

## MINUTES

**Date:** 1 November 2002

**Time:** 10:30 - 13:00

**Venue:** Plas Dolerw, Newtown

**Attendance:****Members**

MickBates (Chair)

Liberal Democrat

Montgomeryshire

Cynog Dafis

Plaid Cymru

Mid and West Wales

Delyth Evans

Labour

Mid and West Wales

Glyn Davies

Conservative

Mid and West Wales

**In Attendance**

Jill Venus

Chief Executive Officer,

Mid Wales Partnership

Paul Griffiths

Head of Recreation and  
Countryside Service

Powys County Council

Deirdre Raffan

Centre for Alternative Technology

Nicholas Edwards

Attendee, Earth Summit, Johannesburg

Natasha Parry

Attendee, Earth Summit, Johannesburg

Rhys Richardson

Attendee, Earth Summit, Johannesburg

Yasmin Tariq

Attendee, Earth Summit, Johannesburg

	<b>Secretariat</b>		
	Julia Annand	Clerk	

## **Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and members of the public.

1.2 The Chair noted apologies from Kirsty Williams.

## **Item 2: Mid Wales Partnership: Presentation on Operation, Aims and Activities**

### **Presenter - Jill Venus**

2.1 The following points were made during the presentation:

- The Partnership, established in 1996, was the Economic Development Forum for Mid Wales, one of four such organisations covering Wales.
- It consisted of representatives from county councils, sector organisations and education establishments;
- It saw its mission as to "provide a strategic framework for Mid Wales within which the private and public sectors can ensure the prosperity of the area through partnership activities across the appropriate economic, social and environmental priorities; and will champion and actively represent the issues which confront rural Mid Wales.
- It aimed to increase the impact of initiatives upon Mid Wales and establish ongoing relationships with the National Assembly and Government.
- Its work was delivered via five specialist working groups:- IT; Skills and Training; Transport; Tourism; and Business Support and Economic Development. However there was much cross linkage between the groups.
- Work undertaken to date included:
  - Mid Wales - Naturally different (An integrated tourism strategy for Mid Wales)
  - Mid Wales Integrated Action Plan for Skills
  - Mid Wales Integrated Transport Strategy
  - ICT Action Plan
  - Mid Wales Employment Land Strategy
- The Partnership's current activities included an "Employer Needs Survey" - an investigation into the recruitment needs, attitudes and approaches of employers in Mid Wales. and "A Winning Mid Wales" - an action plan for rural economic regeneration.

2.2 The following points were made during the subsequent question and answer session:

- Members felt that it was important that the Partnership added to the value of services available, for example - ELWa; county councils, WDA and The Tourist Board - and did not simply duplicate them. However the Partnership believed that their role complimented these organisations, often working in partnership.
- Ms Venus felt unable to comment on the difference the National Assembly had made to Mid Wales as she had not been in post long enough to assess the position. However she did consider that rural Mid Wales was not a high priority on the Assembly's agenda.
- It was thought that closer a relationship between the Mid Wales Regional Committee and the Partnership would be of benefit. If the Partnership were made aware of the Assembly's priorities they would be able to prepare briefing on the Mid Wales position.
- It was thought that a suitable role for the Partnership could be as a "Champion" for Mid Wales.
- The confusion of terms used was discussed. The Partnership sometimes used the term "rural Wales" in order to more easily convey their message. However, although essentially rural, Mid Wales had industrial pockets and it was important to remember that the Partnership was not working on behalf of the whole of rural Wales.
- Although there was a limited role for regional committees in taking matters forward, they did have a role in ensuring that reports were presented to the appropriate Assembly subject committee.

### **Item 3: Sports Review: Sport and Recreation: Learning from Audit Inspection and Research**

**Presenter - Paul Griffiths**

3.1 The following points were made during the presentation:

The following comments were noted from the presentation:

- The Audit Commission report which the Council was asked to comment on started from the premise that there was a competitive environment for sports services. There was very little competitive market for sports facilities in Powys. Efforts had been made in the past to involve the private sector in sports provision, but the private option proved more expensive than the Council run options and the low population in Powys was a powerful disincentive for the private sector.
- The Local Authority had concentrated on continued partnerships with existing partners; accessing funding from Sportlot; engaging in a dialogue with users and non-users of leisure facilities and attempting to increase participation in leisure activities. Barriers to increasing participation were: lack of investment funding; increased bureaucracy and the legacy of the fairer funding legislation.
- The Council acknowledged that services could be improved but argued that the premise of the Audit Commission report - that local authorities have to compete with the private sector in the provision of leisure facilities - did not apply to Powys as there was little private sector interest in such a low population density area.

There followed a question and answer session during which the following points were made:

- The issue of access to leisure facilities was crucial in an area such as Powys. The planning of any new facilities had to take into account transport from the beginning. The Council had trialed minibus

services, particularly in the school holidays. Transport has to be linked to demand, and there was a need for greater dialogue with the education establishments. One suggestion was that transport home from school could be delayed to allow sports activities to take place after school.

- Any new transport ideas, such as taxi services, would need to be sustained with additional resources.
- The 'exercise on prescription' scheme had proved popular. If success in one area leads to a cost reduction in another, for instance, health spending was reduced in terms of lower prescription costs, then the costs should be channelled back into the system to maintain good practice.

Comments from the public included:

- Glenys Jones, Montgomery Labour Party: Leisure facilities should be provided for all age groups, not just the young. There should be financial help with transport costs to cultural events. A system of subsidising travel to the theatre would help keep professional theatre alive in Wales.
- Lilian Beddoe, Montgomery Labour Party: There were many who enjoy ballroom dancing in Powys, this was an important leisure activity for older people in the County. The exercise on prescription scheme was very worthwhile but could cause problems when those involved were asked to pay the whole cost of the course at the first session.
- Ena Williams, Wrexham: Wished to express her concern at the lack of facilities in the Mid Wales region, this was not highlighted in the Audit Commission's report.
- Roger Saunders, Countryside Council for Wales: Powys has one third of all the rights of way network in Wales, there was an opportunity to develop these as a leisure activity. The walking and cycling strategy produced by the Welsh Assembly Government did not mention this potential for exploiting the public path network.
- Dierdre Raffan, Centre for Alternative Technology: the number of request stops on the train services needed to be increased in order for people to be encouraged to use public transport.
- Michael Jones, Powys County Council: there were problems associated with transport to leisure facilities. Because there were many user groups with different needs and a lack of transport facilities that exist in urban areas it was wiser to have smaller leisure facilities in villages. Funding bodies such as Sportlot had a centralised policy which was not appropriate for rural areas. The attempts to get funding for an all- weather pitch in Presteigne had suffered because of this.

**Action:** The Chair agreed to pass on all comments made to the Culture Committee which was currently carrying out a Sports Policy Review. He also included the suggestion that savings incurred as a result of improving access and uptake of leisure facilities should be made available to ensure the continuance of those sports facilities.

**Action:** The Chair agreed to write to Sportlot on behalf of those campaigning for an all weather sports pitch in Presteigne.

#### **Item 4: Presentation on the Earth Summit 2002**

**Presenters - Nicholas Edwards, Natasha Parry, Rhys Richardson, Yasmin Tariq, Deirdre Raffan**

4.1 Natasha, Rhys and Yasmin had attended the Earth Summit in Johannesburg following their nomination at a youth assembly held at Aberystwyth. The trip was funded by the National Assembly for

Wales. Nick had also attended the Summit,

The following points were made during the presentation:

- Rhys highlighted concerns regarding Nestle's action in the area.
- Yasmin outlined what she believed were the main problems in the third world, poverty; lack of sanitation and lack of education, even when training/education had been received it seldom resulted in employment.
- Natasha believed that the main barriers to a sustainable environment in Mid Wales were transport and education. She suggested that improvements be made to public transport with lower fares and a more reliable service and that more freight could go by rail rather than road. She also suggested that sustainable development matters be taught in schools but with practical lessons to engage the children's interest. Children could then educate parents.
- Nick highlighted concerns about "deals" between the larger nations which had weakened the final agreement. He informed the meeting that a Welsh Youth Parliament on Sustainable Development was planned, it was hoped that much of the organisation could be done by the young people of Wales with some assistance, essentially financial, from adults.

Comments made in the subsequent question and answer session include:

- The National Assembly was almost unique in that it had a legal commitment to promoting sustainability. The Assembly was keen to empower young people in Wales and was proud to sponsor the Johannesburg trip.
- The National Assembly Sustainable Energy Group would meet on 6 November 2002 and the benefits of wind energy would be promoted.
- Funds were needed to develop educational materials on sustainable development and promote the message from the Earth Summit.
- Michael Jones, Powys County Council was concerned that farmers were encouraged to concentrate production leading to the increased use of fertilisers which led to nitrification of the soil. The Committee said that this was not farming policy in the National Assembly. Organisations such as Farming Connect and Tir Gofal were working with the Assembly to promote sustainable farming and encourage farmers to be custodians of the countryside.
- Lembit Opik MP asked if the Earth Summit had discussed home-working and whether the Assembly had any schemes to encourage this. The Committee agreed that DSL access was needed in Mid Wales to ensure that adequate ICT infrastructures were in place.
- Paul Allen from the Centre for Alternative Technology stated that they and Techniquest had a target of enabling 50% of all schools in Wales to make a visit. The foot and mouth outbreak had resulted in falling visitor numbers and hence income and this was proving difficult. He asked for information on structures that may be in place to help achieve this target.

**Action: The committee to write to The First Minister and Education Minister regarding structures currently in place for helping achieve this target.**

**Item 5: Minutes of previous meeting:**

## **Mid-03-02(mins)**

5.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.