

## **ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

**Date:** Wednesday 13 December 2000

**Time:** 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

**Venue:** Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

### **REPORT BY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

##### **Meeting with Local Authorities on Environmental Issues**

On 6 December I met members and officers from local authorities throughout Wales to discuss environmental issues. The meeting followed on from similar meetings on transport and planning held earlier in the year. We discussed some of the major issues which confront us, including flooding, high level targets, waste policy, contaminated land and air quality, with a view to improving the way we communicate and the way we deliver our strategic priorities for the environment. Various other meetings on flooding with WLGA, EA and others have been held.

##### **EU Environment Council of Ministers Meeting**

On 18 December I will be a member of the UK delegation at the EU Environment Council of Ministers meeting. I am looking forward to attending this very high profile event and meeting senior counterparts from throughout the EU.

##### **Bathing Waters**

I was pleased to announce on 4 December that Welsh bathing waters have maintained their high quality this year with 74 of the 75 Welsh bathing waters monitored meeting the mandatory bacteria standards set in the European Bathing Water Directive. As with last year there was only one bathing water which failed the mandatory standard.

There has been some decline (32 this year as compared to 39 last year) in the number of bathing waters meeting the EC's guideline standards, which are 20 times more stringent than the mandatory standards. These are also the standards that beaches must meet to be eligible for a European Blue Flag. However, last year was a record year and this year's result is still the second highest ever-recorded in Wales, although there are now more designated bathing waters.

## **COUNTRYSIDE**

### **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 received Royal Assent on 30 November. A number of provisions will come into effect from February 2001, including those concerning local access forums, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, wildlife crime and biodiversity. Most other provisions, including the right of access over open countryside, will come into force in Wales on a day to be appointed by order made by the National Assembly. The Committee is provisionally scheduled to discuss priorities for implementation of the Act in the Spring Term.

**Sue Essex**

**Minister for Environment**