

PRIDE IN BARRY

*An association of voluntary organisations, local authorities and others
who have combined together to strive to improve the local environment*



www.prideinbarry.co.uk

Chair & Members
Enterprise And Learning Committee
The National Assembly for Wales

Further Evidence to Support Pride In Barry Case for Proper Funding for Barry Regeneration

After reading the transcript of the Committee Hearing, held at the Barry Memorial Hall & Theatre on Wednesday 8th October 2008, I realise that clarification is required on a number of points as I was unable to be present to answer questions or expand on a number of issues raised by Members.

I have addressed the points in the order raised within the transcript:

- 1) Andrew RT Davies (53–60) on potential monies levered.

There is a misunderstanding that needs full clarity now that a clearer picture of the Assembly net funding position of Barry is becoming known.

Barry can demonstrate that it has a successful track record in delivering over 125 projects, which levered in over £100 million of Private Sector investment. What is now clear is that this has also delivered **£3 million profit to the Assembly**, which we doubt can be rivalled by any other regeneration programme in Wales.

Furthermore, the Assembly retains financial interests in land at Barry Waterfront including a substantial area known as “The Mole”, which has strategic value and importance to the development of a Marina in the Dock. Thus, the Assembly will further profit from Barry, which exceeds its pump-priming investment.

In terms of future private sector monies that will be levered, the Assembly issued a press release on the sale of the 100 acres of land at Barry Waterfront to the house building consortium, which claimed this would result in Private Sector investment of £350 million.

So, it could be argued that the £47 million Public Sector investment, which has already been repaid and produced profit, will lever £450 million in total. By any measure, this must surely prove that Barry is a fantastic place for the Assembly to have confidence and faith, and therefore we believe should listen to the case that Pride In Barry is

making in the knowledge that the ratio of investment to return is unrivalled anywhere else in Wales and potentially the UK.

- 2) Jane Hutt (66-69) links between regeneration and economic potential, as well as Barry as a whole.

From the perspective of the people of Barry, much was promised to them in terms of community facilities, when the regeneration programme commenced. For many reasons, these facilities have not been delivered, with the exception of the flagship Town Hall & Library, which is a marvellous example of what can be achieved in restoration and regeneration renaissance by sympathetic design to conjoin old and modern together. We would heartily recommend Members visit this building to see what can be achieved as an exemplar for Wales.

Many of our existing community facilities are old and past their sell, particularly in wards that are within the highest areas of social deprivation in Wales, as reported by the Assembly's own Index, and in the large increasingly urbanised Waterfront area which adjoins those areas.

A large sporting facility with floodlight pitches and changing rooms never materialised. Meanwhile, the Colcot Sports Centre – home to the local football leagues – is in a seriously poor state of dereliction.

In terms of community meeting rooms and facilities, many halls are pre-First and Second World War and connected to the many churches in Barry. Many of these churches are closed or are closing with plans to redevelop the land for housing and thus the community facilities will be lost. We need to replace these community facilities with multi-purpose facilities that are affordable. One thing our community is good at is supporting each other through a very mixed diverse set of voluntary groups and associations and we are in no doubt that enabling modern facilities, such as we have alluded to throughout our campaign, will assist the community to help itself.

In terms of driving forward plans to maximise regeneration and economic potential, the Assembly has the ability to take decisions that could assist in ways that have so far been overlooked. We believe that Barry – the largest Town in Wales – has no Assembly sponsored body located anywhere. We believe this can also be applied to the Vale of Glamorgan as a whole. Yet, one only needs to look at business parks around Wales to often find Assembly sponsored bodies as an anchor tenant. For example, Government Ombudsman at Pencoed, Health Commission in Caerphilly, and various others at Llandrinod Wells, Aberystwyth, Merthyr etc. This would signal leadership and confidence to the private sector.

When the Assembly is making decisions about accommodation and logistics for related staff, it could do much to assist Barry's economic potential at a neutral opportunity cost. We would encourage the Committee to consider making strong recommendations to support

Barry as a potential location for any dispersal, relocation, or establishment related to Assembly jobs.

3) David Melding (71) on meetings with the Deputy Minister

Pride In Barry is a voluntary community based organisation that has been recognised by the Assembly as an exemplar of community involvement within regeneration.

We have not met or had discussions with the Deputy Regeneration Minister. We note from press reports that he came to Barry last year as a guest of local MP John Smith but to our knowledge did not meet anyone involved in Barry regeneration.

We have been here since we were established in 1994 and have met and are prepared to meet and work in partnership with anyone who shares our vision. All Assembly Members were invited to attend our presentation at the Assembly on 9th October 2007 and that would have included the Deputy Minister, who as far as we are aware did not attend.

We would however point out that Assembly Officials are part of the Barry Regeneration Partnership Board. They have been kept fully informed and up to date on all the issues and debates, and should be keeping Ministers informed.

As part of membership of the Regeneration Board, Assembly Officials will have been party to the production and approval by the Board of the Delivery Plan of future projects for Barry.

Arguably, there is a potential conflict of interest in approving plans, being a source of public funds, having a stake in land sale receipts, determining future policies and spending priorities.

4) Alun Cairns (73) on future of Pride In Barry

Whilst Pride In Barry has many other ongoing initiatives which will continue, its' role as a community organisation to provide input into the regeneration process will be effectively usurped if further funding is not provided.

It is likely that many members who act in a voluntary capacity and have given an enormous amount of their time will review their ongoing role when it appears that the Assembly has not fully engaged in meaningful dialogue, other than to provide warm words, for over 4 years. Volunteers deserve more appreciation for their unstinting efforts to act for their community, and proper meaningful partnership would use that voluntary time much more effectively and constructively.

5) Chris Franks (76-77) on other sources of funds

Barry has missed out on Objective One and Two funds over the last 10 years.

Pride In Barry is sure that Members will be aware that projects are no more than dreams without certainty of funds, and a funding stream allows project managers to set milestones, critical paths, deliverables, and quality thresholds.

We have highlighted this and gave evidence to the Wales Audit Office Regeneration Study (May 05) to support our view which was accepted by the WAO. Indeed, the First Minister accepted the recommendations of the review, and recently the Deputy First Minister has made structural changes to process in response.

Without the certainty of a funding stream, the Barry Regeneration Programme is effectively a dead duck.

6) Janet Ryder (80) on how does Pride In Barry support community development

We represent over 40 community organisations who each have differing and diverse community roles, from running volunteer woodland groups, to youth associations, to rotary. We have established excellent networking relationships with Barry College, Barry Chamber of Trade, and various other organisations, businesses, and groups that have a role within the Town.

Pride In Barry has established an Awards Scheme that promotes and recognises community development and was recognised as an exemplar in Wales by the First Minister. The Ambassador Scheme has since been replicated at National level by the Assembly.

Pride In Barry has representation on other Committees such as the Conservation Advisory Committee, and through its network of volunteers is represented on many other local bodies.

Pride In Barry has no funding and is completely voluntary, and as such does not directly deliver community development but provides advice support and encouragement to those that do, such as Barry College.

7) Kirsty Williams (86) on the role of the private sector

The private sector has made a commitment through its recent purchase of the 100 acres at Barry Waterfront. The key question given current market conditions is when will they develop the land?

Our understanding is they have 5 years to apply for outline planning, and there is that risk that should the present market and credit finance conditions continue then we may not see any progress in the next 5 years.

The land was sold for a very large price, in fact the successful bidder paid considerably in excess of all the other bidders. That consortium is essentially a house building consortium.

We find it hard to see how they will bring in additional tourist attractions, business parks with associated long-term jobs, and the much-needed community facilities given the pressure to produce a return on their investment. They bought the land at the top of the market.

A further concern is that the pressure to produce this return is highly likely to see an attempt to diminish the quality of build, and increase the number of house units per acre, and thus we will see apartments. We agree with the concerns expressed by John Punter of the Design Commission for Wales that we need to guard against creating the slums of the future by building high rise apartments, especially when Barry is trying to get rid of the 60's and 70's blocks that are in the deprived wards of Buttrills and Gibbonsdown.

We therefore agree that the Assembly needs to bring forward plans to provide certainty for Barry's funding to take advantage of opportunities that may arise through the difficulties experienced by the private sector.

8) Sandy Mewes (126 etc) on Pride In Barry wanting all capital receipts

We would like to clarify that this is **not** the case. Pride In Barry has asked for certainty of funding. We have asked for a fair share of monies commensurate with the capital receipts.

Bearing in mind that Barry has delivered £3 million over and above the Assembly investment back to the Assembly, the amount of £20 million over the next 10 years that we have suggested equates to an investment of £1 million per year over the 20 year life of the Barry Regeneration Programme.

This is in effect asking for an additional £17 million, given the Assembly has profited in the sum of £3 million. But given that the Assembly still has a financial interest in parcels of land at Barry Waterfront which includes the strategic piece of land known as "The Mole", further capital receipts will be forthcoming which will go a considerable way to offset the funds that we are asking for.

The track record, to which we have earlier alluded, should give the Assembly confidence that in the long term this investment will produce strong reasons for making this commitment which we firmly believe cannot be matched anywhere else in Wales.

This leaves the substantial monies returned to the Assembly (£50 million to date) to be invested elsewhere.

9) Jane Hutt (161) on Pride In Barry meeting the Deputy Minister in November

In terms of accuracy, Pride in Barry was not given a date for this meeting and did not confirm its attendance until 17th October 08.

We look forward to answering any additional questions at the Hearing on 5th November.

Yours faithfully

Paul Haley
Chair
Pride In Barry