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DESIGN AT THE LARGE SCALE COUNTS MORE THAN EVER

Regional strategies are out under the government's new planning system – but there's still a major role for cross-boundary working. **Biljana Savic**, senior design advisor at CABI, offers a way forward for large-scale projects

Despite the removal of the regional tier and the emphasis on community-driven decisions in the current overhaul of planning policy, local authorities will still need to collaborate across boundaries on some issues. CABI's recent research, *Getting the big picture right*, explores ways of tackling issues that cannot be solved through local action alone. These include large infrastructure projects such as transport hubs, energy generation and new urban extensions, or important new facilities like hospitals and universities. Large-scale urban design addresses other issues that also do not observe boundaries, for example climate change.

Government itself recognises this continuing need for cross-boundary working, of course. In future, some of it will be overseen by local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) which are expected to take over some of the responsibilities of the abolished regional development agencies. They are made up of voluntary partnerships of local authorities and businesses. The government envisages that LEPs will focus primarily on economic development, but also deal with issues such as planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure priorities

and the transition to a low carbon economy. In an early announcement, communities secretary Eric Pickles and business secretary Vince Cable have said that LEPs should reflect the natural economic geography of the areas they serve. Joint local authority working is crucial for making strategic decisions about economic development and infrastructure investment.

Getting the big picture right will help the LEPs to recognise that the spatial dimension must be locked in to the economic dimension when they formulate their plans. It highlights some of the best examples from across Europe.

CABI has long recognised the need for joint working as critical for making the right decisions about economic development and infrastructure investment and improving the quality of life for people living in an area. *Getting the big picture right* sets out the case for 'large-scale urban design', a new way of designing at the level at which economic and housing markets operate. Large-scale urban design recognises that the way that people live their lives has changed. We no longer live our lives in one neighbourhood: we consistently travel further for work, shopping and for leisure.