (see above for more details), before going to the market to find a delivery partner.

PROGRESS ON REDUCING SCHOOLS' CARBON EMISSIONS AND ON ACHIEVING ZERO CARBON NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Too little progress has been made in delivering low carbon schools. Whilst some local authorities have made significant steps in increasing the focus on delivering sustainability and reducing carbon emissions associated with the Schools Estate through the BSF programme, overall the results in achieving low carbon schools has thusfar been disappointing.

We believe that the BSF programme needs to place a much greater focus on the delivery of low carbon schools. The requirement to meet current building regulations standards is insufficient for buildings that will have an operational lifespan well into the middle of this century.

It should be made clear that BSF funding will only be available for investment in school buildings with a low carbon footprint throughout their life cycle. This is a significant opportunity to transform the school estate and the manner that the market views low carbon design and delivery, and should not continue to be missed.

July 2008

Supplementary memorandum submitted by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)

WHAT IS SMART PFI?

Introduction

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is one of the most influential architectural institutions in the world, and has been promoting architecture and architects since being awarded its Royal Charter in 1837. The 40,000-strong professional institute is committed to serving the public interest through good design. It also represents 85% of registered architects in the UK through its regional structure as well as a significant number of international members.

The problem

Both the original and recently revised standard procurement models for schools delivered under the BSF programme waste time, money and effort. The original model operated between 2005 and 2008, and for each sample school this procurement route initially engages three bidders, each led by a main contractor with contracted architects embedded within the bidding consortium. The contractors developed their bids on the basis of a brief prepared by the local authority client, and each produced concept design proposals, site appraisals, ICT strategy and costings. During this process each of the three teams would have a range of meetings and discussions with school officials and teachers, the Local Education Authority, and others to produce a concept design. This would form a key part of the assessment that would result in two bidders going forward to a second stage involving more detailed consultation, technical designs and other development preparation to form the final bids, following which a successful bidder would emerge.

Starting in October 2007, and concluding in February 2008, Partnerships for Schools undertook a broad review of the BSF procurement route, resulting in recommendations for a number of changes. In this model three bidders are reduced to two earlier in the process, after 29 weeks rather than 44 weeks in the current

process. They are also assessed under slightly modified criteria that emphasise their capacity and track record in partnering, as well as the more traditional concept design work, ICT strategising and other preparatory work more usually undertaken by the three bidders at this stage, and the consultation that these elements of the bid entail.

This does lead to a reduction in the overall procurement time—down to 75 weeks from the current 82-week model. There are associated time and cost savings in the revised process, including in the level of detail of the design work undertaken, with more detailed elements of the concept design and full technical specification only required from two bidders at the second stage. This re-focusing of the time available for detailed development and completion of design work is a step in the right direction, but does not go far enough in fostering the very best design solutions, still wastes a great deal of time and resources and does not reflect the best practice that exists in other sectors of both public and private procurement.

The solution

The Building Schools for the Future review recommendations do not go far enough. We were deeply disappointed that more progress was not made towards a clearer and more efficient relationship between designing and bidding in BSF, and further steps were not taken that could result in much improved value for money; significant reductions in the time and cost associated with delivering schools through BSF, and an opportunity to increase the quality of the educational transformation delivered through BSF.

The RIBA believes that it is fundamental that before engaging with the bidding teams the local authority work out what they want. We believe that this requires the preparation of a concept design, by the client, to test, refine and finalise the brief. This would mean integrating early design work by the client into the bid process and omitting the time consuming and resource-heavy approach of doing this with multiple separate bidders.

The early preparatory work required of the client would start with the establishment of the transformational education strategy, goes on to develop strategic briefs and diagrammatic representations of school organisation, then the application of these to the actual site in a thoroughly researched way to produce a concept design. All this is done with full engagement of stakeholders, including visits by the school representatives, the designers and project teams to other schools. The designs are developed to RIBA stage C or C+ and properly costed to fully ensure that they are affordable and feasible. This work is then made available to bidders as part of the tender documents and brief so that “they hit the ground running”.

Using this model the better advised and supported Local Authority will benefit from the development and testing of a more detailed brief. More time can be spent with one design team refining a brief that suits the Local Authority and better reflects their particular needs and aspirations. This should also ensure that there is increased certainty surrounding budgets and affordability, and quality can be specified at this stage in an open and transparent manner.

The bidders are then invited to bid to flesh out and deliver the concept design, to provide their own unique innovation to the proposal, demonstrating betterment where they feel they can bring advantageous changes to bear, and focusing on technical deliver and how to ensure best value on the agreed concept.

This would:

- reduce the pressure on educationalists and other consultees, as well as the significant associated costs, caused by duplication of effort during the early stages;
- similarly, avoid duplicate conceptual design work by the bidders;
- provide more certainty to the client on affordability and quality issues;
- create a more detailed brief for bidders;
- place greater emphasis on partnering as the key differentiator in the early selection process;
- allow bidders to concentrate on the later, more detailed design work, bringing their own innovation to bear and ensure best value is achieved; and
- guarantee a significant reduction in bid costs.

The outcome

The RIBA estimates that the Smart procurement model applied to BSF would save schools upwards of £1 million and reduce the time for procurement by six months, if they invested more time and resource upfront in the vital early preparatory stages of the process before going to the market.

Next steps

We believe a pilot study should be run to prove that investing earlier in the process brings much greater benefits, in terms of increasing design quality while significantly reducing time and financial cost to bidders and client.

Much clearer guidance should be provided to procuring authorities on the requirement for, and benefits resulting from more detailed design preparation, including the client-side preparation of a concept design before seeking a delivery partner.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC)

The Education and Skills Committee's report *Sustainable Schools: are we building schools for the future?* aimed to assist in maximising the effect of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme on improving the quality and sustainability of the environments for learning in this country. The Children, Schools and Families Committee is now seeking written evidence on progress in the Building Schools for the Future project and initiatives to make schools more sustainable.

The SDC is the Government's independent advisory body on sustainable development, reporting to the Prime Minister and the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales. Through advocacy, advice and appraisal, we help put sustainable development at the core of Government policy. The 2005 UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, also charges the SDC with the role of "watchdog" for sustainable development.

Since the Education and Skills Committee's report *Sustainable Schools: are we building schools for the future?* the SDC believes that there have been some positive developments within the Department for Children, Schools and Families relating to schools capital and the BSF programme on carbon emissions, but there is still a need for significant progress on wider sustainability.

The SDC agrees with the Committee's recommendation that DCSF and Partnerships for Schools should develop as a priority a knowledge management and learning strategy to support authorities, schools, contractors, suppliers and others involved in BSF to share best practice and learning as the programme develops—however the Department is still not systematically gathering evidence of the sustainability performance (specifically the actual carbon performance) of recently completed schools. Learning lessons from the early waves of BSF is vital to pushing up standards through the programme. The SDC recommends that DCSF commits to reviewing the actual sustainability performance of completed schools in the first waves of BSF in order to inform future waves.

The Committee asked the DCSF to set out its plans for improved ICT procurement within BSF. In our recent work on carbon emissions from the school estate, we found that emissions from electricity consumption in schools are on a strong upward trend, partly driven by the increase in use of ICT in schools. The SDC recommends that DCSF ensures that BSF drives procurement of efficient, low carbon ICT solutions which serve to reduce energy consumption in schools, not increase it.

The Committee's report notes the importance of the "visioning" phase. The SDC agrees with this and is concerned that the BSF procurement process does not require local authorities to develop the strategy for change in line with the "eight doorways" of the DCSF's National Framework for Sustainable Schools, despite evidence given to the contrary.³ The SDC believes that a vision should be developed at the start of each BSF procurement wave based on the sustainable development outcomes that schools and their communities are aiming to achieve. SDC recommends that the BSF guidance is adapted further to make a more explicit and central link between BSF and sustainable development, linked to the requirement for local authorities to develop Sustainable Community Strategies under the new local government performance framework.

The SDC believes that the Primary Capital Programme must learn lessons from the BSF programme and aim to meet or exceed the sustainability outcomes of BSF. However the Department appears to have less control over the Primary Capital Programme due to a more "arms-length" management of the procurement programme. The SDC recommends that the Department clarifies the sustainability outcomes it aims to achieve, and reviews how it will deliver sustainable schools through this programme.

The SDC is concerned that the Children's Centres capital programme is not meeting the sustainability outcomes required by a major government-funded capital investment programme. Although Children's Centre funding comes entirely from DCSF, we understand that the Common Minimum Standards⁴ (CMS) which should apply, have not been applied, and the requirement to meet BREEAM "excellent" or equivalent has not been delivered to date. Phase 3 of the Children's Centre programme is about to start, to deliver the final 600 centres of a total target of 3,500 centres by 2010. It does not seem that the programme

³ Sally Brooks response to Q716 in oral evidence session 6 December 2006. Ev 198 Education and Skills Committee: Evidence.

⁴ CMS have been in force since January 2006, and are managed by OGC. They were agreed by ministers, including DCSF ministers, at the time. OGC describe the CMS as for departments to "cascade down to others who they fund".

will be altered for Phase 3 to raise sustainability standards, as DCSF has a strategically detached role from the delivery process. The SDC recommends that DCSF urgently reviews the sustainability standards achieved so far in the Children's Centres programme and the standards to be achieved through Phase 3 with the aim of meeting or exceeding the standards delivered through BSF.

The Committee asked the DCSF and Partnerships for Schools to report how the recommendations of the Sustainable Procurement Task Force are being implemented in BSF. The SDC is concerned that schools are still not being procured on a true whole life value basis within the BSF programme, and believe that the procurement process does not incentivise fully sustainable schools. The value of the benefits of sustainable schools should be assessed and accounted for within the BSF programme (eg safe walking and cycling routes, green and natural spaces for play and relaxation, community learning). The SDC recommends that the procurement process should be modified to incentivise high sustainability performance—fully aligned with the Government's Sustainable Schools Strategy.

The Committee noted that the Government must address the issue of schools' carbon emissions. Since the publication of the Committee's report, the SDC has been working intensively with the DCSF to raise the Department's awareness of the emissions footprint from the schools estate, explore the changes required to reduce the carbon footprint by 60% and 80% by 2050, and recommend actions and policy interventions for the DCSF and others to implement or influence in order to deliver these emissions reductions. We found that emissions can be reduced by 80% by 2050 through a comprehensive package of policies and interventions tackling emissions from buildings energy use, travel and transport, procurement and waste. Our advice was presented to the Department in March 2008, and a summary of this will be published on our website⁵ in July 2008. We recommended that the Department develop a strategy to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050 with strong early action to halve emissions by 2020, with specific implications for the Department's capital programmes.⁶ The Department has committed to develop a strategy and is currently reviewing the feasibility of our recommendations.⁷

The Committee recommended that there should be a post-occupancy review of every school within the programme. The SDC's research has found that the mechanisms to deliver and assure sustainability within the BSF programme are not sufficient, and recommend that BREEAM for Schools is updated to set minimum performance criteria for key sustainability elements, and to include a thorough Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) review for each completed school.

The SDC broadly welcomes the DCSF proposals⁸ to better link BSF investment to regeneration and new communities and the potential of this proposal to bring wider benefits to communities from the investment in school assets. We recommend that DCSF and Partnerships for Schools work closely with the Department for Communities and Local Government and its new Homes and Communities Agency to implement this proposal. We believe this will enhance the potential to proactively develop community energy networks within the BSF programme as an innovative method of carbon reduction in schools (and the wider community). We also believe the DCSF and DfT should jointly ensure that new schools are provided with excellent quality cycle and walking routes and are situated in places which minimise the need for vehicle usage.

The SDC is very encouraged by the Department's ambition to deliver zero carbon schools from 2016 and is a member of the Zero Carbon Schools Task Force. The SDC's work on the carbon footprint of the schools estate underlines the importance of radically reducing emissions from new schools within the timescale of the BSF programme, but also of setting stringent standards for carbon emissions of refurbished schools too, and welcomes the extension of the Task Force's remit to advise on carbon standards for refurbished schools.

July 2008

Memorandum submitted by TANDBERG

SUMMARY

- The Building schools for the Future Programme provides an unparalleled opportunity to improve the UK's schools to ensure that they can deliver the best education possible for future generations. In our opinion, for a school to be truly sustainable we cannot only focus on the bricks and mortar. We must ensure that the ICT infrastructure that is put in place is fit for the future.
- In our opinion the Building Schools for the Future Programme has not, to date, encouraged contractors to fully bear this in mind when procuring ICT. The capacity for new technologies to both complement and build on existing teaching methods is yet to be fully realised.

⁵ www.sd-commission.org.uk

⁶ Recommendations to DCSF include: zero carbon new schools by 2016, establish higher carbon performance standards for schools refurbished in capital programmes, new extensive programme of renewable energy retrofit to school buildings, more efficient ICT equipment, consider school location and provision of safe routes to school to maximise walking and cycling, and provision of facilities on school grounds to enable walking and cycling.

⁷ http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2008_0113

⁸ DCSF, 2008, The management of Building Schools for the Future waves 7 to 15. Consultation.

- The lack of guidance for contractors involved in the Building Schools for the Future Programme has meant that many of the new schools will not be able to take advantage of new technologies such as video conferencing.
- In addition, the challenges associated with the 14–19 Agenda and transporting students between different educational providers have not been fully explored. The potential for delivering a greater proportion of lessons via video conferencing should be considered at the earliest opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

1. TANDBERG welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Children, Schools and Families Committee follow up inquiry into sustainable schools and the Building Schools for the Future programme.

2. TANDBERG is a leading global provider of visual communication products and services. The Company has dual headquarters in New York and Norway. TANDBERG designs, develops and markets systems and software for video, voice and data. The Company provides sales, support and value-added services in more than 90 countries worldwide.

3. In the UK, we work with a range of public sector organisations including the emergency services, schools, local authorities, universities, Primary Care Trusts and central government departments. We also provide services for some of the leading private-sector companies in the country.

4. The Building Schools for the Future Programme provides an unparalleled opportunity to improve the UK's schools to ensure that they can deliver the best education possible for future generations. For a school to be truly sustainable we cannot only focus on the bricks and mortar. We must ensure that the ICT infrastructure that is put in place is fit for the future.

5. In our opinion the Building Schools for the Future Programme has not, to date, encouraged contractors to fully bear this in mind when procuring ICT. The capacity for new technologies to both complement and build on existing teaching methods is yet to be fully realised.

6. The inquiry is wide-ranging and deals with a number of areas which it would not be relevant for us to comment on. However, we would particularly like to share our expertise on two areas—ICT procurement and how video conferencing could help to resolve the challenge that transport presents to the delivery of the 14–19 Agenda.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROCUREMENT AND DESIGN OF ICT FOR SCHOOLS

7. In the draft ICT output specification⁹ that was consulted on in April 2004, detailed information was provided for contractors on the procurement of video conferencing in schools. The specification highlighted that video conferencing technology “supports the creation of connected learning communities” and “can be used not only for external use, but also remote viewing of internal events or lectures.”

8. The draft output specification stated that the service provided “must be able to support the operation of up to three video conferencing sessions at any one time, one of which would involve a class of pupils.” It also added that the service “should include a facility for pupils to watch lessons remotely (eg from hospital).”

9. However, when the final output specification¹⁰ was published, this information was significantly watered down, with the document simply stating that “audio and video conferencing shall be supported.” No further information was provided to help contractors decide what type of technology might be suitable and how video conferencing technology could improve the educational environment.

10. This has led to many contractors installing proprietary web based video solutions rather than standards based video conferencing equipment.

11. Put simply, standards based video conferencing solutions comply with the umbrella standard¹¹ which is issued by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The ITU issues guidance on how communications devices should work, developing standards upon which manufacturers can build new technologies with confidence in their ability to communicate with any other devices designed to meet the standard. Conversely a proprietary system is one which does not adhere to these standards preventing it from connecting to or working with any device outside of its own solution.

12. The problem with schools installing proprietary based systems is that it does not allow them to utilise the JANET video conferencing service—the broadband network that connects 18 million end users in UK schools, universities, FE Colleges, Research Councils, Specialist Colleges and Adult and Community Learning providers. JANET also links third parties from around the world to schools in the UK free of charge, provided they possess a standards based video conferencing solution.

⁹ http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/6372/LEP%20ICT%20spec%20v3.doc

¹⁰ http://www.p4s.org.uk/documents/BSF_Standard_Documents/ICTOutputSpecificationTemplateAugust2006.doc

¹¹ Specifically the H.323 standard as issued by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) which ensures compatibility between video conferencing systems from around the world.

13. The quality of video streaming from proprietary solutions is also generally much poorer than standards based options, and could not, for example, be used to project an image of a teacher to enable them to teach a whole class.

14. Standards based video conferencing technology, however, can be used to teach a whole class, or link classes in different locations together. For example, we have been closely involved in the provision of video conferencing to Ernesford Grange Primary School in Coventry. Our equipment has enabled the local education authority to overcome a lack of language provision at some schools by delivering lessons remotely with the physical assistance of a classroom assistant.

15. Standards based video conferencing units can also link schools to other educational providers via the JANET video conferencing service, including museums such as the National Space Centre in Leicester, the Natural History Museum in London, the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield, and many other institutions that provide interactive, real-time lessons over video. Many of the proprietary video solutions currently being offered prevents the use of the service and the ability to collaborate with other schools at home or abroad.

16. Unfortunately, due to the lack of guidance on what systems to buy, contractors are often installing proprietary web based video conferencing solutions as they are cheaper to buy than the units supplied by the leading suppliers (all of whom comply with ITU guidance). However, by installing equipment that does not have the same level of functionality, ultimately it is the students that lose out as they cannot use the technology to its full advantage.

17. Video conferencing also promotes innovative curriculum design. Video conferencing can be fully integrated with interactive whiteboard technology and used to record the “lesson experience” for recall later helping populate school Learning Platforms for use in revision and extending learning outside school hours.

18. However, due to the fact that many schools built under the Building Schools for the Future programme are only installing proprietary solutions because of the limited guidance available, it has meant that the vast majority of schools built under the programme will not be able to benefit from these innovative ways of teaching.

19. This is despite the six figure investment that has been invested into the JANET network, which will allow schools and colleges across the country to be able to make use of high quality video conferencing technology.

20. Further, more detailed, guidance should be made available to contractors relating to the educational benefits of standards based video conferencing, to ensure that more students are able to benefit from the use of the technology.

DELIVERING THE 14–19 AGENDA

21. In September 2008, the first tranche of Diplomas will start to roll out. One of the main challenges to the successful delivery of the 14–19 Agenda will be transporting students between different educational providers.

22. While the provision of affordable transport to move students from site to site might be cost effective in urban areas, it is less likely to be so in rural areas where public transport is less extensive and less frequent. The greater the distance between consortia institutions, the greater the cost and the more time spent travelling during the school day which cannot be spent learning. This has serious implications for the delivery of Diplomas.

23. On 30 June 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) announced an injection of £23 million to help rural areas tackle the travel problems associated with the delivery of Diplomas. The package includes funding new Transport Coordinators in 40 of the most rural areas, who will provide advice and guidance on how to tackle the issue. This has included ideas such as funding students to travel by moped between the different establishments.

24. We believe that video conferencing provides a far more efficient, cost effective and green alternative to the large scale movement of students from site to site than using mopeds or minibuses. Now that all schools have broadband, video conferencing provides a logical and realistic solution to the challenge that transport presents to the delivery of the 14–19 Agenda.

25. By installing video conferencing in new schools as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme, this will allow schools to deliver part of the Diploma courses by video conferencing. This will allow students greater access to a variety of specialist teachers, whilst minimising time and money wasted travelling.

26. Video conferencing has been transformed over recent years. Modern systems provide the highest real time video and sound quality in face-to-face communication over existing broadband infrastructure.

27. An additional benefit of including video conferencing in new schools is that many employers keen to engage with the 14–19 Agenda already have this technology in place. This will help to promote joint working and ensure more effective monitoring of students’ progress in the workplace. There is also considerable potential to exploit such facilities to deliver careers advice.

28. In our opinion, the challenges associated with transporting students between different educational providers have not been fully explored, and the potential for delivering a greater proportion of lessons via video conferencing should be considered at the earliest opportunity.

July 2008

Joint memorandum submitted by the Teacher Support Network and British Council for School Environments (BCSE)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Teacher Support Network and the British Council for School Environments believe that there is an urgent need to improve school facilities. Our joint survey last year revealed a number of widespread problems in existing school buildings.
- There is a strong link between school facilities and pupil performance. For example, school facilities, teacher wellbeing and pupil performance all interrelate.
- In a roundtable meeting with key stakeholders held last month, a number of key client and supply side problems were identified that must be addressed if Building Schools for the Future is to be a success.
- We believe that further reduction of the sample schemes and more time for the design stage will help to ensure that architects are not overburdened.
- We also believe that the remaining stages of the Building Schools for the Future programme will be a greater success if teachers are given support to free up time for active involvement in the process, in part by the establishment of a network of local advisers who can act as a bridge between schools, architects, building companies, local authorities and national government.

ABOUT TEACHER SUPPORT NETWORK

1. Teacher Support Network provide practical, emotional and financial support to teachers throughout the UK. Our team of qualified coaches, advisers and counsellors run a free confidential support service on the phone and online, which is available to any training, serving or retired teacher at any time, 365 days of the year. Previously known as the Teachers' Benevolent Fund, we also provide financial support to teachers in need. The last decade in our 131 year history has seen our reach expand five-fold; now serving teachers almost 100,000 times a year.

2. In addition to these responsive services, we also carry out a plethora of proactive work to improve the health and wellbeing of teachers. Analysis of our service usage gives us a clear indication of the problems that teachers currently face. We will then run appropriate surveys and campaigns to investigate a problem further, raise awareness and alleviate problems troubling teachers. We have also established a sister social enterprise company—Worklife Support—which runs the National Wellbeing Programme; designed to improve the wellbeing of the whole school community.

ABOUT BCSE

3. The British Council for School Environments is a membership organisation made up of schools, local authorities, construction companies, architects and all those involved in and concerned about designing excellent learning environments.

4. This new organisation is a forum for the exchange of good practice, research, dialogue and advocacy, supporting organisations from across the private and public sectors to understand each other's needs. The members range from global leaders in construction and design to primary and secondary schools.

THE NEED FOR BETTER SCHOOL BUILDINGS

5. There is an urgent need to improve school facilities in the interests of pupils, school staff and the wider school community. In a joint survey on school environments that we conducted last year, just 12% of the teachers who responded said that their school building provided an effective learning environment. Out of the 530 respondents, 87% believed that school environments influence pupil behaviour and 60% also said that their school didn't have an adjustable environment to support curriculum delivery. Common causes of complaint were poor temperature control, inadequate facilities for PPA, and outdated layout and equipment. Our full report on the survey is enclosed for your information.

6. The survey results clearly show a strong link—directly and indirectly via teachers—between school facilities and pupil performance. Firstly, poor facilities such as inadequate temperature control make it harder for pupils to concentrate and learn; damaging pupil performance directly. Secondly, poor facilities are also restricting teachers. Restricted teaching means that pupils get a poorer education; leading to poorer pupil performance.

7. We are also sure that these effects are impacting on teacher wellbeing. For example, we believe that poor acoustics make it difficult for teachers to communicate with their pupils; hindering their efforts to teach and harming their confidence in their own ability. This would be another worrying impact of bad school buildings. Research conducted last year by Birkbeck College and Worklife Support provided clear evidence of the link between teacher wellbeing and pupil performance. A report on this research is also enclosed for your information.¹²

8. All of these findings suggest that the majority of school facilities need to be improved urgently. In this respect, we welcome the Government's efforts to speed up the Building Schools for the Future programme. However, we also have a number of concerns about the programme, both from the client and supply sides.

9. These concerns were discussed at a roundtable meeting on Building Schools for the Future, which Teacher Support Network and BCSE hosted in June 2008. Key stakeholders, including teaching unions, architects, and the DCSF, were all in attendance. The attendees identified a number of problems with the Building Schools for the Future programme that need to be addressed if the planned acceleration and streamlining is to be a success.

PROBLEMS ON THE SUPPLY SIDE; ARCHITECTS AND SOURCES OF FINANCIAL OR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

10. Architects involved in Building Schools for the Future said that the demands during the procurement process were too great. One said that they felt “bruised by the process”; saying that at one point, they even had to design seven schools in just 14 weeks.

11. As a result, they said that this time pressure was having a negative impact on the quality of school designs. They wanted to take time to explain all the possibilities of new buildings to teachers, but felt rushed into producing quicker, less ambitious designs.

12. Architects also felt that their designs lacked input from teachers and the wider school community. In their experience, better engagement in the design process would lead to better buildings, but teachers generally had little time to develop and share their design ideas. In consultation, teachers often seemed to think about how to improve their existing building, rather than develop a vision of their ideal school building. One contributor said: “unless you get quality engagement, you'll never get a quality end product.”

13. Architects also added that the aims of the Building Schools for the Future programme were potentially unrealistic, given the information and funds available. They felt that they were expected to design school buildings that could successfully support learning for the next 25 years, but the information needed to do this was not (and could not realistically be) available. They pointed out that it was impossible to guarantee that a new building would accommodate the many possible demographic and technological changes in such a long period. Likewise, one contributor said that it was not possible to design a climate control system to fully accommodate possible climate change within current budgets.

14. Finally, a public body representative from the creative industries added that many schools in the Building Schools for the Future programme were failing to use other available resources to make their new building as beneficial as possible to their communities. The body had tried to establish stakeholder groups for school communities, but teachers did not have time to attend. As a result, schools missed out on opportunities for extra funding and their building plans were not co-ordinated with other work in the area; harming the school and the community as a whole.

PROBLEMS ON THE CLIENT SIDE; TEACHERS, PUPILS AND THE OVERALL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

15. The roundtable forum showed that teachers have too little time and resources to input effectively into the Building Schools for the Future procurement process. Representatives from trade unions and other teaching organisations said that the everyday pressures on teachers are great, and that teachers do not receive the extra support necessary to cater for the demands of creating and moving to a new building. Reflecting the earlier point, architects commented that Headteachers were clearly very busy and did not seem to be able to devote the necessary time to the design process. Lack of engagement or enthusiasm by Headteachers would inevitably influence the quality of, and opportunities for contributions by other teachers and the rest of the school community. All of this helped to explain why contributions from teachers could be narrow and lacking in vision. Likewise, time pressure helped to explain why teachers had not extended consultation to the local community and capitalised on public body and other local initiatives.

¹² Not printed.

16. Architects also said that it was understandable that teachers were not offering a design vision for the school, because they had very little or no experience of similar projects. The experiences of other teachers involved in the programme were not being disseminated, meaning that the new buildings were not reaping any best practice benefits.

17. Mirroring their own complaint about the expectations of the Building Schools for the Future programme, architects added that teachers were under unfair pressure to make long-term decisions without long-term information. Even short-term demographic and technological forecasts (eg plans to make new kinds of ICT equipment available to schools) were not available for consideration. We would imagine that it is even harder to make such forecasts in a period of such change for schools, which will include the raising of the participation age for education and training to 18 and the introduction of 14–19 Diplomas.

18. As a result of the three above client-side pressures, architects said that new school buildings were at risk of lacking a sense of ownership and pride. They argued that, without true involvement in the design process by teachers, pupils and the neighbouring community, people would not feel attached to a building that should be a source of pride in any area. They also observed that teachers were invariably asking for “flexibility” as a result of the above-mentioned time and information constraints, meaning that the end product would lack personalisation, identity and purpose.

19. Finally, attendees said that there was a danger that, as a result of the above client-side factors, schools in need of new buildings may choose not to apply to be a sample scheme on the Building Schools for the Future programme. They could feel that the programme would be too much of a burden to the school in the short term, or they may simply not have time to put their case forward for funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

20. The aforementioned problems with the Building Schools for the Future programme must be addressed if the planned acceleration and streamlining is to be a success. We would like to see far greater interaction between architects and teachers throughout the process, from project scoping to the official school opening.

21. Steps must be taken to ensure that architects are not overburdened. The procurement process must give greater consideration to the aggregate workload and costs of bidders and be wary of the negative impact that this can have on the end product. Further reduction of the sample schemes and more time for the design stage are two options to consider.

22. It is clear that teachers are lacking the time and information necessary to make the most of the opportunity provided by the Building Schools for the Future programme. It is right that teachers are involved in the process, but they must be given the resources needed to make the best contribution possible. There should be a network of local advisers, similar to and working with the Extended schools support service, who can act as a bridge between schools, architects, building companies, local authorities and national government. Teachers should also be given support to free up time for active involvement in the process. These recommendations could play a key role in ensuring that the remaining stages of the Building Schools for the Future programme are a success.

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