

## **ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

**Date:** Wednesday 21 March 2001  
**Time:** 2.00 to 5.00 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

### **REPORT BY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

#### **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S GREEN TRANSPORT PLAN**

##### **Green Transport Plan**

The Green Transport Plan project began in January. Its aim is to produce a draft Green Transport Plan for Cathays Park and Cardiff Bay by the end of July. The project is running to timetable and a Project Board has been established. The Board held its first meeting on 1 March. A travel audit questionnaire is expected to issue to all staff and Assembly Members before 16 March. The questionnaire will issue to staff (other than those in OPO) under a covering email from the Permanent Secretary, and OPO staff, Members and their support staff will receive the questionnaire under an email from the Clerk. A visitor travel survey will also take place at both sites. Site assessments and a review of car parking policy are currently under way.

#### **COUNTRYSIDE**

##### **Transfer of resources from the Environment Development Fund (EDF) Sub Expenditure Group (SEG) to the Countryside Council for Wales SEG**

In accordance with Standing Order 19, the Committee will wish to note that I have approved,

and the Finance Secretary has agreed, a transfer of £25,000 from the Environment Development Fund SEG into the Countryside Council for Wales' grant in aid SEG. Both SEGs fall within the Transport, Planning and Environment Main Expenditure Group.

This transfer will enable CCW to complete its programme of work on Wales' list of candidate Special Areas of Conservation scheduled for 2000-2001.

### **Environmental Development Fund – National Parks**

The Committee will also wish to note that the Finance Minister and I have approved the carry forward of £410,000 of the National Parks' element of the Environment Development Fund from 2000-2001 to 2001-2002. This request has been granted on an exceptional basis this year, primarily due to the late start of the scheme in 2000, and the customary slow uptake typical of many new grant schemes.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Local Air Pollution Control Fees and Charges scheme**

The fees and charges imposed on industry that are regulated under the Local Authority Pollution Control scheme are currently being updated. The intention is to have a new scheme in place by 1st April. We are proposing a modest increase in the fees this year to cover the cost of providing guidance. Local authorities are also being encouraged to introduce transparent cost accounting procedures so that the fees and charges can be more closely linked to the resources that are required for the work.

### **The Smoke Control Areas (Exempted Fireplaces)(Wales) Order 2001**

This Order is currently working its way through Assembly procedures and was considered by the business committee on the 6th March 2001. The order adds another two designs of fireplace to the list of fireplaces that can be used in smoke control areas in Wales.

### **Air Quality Limit Values (Wales) Regulations 2001**

We are currently consulting on the implementation of these regulations in Wales. They will give

effect to two European Council Directives on air quality. One sets out the framework of air quality management and assessment and a daughter directive sets limit values for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead in ambient air.

## **Flood Defence Funding**

The Committee will recall that it was intended to reimburse the additional Emergency Response and Repairs costs of the Environment Agency resulting from the floods of last year via the local authorities and through the Bellwin scheme. The purpose was to relieve local authorities of having to fund these extra costs through the flood defence levies. As there was a precedent following the flooding at Towyn for action of this nature it was considered the best way forward at that time, although not ideal.

Subsequently, it was announced that MAFF would reimburse such costs directly to the Agency in England, and Edwina Hart and I have agreed we should also do so in Wales. Funds are available from underspending of the Arterial Drainage and Flood and Coast Protection BEL, which provides grant to local authorities for flood defence and coast protection. Mrs Hart has agreed to the transfer of £1.1m from this BEL to the Arterial Land Drainage and Flood Defence (Environment Agency) BEL to cover reimbursement of the Environment Agency's additional costs in the current financial year.

## **PLANNING**

### **Draft Marine Aggregates Dredging Policy South Wales**

The draft Marine Aggregates Dredging Policy for Welsh waters in the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary is nearing completion. Significant progress has been made with developing area-based policy which will guide industry towards preferred areas for marine dredging and away from those that are most sensitive.

The policy is based on the best scientific data and information available. A fifth meeting of a Technical Advisory Group was held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March where detailed matters of dredging policy were discussed.

I will be issuing a consultation document seeking views on this new approach to marine and coastal dredging policy. All Assembly Members and Members of Parliament with an interest will be sent a copy of the Marine Aggregates Dredging Policy. Members' further contributions to the consultative process are welcomed.

### **Aggregates Technical Advice Note (TAN)**

A draft for consultation will be put to EPT Committee on 9 May 2001.

## **Development and Flood Risk Technical Advisory Group**

A research specification is being drawn up to develop a risk-based methodology to underpin the Technical Advice Notes. The research contract would be for 4 months and run parallel to the drafting of the TAN.

## **TRANSPORT**

### **Transport Policy**

Last week I met the Welsh Association of Technical Officers and Welsh Local Government Association. We discussed, along with other items, the Transport Framework, review of public transport and Local Transport Plans.

### **Transfer of Resources**

In accordance with Standing Order 19, the Committee will wish to note that I have recently approved, and the Finance Minister has agreed, several in-year transfers of funds between the Budget Expenditure Lines which comprise the 'Trunk roads, motorways and transport services' Sub Expenditure Group. The changes reflect pressures and savings that have been identified during the year:

- £1.7 million has been transferred to the Land budget to meet the pressure from claimants and, more recently, their Assembly Members, for payment of compensation claims for depreciation in the value of property resulting from the Assembly's trunk road schemes. The transfer will bring forward in to the current financial year the payment of claims which otherwise would not have been processed this year.
- £2 million has been transferred to the Maintenance budget to cover the clearance of debris and general cleaning in the aftermath of the autumn floods.
- £550,000 has been transferred to maximise the purchase of winter maintenance vehicles and equipment in the current year. The decision was taken to take advantage of discounts available to avoid escalating purchase costs in future years and to minimise vehicle-servicing bills.
- These pressures have been met from a £1.9 million underspend on Freight Facilities and Industrial Development Act 1982 Grants for which demand unfortunately has been much lower than anticipated and from a £2.3 million reduction in the structural renewals

programme resulting from problems with land access and delays to the programme following the autumn floods.

The changes are self-balancing and no additional funding is sought.

**Sue Essex**

**Minister for Environment**