

remarkable

public affairs property & planning

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remarkable



Lisa Alexander, director, PA

The more things change...

Welcome to the second issue of Remark. This issue is probably best summed up by the phrase, "the more things change, the more they stay the same".

Springtime is always loaded with expectation for the year ahead, but this year it's particularly exciting. 2010 will show us how resilient recent green shoots will prove to be.

Politics moves fast and in an election year – no matter what the result – it's pretty much guaranteed that we'll see some major developments. In the newsletter we'll be taking a look at the policies of the three main parties that are most likely to impact on the world of planning.

So that's the change – but what will stay the same? Well, whatever happens, developers will still be facing tough communications challenges, and will need a combination of best practice, experienced professionals and good old fashioned hard work in order to achieve planning success. We'll also share a few insights on these important ingredients and show how we can help you stay successful, no matter what the future brings!

Enjoy remark.

Lisa ▲



Public exhibitions: the secrets of success!

When the task is to explain a planning application to local residents and councillors, Remarkable recommends public exhibitions in preference to public meetings.

Public meetings can feel like war when one or two opinionated objectors dominate the discussion and prevent other attendees from asking their questions. At exhibitions everyone gets to talk with members of the development team one to one; study the plans and information on display and feedback their comments for consideration if they wish. That's why they provide a great way to diffuse angry objection and win hearts and minds.

Of course, some developers question the need to engage with the public at all, but Remarkable director Dan Hayman does not agree. "If you don't speak to the community, someone else will and that someone could be a local activist who objects to all development on principle.

"Consultation shows that you are willing both to explain and to listen. It means that people are far more likely to receive balanced information about your plans and to understand how planning law restricts what you are able to do. It's our experience over many years that when developers consult on their proposals, objection falls off. This can be enough to tip the balance away from a refusal at committee and save the cost of a lengthy appeal."

The art of exhibitions

Setting up and running effective public exhibitions calls for excellent organisation; plenty of publicity to tell people what's happening and when; good exhibition collateral and a keen and knowledgeable team on the day.



As a veteran of over 500 such exhibitions, Dan continues: "A sense of humour and genuine respect for local residents from every part of society are essential to put attendees at ease. They can turn up in hoodies or carpet slippers, while you'll be in your suit; so connect with them by being as friendly as you are professional.

"Stamina is essential as exhibitions involve travel, set up and break down phases before and after the event, and several hours of intense concentration. The skills of a diplomat, a showman and a sales engineer are also handy.

"Every attendee should be able to talk to the planner, architect or engineer who can best answer their questions. Turning round objectors to see the benefits of your proposals depends on putting people at their ease, and putting across a good case." ▲

Communicate to win

The tried and tested way of building up opposition to a regeneration scheme or proposals for new energy production is to say little, make sure that each statement contradicts the last one, and fail to answer questions. As far as we know, no-one does this deliberately, but it sometimes seems to happen.

One of the most valuable aspects of Remarkable's planning communications service is the work we do in helping our clients to refine their messages. This means explaining your scheme honestly and clearly in plain English. Good messaging is both factual and concise.

Remarkable's top tips are:

1. Avoid planning jargon.
2. Use plenty of images and not too many words.
3. Never underestimate people's intelligence or overestimate their knowledge.
4. Recognise that it's important to local residents to know what you are attempting to develop near their homes.
5. Anticipate and address local concerns. ▲

Inside remark:

A remarkable guide

Planning issues explained.

25 years on from Live Aid

Ethiopia support from Remarkable.

Top score for Reko

Puma promotional video for World Cup.



Remarkable's guide to planning issues after the election – what's likely to happen

With the general election fast approaching and the polls pointing to a possible change in government, all eyes are turning to the three main parties' policies to see what's on offer.



Labour

The December 2009 Pre-Budget Report provided an excellent opportunity to review Labour's intentions. With regard to development, the Report mentioned the possibility of introducing Tif (Tax Increment Financing), a scheme used in America for the past 50 years.

Tif uses predicted future gains in taxes to fund current improvements which, in theory, will then allow for those future gains. For example – if a public road was built, this could lead to an increase in the value of the surrounding property, and perhaps new investment. The increased site value and investment will often lead to increased tax revenues which are known as tax increments.

Although not supported by all, Tif has been broadly welcomed by business and industry leaders in the UK.

The chancellor used the PBR to announce that the government would "continue to examine" the framework for Tif and how it could be used in the UK, while also looking at the primary legislation needed to implement it.

With regard to housing, the government's target of 240,000 new homes a year by 2016 is to be supported by an expansion of the Public Land Initiative. Run by the Homes and Communities Agency, this aims to bring forward surplus public sector land for new housing. It allows public land owners to make sites available to house builders on a 'deferred payment' basis, rather than selling them outright.

Also announced was the formation of a new body – Infrastructure UK – responsible for advising the government on priorities for long-term national infrastructure investment and developing a strategy in advance of Budget 2010.

Conservatives

From the Conservative perspective, Infrastructure UK is simply another quango within a clogged administration. Given David Cameron's views on quangos, it is possible that, should the Conservatives win the next election, Infrastructure UK would disappear with numerous others in the party's quango cull.

Also on the hit list are the Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Assemblies, both of which are likely to be disbanded in favour of a more localised approach. The party aims to remove regional decision making on development and hand control back to local authorities to make decisions better suited to the individual locations.

The Tories believe this will remove pressure on local authorities to provide unduly high levels of development in areas which cannot support it. The party intends to place a Planning and Local Communities Bill in Parliament within a year of an election victory, although amendments could be made more quickly using devolved powers.

The recently established Infrastructure Planning Commission is also in line for the chop under the Tories, who claim it is a further level of unnecessary quango involvement. The Commission was established in advance of a number of national policy statements. It replaces eight planning regimes, with the objective of saving £300 million and speeding up decision making on applications such as road, rail and port infrastructure, nuclear power, and oil and gas applications.

The party also aims to encourage a more bottom-up approach to development with greater support for local groups wishing to shape their areas and by replacing Labour's 'decent homes' with 'decent neighbourhoods'.

One of the party's more ambitious approaches to encourage development at a local level has received much attention in recent months: Under a Conservative administration, from 2011/12, local authorities would retain any increase in council tax revenue as a result of development in their areas (with 100 per cent retention for open market homes and 125 per cent for affordable homes) as well as retaining business rates. Funds would not be ring fenced and would replace central funding as an incentive for development.

Although the removal of unelected bodies from the planning process is generally considered a positive step, house builders are concerned that this overhaul will further delay development, which could be critically damaging in the current economic climate.



Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats echo the Conservative view on regionally defined housing targets, and have pledged to scrap these in favour of local authority decision making.

The party plans to make repossessions of properties a last resort, ensuring banks do all they can to prevent people losing their homes. Lib Dems have continuously highlighted the lack of affordable housing to rent and propose to build tens of thousands of simple new homes for this purpose, so far fewer people are left without a warm and secure home. Finally, the party wishes to create a system of 'Safe Start' mortgages that protect buyers from negative equity.

Numerous changes with regard to development and housing are being proposed across the political spectrum. As all parties embrace the green agenda with measures to tackle climate change and the carbon footprint, planning and development are likely to become ever more topical issues for debate in the new decade. ▲

A remarkably diverse offering

In five years of fast-track growth and development The Remarkable Group has evolved from a small, ambitious PR firm to a fully integrated communications group.



On the way, it has added an impressive property and planning communications service along with digital, design and marketing expertise.

Director Lisa Alexander (pictured above) joined Remarkable in 2004 to deliver planning communications for two regional residential developers. Since then, the company's public property and planning communications practice has grown in size, capabilities and geographic spread.

Remarkable now supports the full range of building and infrastructure development. Projects are in progress throughout the country. "At any one time we could be working on several supermarket developments, a range of housing, commercial and mixed use schemes, and a wind farm or a waste facility," Lisa says.

"Some of the most controversial schemes we have worked on have involved sports, leisure, recycling and waste, and church uses," Lisa continues. "Our most impressive project to date was to manage the public consultation for the £2 billion Greater Manchester PFI waste management contract.

"I'm pleased to report that we contributed to the success of all 36 applications for waste management facilities across 22 sites that will help to recycle up to 60 per cent of Manchester's household waste. Local residents and stakeholders generally welcomed the prospect of new recycling and composting facilities, but there were also pockets of strong objection to address.

"The secret of success is to apply the same principles of open, honest communication whatever the subject of the planning application. Quite simply, we deliver best practice. Time and again it proves its worth in helping to get applications approved." ▲

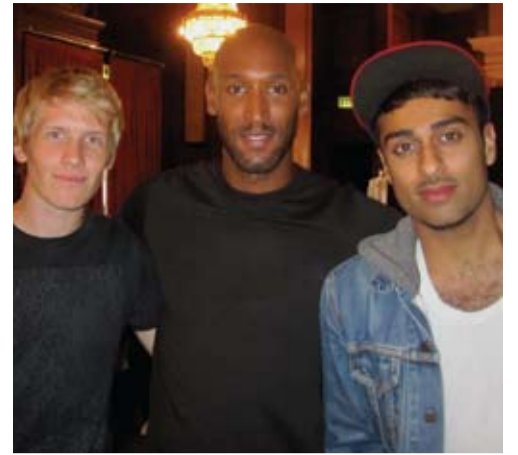


Crucial policies at a glance

A policy library covering the main political parties' stance on key issues will soon be available as an additional resource for Remarkable's clients.

Currently under construction by the Property and Planning team, it will consist of policy briefings on Labour, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, and the Green Party, and will cover topics such as: housing, wind, nuclear waste and major infrastructure.

Each briefing will be broken down into a number of subheadings, making it easily accessible and quickly digestible. The briefings will be available for clients to download from Remarkable's website in the near future. ▲



Nic Yeeles, Nicolas Anelka and Ehsan Bhatti at the Puma shoot

Reko Score with Puma

The Remarkable Group's specialist video and motion graphics division, Reko, is working with one of the biggest sporting brands for a World Cup campaign.

Reko is creating a promotional video for Puma, filming behind the scenes at its World Cup campaign photo shoot with Chelsea's Nicolas Anelka and Arsenal's Bacary Sagna, Tomas Rosicky and Emmanuel Eboue.

The shoot took place at the famous Pinewood Studios - the home of world class film, television and commercial production and post production facilities. Head of video and motion design for Reko, Nic Yeeles, said: "Being appointed by Puma is fantastic news. It was great filming the promotional and viral video at Pinewood Studios and very exciting to be where the James Bond films were produced."

Reko offers clients video production using motion graphics for on-line advertising, promotions, websites and show reels. Puma appointed Reko following its presence at this year's London Fashion Week where the team worked with top designers Issa London; Aquascutum; Jasmine Di Milo and Ballantyne. ▲

For more information on Reko please visit www.reko.tv or call 01962 893 893 and ask for Nic Yeeles or Stephen Pomeroy.

25 years on from Live Aid

Twenty five years after those shocking and moving television pictures of the Ethiopian famine sparked the global Live Aid phenomenon, Remarkable's CEO Stephen Pomeroy has been back to see for himself the work that has been going on since to rebuild lives and communities in Ethiopia.

At the end of 2009 Stephen was approached by St Mathews Church Children's fund (SMCF) asking if he would support its Twenty5 campaign. This campaign provides opportunities to reach potential charity supporters and, crucially, helps to give children a better start in life. Stephen took two of Remarkable's video production team, Nic Yeeles and Ehsan Bhatti, to Ethiopia to capture, on a short film, the difficulties, the hope and the action within Ethiopia twenty five years on from Live Aid.

Twenty5 was launched to celebrate the 25 years of work that has been done to support the orphans and communities of Ethiopia devastated by the famine and poverty. Alongside its partner JeCCDo, the SMCF has helped to save thousands of children. Twenty5 will highlight some of the incredibly powerful and moving stories of some of these children - and how their lives have changed since 1984.



Ehsan, Stephen, Biadgign and Nic

The Twenty5 campaign is designed to celebrate this work, but also to ensure Ethiopian people need never again experience the devastating effects of widespread famine. It is a campaign focused on enabling local people to develop a sustainable future for themselves.

Twenty5 will raise awareness and funds to invest in communities over a number of years, helping Ethiopians to improve their education, childcare,

health and environment so that they are better placed to overcome food shortages in the future.

In the next issue Stephen reports back on his Ethiopian mission. The film, produced on location in Ethiopia, will be aired at a parliamentary reception this summer and will then form part of a wider national media, digital and promotional campaign.

In the meantime, the Twenty5 campaign needs

sponsors, so if you would like to be involved in this very worthwhile project, get in touch with Stephen Pomeroy at Remarkable. ▲

For more information call 01962 893 893 and ask for Stephen Pomeroy.

Visit www.twenty5ethiopia.org for more details about the Twenty5 campaign.



Digital expert to head up team



Simon Judd has been appointed head of the digital department to further strengthen its 10 strong team at Remarkable.

He's worked in the digital industry for nearly 12 years in a number of top rated digital agencies in the south, including one of the world's largest networks - Graphico DMG. Simon has worked for clients such as STA Travel, Historic Royal Palaces and Pernod Ricard.

He began his career at Southampton Institute and Bournemouth University as marketing manager. After working in house for four years he then opted for agency life.

Simon's new role at Remarkable will give him the exciting challenge of running the digital side of the business, working closely with the creative team. Alongside his client work, Simon will play a major role in winning new business, drawing up proposals and meeting potential new clients to increase the agency's ever increasing portfolio. ▲

£40,000 raised at NSPCC ChildLine Ball

An amazing £40,000 was raised at the Enchanted ChildLine Ball at Oakley Hall near Basingstoke in October - an event that Remarkable helped to organise.

The evening of glitz and glamour was attended by 270 guests and was hosted by Esther Rantzen CBE. ITN's Alastair Stewart OBE was compère. The Diamond Girls, dressed in theatrical butterfly masks, sold tickets for the chance to win a £2,500 diamond; while a piece of art by Tony Hart, of Take Hart fame, went for £1,900 in the silent auction.



Alistair Stewart and Esther Rantzen

The Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, donated a signed copy of her children's book 'Tea for Ruby' to the auction and guests were entertained by Britain's Got Talent finalists, Signature. The FABBAGIRLS, got everyone up and dancing and guests left with signed copies of Britain's Got Talent Escala's first album, donated by the band.

Founder and President of ChildLine, Esther Rantzen, said: "The Hampshire Enchanted ChildLine Ball was quite simply superb. It was the best ChildLine ball I have ever had the pleasure of attending."

Remarkable's Catherine Reid, who was on the Ball organizing committee and provided pro bono PR and design work, including media relations and website creation, agreed that it was a fantastic event. ▲

Remarkable sweeps up six top awards



An impressive six trophies headed Remarkable's way at the CIPR Oscars held at the De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel, showcasing the cream of the region's in-house and agency PR work over the last 12 months. Remarkable won gold awards for the 'Best Public Affairs' and 'Not for Profit' category, as well as 'Best Use of Design' for HIPPOWASTE™'s Death of the Skip campaign.

Remarkable was also runner up in three other awards; winning silver for 'Integrated Communications' for Hampshire Cricket and 'Best Publication' for Viridor Credits. A silver award was also secured for 'Most Outstanding Agency', with Remarkable narrowly missing out on the gold, which it previously won in 2007 and 2008.

PR director Chris Wotton said it was a great team effort: "Winning awards is fantastic recognition for the Remarkable team but more importantly it reflects the results we are achieving for clients."

The agency will now go on to represent the Wessex and Channel Islands region in the national finals this year.

Katherine Steadman, chair of CIPR Wessex, said: "A CIPR PRide Award is a hallmark of professionalism and success - it recognises and rewards the outstanding achievements of those working in the PR industry. To win a CIPR PRide Award is a tremendous achievement." ▲

The winning formula: Uniting support

Mobilising residential support proved Remarkable's key to success for retail clients this year, highlighting that not all residents are objectors.

When Remarkable was instructed in the later stages of a site proposal for a new retail store in the North West, the client was faced with an officer recommendation for refusal on the grounds of need. At short notice - a matter of weeks away from the planning committee meeting - Remarkable's property and planning division was charged with turning this around. It was a challenge, but one that the team was well equipped to deal with.

Drawing on its extensive property communications experience in delivering positive planning outcomes, Remarkable believes that local community support is fundamentally important. Building alliances with residents and mobilising these into a cohesive and coherent voice can send out powerful messages to decision makers, and be hugely influential when it comes to securing final consent.



Such a voice is likely to resonate more and have more credibility and reach. It will validate the proposal and be harder to ignore or overlook.

For this specific proposal, initial engagement with community stakeholders led by the retailer's planning consultants consisted of a standard public exhibition before Remarkable was involved. This achieved low turn-out and was poorly followed up, with letters to just 100 residents.

Learning of the recommendation for refusal, Remarkable was brought in to harness and mobilise any possible local support in a renewed bid for a successful outcome and to avoid an expensive appeal.



Remarkable's first initiative was to motivate the silent majority of supporters in the town. The team produced and distributed a leaflet/newsletter drop to more than 1,000 residents. The information provided set out the development scheme, conveyed the key benefits of the proposal, and summarised public feedback to date. Most importantly, recipients were encouraged to send in their views via an accompanying pre-paid feedback form and were also given access to a dedicated freephone information line. The input received from both of these provided vital information and contact details from 200 people firmly supporting the scheme - a significant number of whom had not been identified at the earlier public exhibition.

To capitalise on this potential commitment, Remarkable's focus then shifted to segmenting and targeting these audiences with appropriate communications, delivered in a variety of ways. A briefing paper was prepared for all committee and ward members, reflecting and reinforcing the support by summarising the positive feedback secured.

Remarkable also wrote individually to 300 residents who responded to the newsletter - 97 per cent positively - advising them of the status of the

proposal and the date and venue of the committee meeting. Recipients were urged to write or email committee members to express their views and - critically - to attend the actual meeting.

Using the response to this targeted outreach, Remarkable was able to identify strong advocates for the scheme, and potential speakers for the meeting. From this activity, a suitable candidate was identified and approached to speak.

The end results: A very well attended committee meeting in terms of public presence; members highly aware of the far-reaching support; and a passionate resident speaking to voice positive local feeling.

The ultimate result, of course, was the outcome: a unanimous approval, met with rapturous applause from the public balcony.

Galvanising support is of vital importance in creating a firm foundation of goodwill and commitment - crucial to the ultimate success of the proposal. Regardless of how well prepared a proposal is, a successful outcome may be out of reach if it has little or no local community support. ▲