

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 28 November 2001
Time: 2.00 to 4.45 pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

REPORT BY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

I visited the Arts Factory in Ferndale on 21 November. I had an informal meeting with the Chief Executive and Marketing Manager where we discussed the Factory's plans for a community windfarm and a proposal to purchase the Highfields Industrial Estate and convert it into a Sustainable Development business park.

COUNTRYSIDE

Lead Gunshot

Following consultation with interested parties on a draft Statutory Instrument and Regulatory Appraisal in the summer, I have decided to progress legislation to restrict the use of lead gunshot in Wales. The draft Regulations have now been published on the Intranet.

Review of the Environment Wales Grant

The Review of the Environment Wales Grant Initiative has now been completed, and I will circulate copies of the Report to Members as soon as it is published.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Partnership Agreement

The Partnership Agreement 'Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the people of Wales' requires the Assembly to issue guidance to local authorities and others on tackling noise

pollution. A new booklet entitled 'Sound Advice on Noise - Don't suffer in silence' was issued on 20th November. It provides useful information to members of the public on how to overcome noise problems as well as listing a number of useful contact points for information about noise problems such as at work or from transport.

Meeting with Environment Agency

On 16 November I met the Chair and Chief Executive of the Environment Agency together with the Board Member and Director for Wales. This was in the nature of a routine meeting - I hold regular quarterly meetings with Environment Agency Wales - and matters discussed included waste, flood defence, and issues arising from the Financial Management and Policy Review of the Agency.

PLANNING

Report Of the Advisory Panel on Standards (APOS) for the Planning Inspectorate

APOS was set up to advise the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, and the First Minister on the maintenance and enhancement of professional standards in the work of the Planning Inspectorate.

The eighth APOS Report has just been published and concluded that 99% of the Inspectorate's casework is free from justified complaint and that the Inspectorate continues to maintain high standards across its field of responsibilities. However, APOS noted that there were early signs that the tightening of timeliness targets may in some instances be putting quality at risk. We will keep the balance between speed and quality under review with the Inspectorate.

TRANSPORT

Transport Framework

I launched the Transport Framework at Llandudno on 23 November.

Virgin Train Naming Ceremony

On the 23 November 2001, I officially named one of Virgin's new Voyager trains - "Welsh Dragon" at Llandudno town railway station. I subsequently gave a keynote address on the condition of railway stations in Wales at a seminar arranged by the Rail Passenger Committee for Wales at St George's Hotel Llandudno.

Sue Essex

Minister for Environment