

Dyddiad: Dydd Mercher 18 Gorffennaf 2001
Amser: 2.00pm – 5.10pm
Lleoliad: Ystafell Bwyllgora, Adeilad y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol

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

POLICY REVIEW OF RURAL ICT

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 7th February the committee agreed that the subject of its next major policy review should be the provision of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in rural areas. This paper sets out draft terms of reference for the committee to consider and a suggested approach to the review.

Background

2. The committee's work will be part of a wide range of activity already taking place in Wales to promote the development of ICT provision and use.

- *Cymru Ar-lein - Online for a Better Wales* was approved in plenary on 3 July and seeks to provide strategic leadership and co-ordination to build on the work that is already taking place in Wales and beyond. The *Cymru Ar-lein* Strategic Framework will be launched in October to set a framework to lead the actions of the business, public and voluntary sectors in developing ICT in Wales;
- a raft of programmes and initiatives are already in place across the public sector in Wales to advance the Information Society at a local and national level. Some of these have a particular rural focus.

3. In addition to highlighting the particular needs of rural areas, it is suggested that the committee concentrates in the main on identifying the key business and community services required in rural Wales and the steps necessary to encourage commercial providers to respond to that demand. Such a focus would complement the activity already taking place and address one of the key issues for the provision of ICT services in sparsely populated rural areas i.e. the generation of sufficient demand to justify commercial provision.

Draft terms of reference

4. The committee is invited to approve the following draft terms of reference.

5. With reference to individual case studies and experience in Wales and elsewhere, to identify additional actions required to ensure that the economy and communities of rural Wales benefit fully from Information Age developments.

The study will pay particular attention to the nature of ICT services required in rural Wales and the steps necessary to stimulate their demand and supply by:

- *identifying the current and planned ICT activities that have an impact on economic, educational and community development in rural Wales;*
- *assessing the demand for ICT services and products in rural Wales, how their supply could best be stimulated and consequent resource implications;*

The output of the review will be a report specifying:

- *the ICT requirements of rural Wales and consequent economic development potential;*
- *the actions required to stimulate supply of the ICT services demanded in rural Wales.*

Next steps

6. Subject to the approval of the terms of reference, it is suggested that an invitation to submit written evidence be issued after the committee's meeting on 18th July. This would enable an analysis of the evidence received to be provided to the committee's first meeting of the autumn term and a programme of further oral evidence-gathering to be agreed.

7. On the basis of the written evidence gathered over the summer, the committee may wish to consider the appointment of an expert adviser and the particular blend of skills such a person would require. Alternatively, given the specialist ICT expertise already available within the Assembly and in bodies the committee could invite to give oral evidence, the appointment of an adviser may be felt to be unnecessary. It is suggested that a decision on any appointment should be made after consideration of the written evidence received over the summer.

Action for the committee

8. The committee is invited to comment on and agree the terms of reference in paragraph 5 and the next steps set out in paragraphs 6 and 7.

Committee Secretariat

July 2001