

Local Government and Public Services Committee

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Meeting date: Thursday 30 March 2006

Venue: Committee Room 3, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Proposed EU Directive on Green Vehicles – The Swansea Experience

City and County of Swansea

CENTRAL TRANSPORT UNIT

In line with the Kyoto Protocol, Swansea Council recognised it could have both a direct and indirect effect in support of this protocol. As a result Members and Officers produced a mission statement in the form of 'The Swansea Clean Air Charter' launch in 1997.

Being one of the largest fleet operators in the area it was decided they would lead by example and make their Transport Unit the heart of this policy.

Fully embracing this initiative the Central Transport Unit embarked on a programme of continual improvement both direct and indirect. Direct improvement involved the introduction of 'Green' vehicles which include LPG and exhaust cleaning equipment, and changes to the maintenance regime. Indirect influence included infrastructure improvements and provision of both advice and practical assistance to both other public bodies and private sector companies to promote change.

An internal target of 10% per annum improvement was agreed which has been met or surpassed year on year since 1997. However the removal of grant funding has had an adverse reaction on this initiative due to increased costs to the end user.

The issues involved in the introduction of this initiative were widespread.

Initially, driver's perception of the explosive nature of LPG had to be dispelled and addressed by education.

The lack of refuelling infrastructure was initially a major issue. This was overcome by introducing LPG fuel stocks into the main depot in a way they could be utilised by other organisations.

This facility was promoted and resulted in the Department for Transport Vehicle Inspectorate, DVLA, Land Registry, Social Security, and a wide range of private sector companies and private individuals utilising this new facility.

Swansea was the first Welsh Council to actively promote alternative fuelled vehicles giving Vauxhall its first large order for dual fuel vans, and has been in

the forefront since, gaining the reputation as the lead Authority in Wales. Although a number of other Welsh Authorities have now emulated Swansea's policies, Swansea has achieved national acclaim and recognition by winning a number of awards, culminating in the Energy Savings Trust Public Sector Green Fleet of the Year Award 2005.

On the down side the LPG powered vehicles have not proven to be as reliable as the conventional diesel, and with the removal of the grant funding more expensive. This has caused a dramatic national decline in alternative fuelled vehicle sales which has now prompted the major vehicle manufacturers to review their commitment. Many have dropped production of alternative fuelled vehicles as an option, including Vauxhall which were the market leaders.

Swansea intends to continue to build on past successes by constantly reviewing its policies and the continued introduction of more fuel efficient vehicles and new technologies.

Currently Swansea is lobbying a wide range of bodies in pursuit for the supply of pre-mixed bio-diesel. This is currently not available in South Wales, and thus far there seems little enthusiasm by the fuel suppliers to introduce it as an option. If this attitude can be overcome it will pave the way for several Councils to introduce bio-diesel as an option.

Swansea's submission to the Energy Savings Trust Green Fleet Awards is attached. This provides greater detail of Swansea's approach, initiatives and achievements thus far.

T. R. Avery
19-03-06

EST GREEN FLEET
AWARDS 2005

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

CENTRAL TRANSPORT UNIT

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Annex

EST GREEN FLEET AWARDS 2005

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

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Introduction

Being a coastal city, Swansea does not suffer from poor air quality problems. However this does not weaken the Council's resolve to make improvements for its residents and visitors.

Swansea is committed to responsible procurement and use of energy, in order to meet the UK's reduction targets for Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change programme.

Energy conservation supports one of the Council's Corporate Aims on Sustainable Development, through minimising the adverse environmental effects from the use of fossil fuels.

The Council recognises that it can have both a direct and indirect effect. The direct effect is via the Council's use of energy in its vehicles and operations. The indirect effect is by influencing the wider community which it serves.

Being one of the largest fleet operators in the area it was decided by Members and Officers that the Council should lead by example and place transport at the heart of the environmental strategy. It acts as a nucleus recognising and promoting local participation whenever possible.

Communication

Swansea uses all forms of communication to publicise its initiatives, achievements and policies. These range from simple word of mouth, meetings, lectures and conferences to written in local and national publications, plus the production of focus papers written within the Council. Swansea has been an ardent supporter of the "Green Fleet Awards" since their inception believing them to be a practical platform in raising awareness. The Council has achieved two "Runner-up" awards consecutively plus a Fourth place in this competition. By

active promotion Swansea has been able to provide assistance and guidance to many other bodies less advanced throughout Wales and the UK.

The cost of any policy has to be balanced against benefits. However, “Green Initiatives” normally require a greater financial commitment without always seeing tangible financial benefits. Some of the initial costs can be deferred by substantial Powershift grants and the lower cost of LPG fuel is a longer term saving. The Council consider an improved environment a benefit and has committed itself to this policy.

The Council launched the “Swansea Clean Air Charter” declaring the Councils aim towards a better environment. A cornerstone of this strategy is the Councils “Green Fleet” policy, which has since been enthusiastically pursued and supported. The Councils policy is to promote and sustain its “Clean Air” objectives both directly and indirectly. It will embrace any initiative to achieve this by providing advice or assistance, co-operation and collaboration with others to full partnerships. It actively supports and promotes the following initiatives:

Don't Choke Britain Campaign
Agenda 21
Green Fleet Awards
Green Apple Environmental Awards

The Council also enjoys very close relationships with the Welsh Assembly Government, Energy Savings Trust Powershift, Vauxhall Motors, Ford Motor Company, British Gas/Flo Gas and Emeco.

By working closely with British Gas/Flo Gas UK, the supplier of the Councils LPG refuelling stations, private sector companies have been provided with a refuelling facility which was not previously available. This has allowed them to further the Councils aim in promoting its “Clean Air” policy. Public Bodies and Private Companies which have taken advantage of this facility include Department of Transport Vehicle Inspectorate, Social Security, DVLA, Land Registry Office, a large pharmaceutical company and the Taxi Association plus a number of private individuals.

Initiatives

Swansea Council has actively investigated, trialled and introduced a wide selection of products. These include operational changes, maintenance products, different forms of transport and fuel sources to complete new vehicles. The following initiatives have been introduced and are being constantly improved:

- Unleaded petrol and ultra low sulphur diesel

- LPG
- New petrol refuelling facility with vapour recovery
- Electric powered vehicles and cycles
- Pedal cycles
- Mini bus shuttle service between two office blocks reducing car journeys.
- Low rolling resistance tyres.
- Centralisation and standardisation of fuel management systems to allow four refuelling stations to be utilised by all sections reducing overall unproductive mileage when obtaining fuel.
- Introduction of 175 LPG vehicles
- Introduction of one Bi-fuel (Diesel/LPG) refuse collection vehicle. This is the first of its kind to operate within the UK.
- Introduction of 14 refuse collection vehicles with Eminox CRT exhaust emission cleansing equipment. This will represent 75% of the cleansing RCV fleet.
- Improved utilisation has allowed the fleet size of 700 to be reduced slightly while demand increases.

Taking a holistic approach the Council has dovetailed the following initiatives to compliment the internal improvements:

- Formed a Corporate Working Group to focus on Transportation to investigate current trends and patterns and possible ways in which staff can be encouraged to change travel habits. The initiative is called START (Staff Take Action to Reduce Travel) More than 640 employees have taken part in the review process from which an improvement plan is being produced.
- Develop a “Park and Ride” strategy. Two locations have been developed with secure parking on the main approaches to the City. This has reduced car movements within the City Centre.
- As part of sustainable transport under the umbrella “Multi-Modal Travel” the Council is developing through the National Cycle Network Routes, a further 9km of cycle track which will bring the total to 50kms. Cycle tracks are being incorporated into all new major developments to further extend this facility.

Current Initiatives

During the given period the Council has introduced

- 11 dual fuel (LPG/Petrol) vans
- 9 refuse collection vehicles with exhaust emission reduction equipment
- vehicle tracking devices on 100+ vehicles which has produced a reduction in journey miles, thus reducing both fuel usage and exhaust emissions
- consolidate workshop waste products via recycling and environmentally acceptable methods
- introduce 95 new vehicles with low emission diesel engines

Achievements

The introduction of the car sharing scheme and the mini-bus shuttle has reduced the need for pool vehicles. The number of cars has now been reduced by approximately 25%. The introduction of the dual fuel vehicles and new diesel powered commercial vehicles, plus the refuse collection vehicles has improved the “Green” credentials by 50% and 75% respectively, and the “Park and Ride” initiatives has reduced car movements within the City by approximately 16,500 per month with a potential for considerably greater reduction.

Swansea has had a robust “Green” policy for many years which has brought recognition within the Welsh Assembly Government. It offers assistance by communicating its achievements and progressive learning to others openly.

Swansea is considered by many to be the Lead Authority in Wales having clearly demonstrated its commitment over many years, and by doing so has influenced a large number of private sector and local government bodies to follow suit. The publication of these Awards highlights what is being achieved collectively and demonstrates the opportunity for individual improvement, which ultimately should benefit all.