

## Y Pwyllgor Amaethyddiaeth a Datblygu Gwledig ARD 11-00(4)

**Dyddiad:** 5 Gorffennaf 2000  
**Amser:** 9.00am - 12.30pm  
**Lleoliad:** Ystafell Bwyllgora, Adeilad y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol

Nid yw'r cyfieithiad Cymraeg ar gael ar hyn o bryd.

### **Review of Rural Diversification - Planning**

#### **Purpose**

1. The Committee is asked to agree a set of recommendations on planning to feed into the current review of planning guidance. The attached **draft** letter for the Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee to send to the Assembly Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport will form the basis for discussion. It draws on the proposals made to the Committee and the discussion at the meetings on 21 and 29 June.

**Secretariat**

**July 2000**

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**DRAFT**

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Sue Essex  
Assembly Secretary for the Environment,  
Planning and Transport  
National Assembly for Wales

**Pwyllgor Amaethyddiaeth a Datblygu Gwledig  
Agriculture and Rural Development Committee**  
Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd / Cardiff CF99 1NA

July 2000

Dear Sue

## **Economic diversification in rural Wales**

As you know, the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee is conducting a review of ways to encourage a stronger and more diverse rural economy. Following a series of consultation meetings in March, the Committee agreed to focus the first part of its review on the role of planning in rural diversification. I am writing on behalf of the Committee with our initial views which I hope you will take into account in your current review of planning guidance.

In a short period, the Committee has taken a great deal of evidence, in writing and orally, from interested organisations. All have made valuable and sensible suggestions. What follows represents the Committee's agreed areas for action but I would commend to you all of the evidence we have received. I have asked the Clerk of the Committee to provide you with a full set of the written submissions received.

### **Recommendations:**

1. The Committee supports the suggestion that the Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme should provide the guiding principles for the planning system. Some bodies expressed concern that the environmental pillar of sustainable development was given most weight in planning decisions whilst others felt the economic benefits of a high quality environment were sometimes overlooked. We recommend that planning guidance makes clear that economic, social and environmental considerations should all be given equal weight.
2. The Committee supports the need for additional research in a number of areas:
  - 2.1 the reasons for farmers' negative perceptions of the system and appropriate solutions. The research should examine if farmers are inhibited from bringing forward applications by real or perceived barriers imposed by the planning system;
  - 2.2 the number and nature of diversification projects submitted, reasons for refusal and conditions imposed on those approved.
  - 2.3 the spatial perspective of the relationship between planning and diversification at the national, regional and local level. The research should examine the need for local guidance to address local circumstances and should identify possible conflicts with national guidance at the local/ regional level;
  - 2.4 the relative merits and practicability of incorporating a rural business class into the use classes order;

2.5 the relative merits and practicability of amending the General Permitted Development Order to allow change of use of agricultural buildings;

3. The Committee recommends a more pro-active planning advice service for rural business. We feel this should be integrated into a broader training, business advice and demonstration package which I hope we will consider in more detail later in our review. As part of this package we recommend

3.1 the development of a good practice guide to encourage small scale farm diversification;

3.2 increased dialogue between the farming community, rural businesses, planning authorities and other public bodies drawing on best practice in local planning authorities;

3.3 the establishment of nominated liaison officers in planning authorities to assist farmers and others in navigating their way through the planning process.

4. The Committee recommends that impact on future business viability should be taken into account when assessing planning applications.

5. The Committee recommends a criteria-based system where each application is assessed on its merits rather than against a list of suitable activities.

6. The Committee recommends that the definition of both agriculture and forestry should be clarified and extended to take account of downstream activities such as processing and sales. We recognise, though, that amending the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is not within your power, but would ask that you make representations to this effect whenever you are able.

7. The Committee recommends that the TAN on design should be revised to give enhanced guidance;

8. The Committee recommends that planning guidance should allow for small-scale diversification developments around existing farm complexes.

Yours sincerely

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM  
Chair of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee