

Urban renewal back on the government agenda

Land tax to lead urban renewal

Business Improvement Districts will be the first government scheme able to pilot a land value tax.

Due to start in 2004, BIDs will spearhead the government's initiative to foster urban regeneration.

Although Labour is unwilling to introduce a new tax to fund urban renewal, officials say they seem to recognise the need to find a way to collect economic rent to pay for urban regeneration, leaving the door open to LVT as a solution. As the government is favouring a voluntary approach for property owners to help fund each BID, there are obstacles to be overcome.

This was highlighted at a conference,

Blair BIDs for broad collaboration

Prime Minister Tony Blair announced the BIDS initiative in April 2001, when he said they "will be funded by an additional business rate agreed together by local business and councils".

BIDS are necessary because Single Regeneration Budget funding has to end, according to EU rules.

The BIDS legislation, due in 2002, will "give broad enabling power" to local partnerships. Officials are already tending to favour BIDs in areas with a sound business base and not, as one source said, for "basket cases". The first BID schemes are likely by 2004.

Currently Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, USA has the only BID funded entirely from LVT. Its director is due to speak at a conference discussing LVT and how it might be implemented in Liverpool's Tate Gallery on 22 February (see page 12).

Progressive Forum goes

Progressive Forum will go international in April.

The Federation Internationale des Geometres (FIG) has told PF convenor Tony Vickers that he can make the announcement when he presents his paper at the World Congress of Surveyors meeting in Washington DC 19-26 April 2002.

A full report of Progressive Forum International's launch will appear in the summer 2002 issue, which will feature resource globalisation as its theme.

The theme of the FIG2002 Congress is geomatics and property valuation for global sustainable development. Geomatics, which

used to be called land surveying, is the science of measuring and depicting the shape of the earth and its features, external and internal.

FIG is a UN-registered non-governmental organisation. The World Congress of Surveyors provides a major opportunity for introducing the concept of land and liberty into professional debate.

Over 1,000 delegates from more than 70 countries are expected – predominantly leading members of land and property professions with influence in development of their national government policies.

Vickers will be attending as a member of



Scottish Lib Dems grasp the thistle

Scottish Liberal Democrats have voted to replace Council Tax with land value taxation and a new system of business rates.

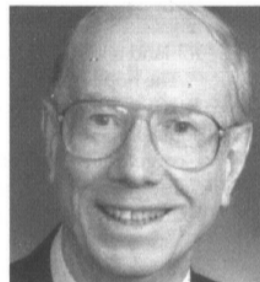
This means for the first time since the 1930s there is a party in power anywhere in Britain theoretically able and willing to legislate for LVT.

Delegates at the Scottish Lib Dem annual conference at Glenrothes in October last year voted to "campaign for the Scottish Executive to abolish Council Tax in favour of... a fairer and more sustainable method of funding local authorities".

They called for the Executive "in particular to consider reforms to introduce... land value taxation and fair and sustainable business rates."

The leading Scottish Lib Dem advocate of LVT, Donald Gorrie MSP, is a strong supporter of a limited pilot of LVT, and is not averse to nationwide adoption of LVT if pilots prove it workable.

Lib Dems share Scottish Executive power with Labour and have twice, in little over two years, produced an acting First Minister for Scotland, with power to introduce legislation to parliament for reform of local government finance.



Gorrie:
a strong
supporter
of LVT