

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

:

Date: Wednesday 11 July 2001
Time: 2.00 to 5.00 pm
Venue: Theatr Brycheiniog, Canal Wharf, Brecon LD3 7EW

REPORT BY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT**COUNTRYSIDE****Coastal and Maritime Partnership**

I shall be Chairing the first informal meeting of the Coastal and Maritime Partnership on the 19th of July. The aim of the partnership is to provide co-ordinated advice to the Assembly on sustainable development issues affecting the coast / seas of Wales as well as facilitating the exchange of information and the dissemination of good practice.

Access to the Countryside

Further developments with regard to access to the countryside have occurred over the past 2 weeks, with Pembrokeshire County Council opening all their public rights of way from the 23rd of June. Currently over 63% of the public rights of way network across Wales is open, and the majority of that which is still closed is in Powys. The only Counties, which still have footpath restrictions in place, are Monmouthshire, Powys and Ceredigion.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**Air Quality Limit Values (Wales) Regulations 2001.**

The Air Quality Limit Values (Wales) Regulations 2001 will come into force on 19 July. The regulations implement Council Directive 96/62/EC on ambient air quality assessment and management, and Council Directive 99/30/EC relating to limit values for 'the relevant pollutants' in Wales. The relevant air pollutants are sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, particulate matter and lead in ambient air.

The regulations require that the Assembly identify and delineate zones and agglomerations in Wales to meet the requirements of the Directive. An agglomeration being defined by the

Directive as an area with a population greater than 250,000 or an area of 250,000 inhabitants or less with a population density per km², which a Member State considers, justifies the need for assessment and management. To meet these criteria, Wales has been split into two zones - North Wales and South Wales.

The regulations place the Assembly under a duty to take the measures necessary to ensure that in each zone in Wales concentrations of relevant pollutants do not exceed limit values. The limit values for each pollutant, and the date by which they are to be met are specified in the regulations. The limits are the same as those proposed for England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Managing Waste Sustainably

On 4 July I launched the consultation paper for the new Wales waste strategy '*Managing Waste Sustainably*' at Newport Wastesavers and then at the Hilton Hotel Newport. Newport was chosen as the site for the launch because the local authority is a member of the consortium of 6 local authorities in South East Wales which are developing a co-operative approach to managing waste and also because of the working arrangement with Newport Wastesavers and Newport County Borough Council. The strategy seeks to encourage partnership arrangements like this between local authorities and with the voluntary sector.

Other speakers also indicated the extent of the partnership approach that we have adopted in developing the proposals in the consultation paper and included representatives from the WLGA, the Wales Environmental Services Association and Environment Agency Wales.

I would also like to thank the members of the Wales Waste Forum for their contribution to the producing the consultation paper.

The consultation is now open until 5 October.

PLANNING

Draft 'Planning Policy Wales' Results of Consultation

The public consultation of draft 'Planning Policy Wales' ran from 27 February to 27 April and was extended until 1 June. A total of 143 responses were received. These included:

- 21 Welsh local planning authorities;
- 27 business organisations;
- 26 voluntary sector organisations.

The draft was generally welcomed. Most of responses considered the draft to be an improvement on the current guidance in 'Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy'. The new focus on sustainable development and the guidance on the reuse of previously developed

land were particularly welcomed, as was the increased emphasis on community involvement. Many responses welcomed the collaborative approach, through the Land Use Planning Forum, to the review of planning guidance and the preparation of the draft document.

The voluntary sector and professional organisations in particular welcomed the 'substantial number of additions and changes to the guidance' which they considered strengthened the document.

Some concern was expressed that the document did not respond sufficiently to the Welsh perspective. There were a small number of suggestions to remedy this. Some local planning authorities considered that the document contained too much information that was not planning policy. They believed that the final version should be more concise.

All comments received will be thoroughly analysed and the document redrafted over the summer. A draft final version will be submitted to EPT Committee and to Plenary in the Autumn Session and the final version is expected to issue by March 2001.

Planning Inspectorate's Annual Report 2001

The Planning Inspectorate's Annual Report and Accounts for 2000-2001 will be published during the week commencing 16 July. The report summarises the Inspectorate's activities in England and Wales in the financial year ending 31 March 2001. Copies will be available in the Assembly Library and on the Inspectorate's Website.

Planning Chairs Meeting

I met Planning Chairs of the local planning authorities on 28 June and had a very useful discussion on a range of planning matters including the National Spatial Planning Framework and links to regional planning work, progress on unitary development plans, and development control issues.

Dissemination Seminar: North Wales Slate Waste Tips – A Sustainable Source of Secondary Aggregates

I opened the Dissemination Seminar at the Welsh Slate Museum, Llanberis, on 29 June. This was well attended by over 50 representatives of interested organisations including a number from England.

The Seminar marked the completion of the research project, undertaken by Arup on behalf of the Assembly. The study investigated the practical potential for the use of slate waste as secondary aggregates and the technical, environmental, economic, amenity and planning constraints with a view to devising practicable and sustainable means to overcome the constraints.

The research project found that the remote location of the slate waste from major markets and

the lack of adequate freight transport infrastructure means that slate waste is unable to compete with primary aggregates in the main markets in the North West and South East of England. The introduction of the Aggregates Levy alone in 2002 is unlikely to be sufficient to adjust market prices in favour of slate waste.

The report concluded that it would be necessary to support investment in rail freight infrastructure and track access charges through grant aid to facilitate the use of slate waste.

Officials are considering the conclusions of the study to determine the appropriate action that may be required to facilitate the use of slate waste.

TRANSPORT

Transport Forum

The fifth meeting of the Transport Forum met on 25th June. The updated Transport Framework, having taken into consideration the responses from the consultation exercise, was discussed. There were presentations by the CBI on Transport and Economic Development and an update on the rail franchise progress. The sub groups looking into long distance coaches, community transport and cycling and walking strategy gave progress reports.

Road Haulage Modernisation Fund

I am meeting Deborah Stux, Regional Policy Adviser for the Freight Transport Association on 6 July to discuss how the Road Haulage Modernisation Fund may be taken forward in Wales. This is a forerunner of a wider consultation of the industry to establish the needs of the industry in Wales.

Clean Fuels Market

Proposals to establish a demonstration project for building the clean fuels market in North Wales are being discussed with the Energy Saving Trust and Gwynedd County Council. The project would include the installation of 2 or 3 Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) refuelling points and the conversion of around 30 cars.

Opening of Improvement Scheme: Junction 46 of M4

I opened the improvement scheme for Junction 46 of the M4 at Llangyfelach, Swansea on Monday 2 July.

The original interchange only possessed east-facing sliproads, therefore having only limited access to the motorway. This scheme now provides a full interchange offering better access to the development site being built on the site of old Velindre steelworks.

The interchange scheme was valued at £3.6million, £2.8m of which was provided from the National Assembly's Capital Challenge fund. The interchange works were designed by the City

and County of Swansea and were built by Edmund Nuttal Limited.

The Velindre strategic development site will offer approximately 200 hectares of high quality land for a major inward investor or flagship company. The site will have excellent transport links being close to the M4, having rail access and being close to the ports of Port Talbot, Swansea, Milford Haven and Pembroke Dock.

VOLUNTARY SECTOR SCHEME

The Assembly's Voluntary Sector Scheme ensures that all Assembly Ministers meet with representatives of the relevant voluntary sector organisations twice in each calendar year.

I had the first of these meetings on Wednesday 21st March 2001. The note of this meeting is at Annex 1. The second meeting for this year is scheduled for September.

The meetings will review the operation of the Scheme and the level of consultation between the voluntary sector and the Assembly. The meetings will also review past activity, anticipate forthcoming issues and consider resources.

Sue Essex AM
Minister for Environment

Annex 1

MEETING BETWEEN THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND REPRESENTATIVES OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR NETWORKS

DATE: Wednesday, 21st March 2001
VENUE: Conference Room 5, Cardiff Bay

PRESENT:
Sue Essex AM

Assembly Minister

Voluntary Sector Representatives

Tim Stowe
Marc Welsh

RSPB
Wales Wildlife and Countryside Link

Rhina Jones
John Pavitt
Mal Williams
Siobhan Hayward
Phil Jarrold
Sue Spurrier
Gwenan Davies

Wales Assembly of Women
Cytal
Cylch
Black Environment Network
WCVA
WCVA
WCVA

Officials

Martin Evans
Jane Large
Terry Gwilym
Lisa Dobbins
Gerry Quarrell
Chris Uttley
Robin King
Emyr Foxhall

TPE Group Director
Transport Policy Division
Transport Policy Division
Sustainable Development Unit
Countryside Division
Countryside Division
Countryside Division
TPE Group Business Unit, (Secretariat)

APOLOGIES:

David Cooke

Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations

PURPOSE: The National Assembly's Voluntary Sector Scheme requires that each Assembly Minister meets representatives of relevant voluntary sector networks at least twice in any calendar year.

SYNOPSIS:

Specific actions for Ministers/Officials

- Item on Sustainable Development and the ASPBs to be on the agenda of the next Voluntary Sector meeting with the Minister for Environment.
- Minister to place issues discussed in the item tabled by BEN on the relevant Committee agenda.
- The Enfys scheme to be on the agenda for the next Voluntary Sector meeting with the Minister for Environment.
- Ensure that the WCVA is on the circulation list for the Environment Business Group Progress Chart

Specific action for the Voluntary Sector

- Provide background papers for Environmental Protection Division on Zero Waste New Zealand

Issues which may inform the Assembly as a whole in developing policy

- The Voluntary Sector raised concerns about the additional work load that delivering Sustainable Development has had on Countryside Council for Wales (CCW).
- The Voluntary Sector considered that more should be done to promote ethnic inclusion in the policies of the public bodies and voluntary organisations within the environment sector. The Voluntary Sector would like the Assembly to ensure that ethnic monitoring occurs in all organisations that it funds, and that all personnel funded by the Assembly have the awareness and skills to work effectively with ethnic groups.
- The Voluntary Sector considered that all interested voluntary sector organisations should be engaged in discussions over developing community transport.

ISSUES RAISED

Funding issues

As part of the process for the Budget Round for 2002, it was suggested that there was a need to identify the issues that the Assembly was funding. As an example, 3 items were highlighted:

- Sustrans (sustainable transport);
- additional money to the CCW; and
- Voluntary Sector to look at cross-cutting organisations that deliver across portfolios.

Consultation on Policy

The importance of consulting on policy was discussed as a way of enabling input from the range of organisations within the Voluntary Sector.

Funding provided to the voluntary sector via local government was discussed. The relationship tended to be between individual departments rather than on a local authority basis.

Countryside Council for Wales

The Voluntary sector felt that CCW have been under a great deal of pressure in terms of their extra work and its role in delivering on Sustainable Development.

There was some tension between the CCW's duties (relating strictly to the environment) and the more balanced concept of sustainable development. All Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) will have to address sustainable development and it was agreed to discuss this matter at the next meeting.

Action: Agenda item on Sustainable Development at the next Voluntary sector meeting – Angela Williams (Diary Secretary Sue Essex AM)

Equal Opportunities issues with regard to ethnic minorities and the environment

A paper on the Black Environment Network (BEN) was introduced by the Voluntary Sector.

The issues raised in the paper were considered to be of interest to the Equal Opportunities Committee. The Minister agreed to check on this matter either by putting it on a future agenda for Environment, Planning and Transport Committee or at a meeting of the Equal Opportunities Committee.

Equal Opportunities issues needed to be looked at in similar terms as Sustainable Development. Work was in hand to develop the tools to involve local government and other organisations more effectively. The Assembly was looking to mainstream equality into the way it operates and develops policy.

Action: Sue Essex AM to place item on the appropriate agenda for discussion.

Voluntary Sector Sustainable Development Forum

Progress was noted.

Enfys – Open spaces and sustainable communities in Wales

The Enfys scheme was now up and running and it would be important to make links to Sustainable Development. The Voluntary sector hoped that the Minister for Environment could endorse this at some point.

It was felt that this was an important initiative, and it was agreed to discuss this at greater length at the next meeting.

Action: Agenda item at the next Voluntary sector meeting, Angela Williams (Diary Secretary Sue Essex AM)

Community Transport

The new Local Transport Services Grant was generally welcomed. There was recognition that the requirement on local authorities to produce Bus Strategies and Local Transport Plans, as well as the requirements of the Best Value regime, should produce a more strategic approach to transport provision.

The relationship between local authorities and the voluntary sector was discussed. To support such joint working some schemes are using service level agreements e.g. community transport in Powys.

Both the Minister and the voluntary sector were keen that examples of good practice are shared. The Assembly will be running seminars for local authorities where best practice can be shared, and supporting Community Transport Association (CTA) in its role of facilitating exchange of best practice and the relationship between local authorities and the voluntary sector. This action was welcomed.

The Voluntary Sector was concerned that other interested voluntary organisations were drawn

into the discussion as developing community transport (especially monitoring the new grant) is taken forward.

At the next meeting (in 6 months' time) the Minister expressed a wish to have more detailed discussion on how the Local Transport Services grant can be monitored by the voluntary sector.

The Minister intends to draw on the views of the Welsh Transport Forum subgroup that is currently engaged on a review of Community Transport and share this with the voluntary sector. One suggestion was to involve the CTA national organisation in discussions.

Countryside and Rights of Way legislation and local access for a

The paper tabled by Countryside Division on the Countryside and Rights of Way Act access rights was considered. While welcoming the new provisions of the Act - which they saw as a real step forward - the Voluntary Sector representatives had some concern about their ability to be effectively involved in the consultation mechanisms proposed. For example, on local access forums if 25 were created across Wales (one in each LA and the three National Parks) they would be hard pressed to identify suitable representation. Officials explained that 25 was the maximum number of forums anticipated - in practice fewer than this were likely to be created. Representation was intended to be local, so the voluntary sector could draw on their full membership to achieve representation.

Officials also referred to the Foot and Mouth situation, which could now potentially delay some aspects of the new legislation. This was understood.

Strategic Forward Look – Voluntary Sector involvement in future policy making

Martin Evans introduced the item and referred to the project management approach being piloted in parts of the Assembly. Copies of the Environment Business Group Progress Chart were forwarded to members of the Voluntary Sector, who thought it to be very useful (monthly updates would be sent).

Action: Circulate up dated Environment Business Group Progress Chart to the WCVA – Martin Evans

Zero Waste New Zealand

This item was introduced and thought to be a good idea. It was suggested that a presentation about the issue be placed on the agenda of the Waste Forum.

Action: Voluntary Sector to provide background papers for Environmental Protection Division – Mal Williams (Done)