

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 27 June 2001

Time: 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

EPT Committee Members:

Richard Edwards, Chair

Preseli Pembrokeshire

Mick Bates

Montgomeryshire

David Davies

Monmouth

Sue Essex, Minister for Environment

Cardiff North

Geraint Davies

Rhondda

Helen Mary Jones

Llanelli

Tom Middlehurst

Alyn and Deeside

Karen Sinclair

Clwyd South

Rhodri Glyn Thomas

Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

Officials:

Martin Evans

Director of Transport, Planning and
Environment Group

Keith Bush

Office of the Counsel General

Lisa Dobbins (item 2)

Sustainable Development Unit

Huw Thomas (item 2)

Transport Policy Division

June Milligan (item 3)	Head of Countryside Division
Gerry Quarrell (item 3)	Countryside Division
Angharad Huws (item 3)	Countryside Division
Robin Shaw (items 4 and 5)	Director of Transport
Meryl James (item 4)	Transport Policy Division

In Attendance:

Countryside Council for Wales

Richard Ninnes (item 3)

Denys Morgan (item 5)

Expert Advisor

Secretariat:

Siwan Davies

Committee Clerk

Vaughan Watkin

Deputy Committee Clerk

Opening Remarks from Chair

0.1 The Chair welcomed members, officials and members of the public to the meeting. He informed members that the Minister would be seeking the committee's views on a second set of draft regulations under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act on local access fora at the next meeting on 11 July, which would be held in Brecon.

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions and declaration of interests

1.2 The Chair invited members to declare any interests under Standing Order 4.5, which were as follows:

- Mick Bates – partner in a farming business;
- Geraint Davies – member of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and a pharmacist.

Item 2: Report from the Minister for the Environment - EPT-12-01 (p 1)

2.1 Sue Essex introduced her report, and updated the committee on the following issues:

- Earth Summit 2002 - the First Minister would be representing Wales at the summit;
- Access - footpaths in Pembrokeshire had been opened that day and it was expected that Ceredigion, the only remaining local authority not to have significantly re-opened access to the countryside, would follow shortly;
- Waste Strategy - the launch of the draft strategy would take place in Newport on 4 July, committee members were very welcome to attend.

2.2 The following points were covered in discussion:

- Glas Cymru – members recorded regret that front line jobs were being lost. The committee would need to monitor service delivery on the ground to ensure that environmental standards were met;
- Sustainable Development – the committee discussed the latest developments outlined in the Minister's report, and welcomed the establishment of the Cabinet sub-committee. The bids to the European Innovative Actions Fund were exciting, and should be widely publicised. The pan-European sustainable development network was welcomed, and the Minister congratulated for placing Wales in the lead amongst European regions. It was agreed that the committee would be consulted on arrangements for the Welsh Sustainable Development Forum and the internal Sustainable Development Co-ordinating Group, before any decisions were taken;
- National Spatial Planning Framework – positive feedback had been received at the seminar held the previous week. The framework would now be developed quickly in order to underpin the National Economic Development Strategy, Transport Framework and other strategies. Consultation on the way forward was expected to commence in July. Members stressed the need for the framework to address cross border issues, particularly in North and Mid Wales;
- Green Transport Plan – one Member expressed concern that the National Assembly's plan would discourage car use, without focusing on improving public transport so that it offered a realistic alternative. Staff were being consulted on the proposals, and the House Committee would be seeking Assembly Members' views. Members congratulated the North Glamorgan NHS Trust on their environmental vision, and suggested that other organisations be encouraged to develop similar plans. Members asked that new or renewed transport contracts awarded by the National Assembly require contractors to use green fuels;

- Foot and Mouth – the committee expressed its sympathy at the recent outbreak at Libanus near Brecon. It was noted that funds had been made available to local authorities under the Bellwin scheme to cover additional costs, such as supplying disinfectant in key locations near infected areas. The Minister would write to members with further details;
- Concessionary fares – the draft Travel Concessions (Extension of Entitlement) Wales Order 2001 regulations that had issued for consultation contained minor changes to the version attached to the Minister’s report. To ensure that the regulations could come into force on 1 April 2002, consultation responses were invited by 20 August 2001, with a target date to plenary of 22 November. The committee was keen that this timetable be met;
- Consultation documents – it was suggested that all consultation documents be sent to the Wales Association of Community and Town Councils and the Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils.

Item 3: CROW Act: draft consultation on mapping regulations –

EPT-12-01 (p 2)

3.1 Sue Essex sought the committee’s views on the draft consultation paper, and the following points were covered in discussion:

- Consultation on the draft regulations – there were concerns that eight weeks was insufficient time to consult over the summer period. The Minister agreed to look at ways of targeting key stakeholders, such as landowners and ramblers, to ensure that they had the opportunity to comment;
- Consultation on the draft maps – some members strongly felt that landowners and primary users should be contacted where the designation of their land was to change. In any event, draft maps should be made widely available, such as on web-sites, which could be accessed local libraries, at community centres and publicised via community newsletters;
- Changes to and correction of maps – the Countryside Council for Wales would provide a definition of what was considered to be a ‘minor change’. It was confirmed that charges would not be made for maps where there had been changes;
- Budget – there was a statutory duty to carry out the mapping exercise and adequate funds would be made available. Local authorities had already received budget increases to cover the costs of wardening.

3.2 The Minister would take forward the committee's suggestions, and a summary of the consultation responses would be made available to members. It was hoped that the regulations could come into effect early in 2002.

Item 4: Road Safety Strategy – EPT-12-01 (p 3)

4.1 The committee had discussed a draft consultation strategy on 4 April. Sue Essex updated members on progress following the consultative conference on 15 May, and sought members' views before the final draft consultation document was finalised.

4.2 The following points were covered in discussion:

- Cost of road accidents – calculations were made of the hypothetical cost of an accident on society, these were UK figures updated on an annual basis;
- Monitoring and evaluation – the draft did not contain details of structures for monitoring and evaluating road safety schemes. It was noted that local authorities were asked to monitor schemes against targets, but suggested that a monitoring and evaluation framework be drawn up. Qualitative evidence should also be collected, for example by holding another conference with key stakeholders, and ideally communities should be involved in all stages of project development;
- Speed limits – Local highway authorities were now able to set 20 mph speed limits on their roads without having to seek approval of the Secretary of State or the Assembly but action was likely to be prioritised within competing budget demands. Speed cameras had been effective in reducing motorists' speed, whilst some traffic calming measures had limited effect. The Scottish Executive had recently published a report on a study of 20 mph 'advisory' speed limits, which indicated reduced accident numbers, despite a negligible effect on overall vehicle speeds. A copy of the report summary would be circulated to members;
- Funding - the National Assembly had directly funded some local road safety schemes, and some members strongly felt that there should be ring fencing of local authority funds for road safety initiatives. Transport funding generally was afforded a high priority by the committee, and this view would be communicated to the Finance Minister during this year's budget round.

4.3 Members' comments would be fed into the final draft consultation document, which would issue for consultation in the summer over a twelve week period.

Action Points

- *Officials to circulate copy of the Scottish Executive's report summary on study of 20 mph advisory speed limits to committee members*

Item 5: Policy review: draft report - EPT-12-01 (p 4)

5.1 The Chair explained that the draft report drew together previous committee discussions, with the exception of the recommendations in Chapter Six on monitoring and evaluation, the principles of which had already been agreed. The committee's agreement was sought to issue the report for public consultation.

5.2 The committee considered this to be a good piece of work, which was ready to issue for consultation. Members requested that a leaflet containing the consultation questions and recommendations be made available also.

5.3 The Chair and members thanked the secretariat and Expert Adviser for their work on the review. The aim would be to launch the consultation report during the week commencing 23 July, with responses requested by 12 October.

Item 6: Minutes of the meeting of 13 June – EPT-10-01 (min)

6.1 The committee adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 13 June.

Date of next meeting

7.1 The next meeting of the committee would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 11 July at Theatr Brycheiniog, Canal Wharf, Brecon.

Committee Secretariat June 2001