

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 26 March 2003
Time: 9.15am to 12.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

REPORT BY MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

I have taken the opportunity in this Report to review progress across my wide-ranging portfolio. As you know much has been achieved, and my Report is divided into the main policy areas within my remit, namely

- Sustainable Development
- Environmental Protection
- Countryside Coast, and Conservation
- Planning
- Transport
- Heritage

Sustainable Development

The Assembly has a legal duty to ensure all policies support sustainable development and therefore all Ministers have responsibility in delivering this agenda. We are discussing progress with Sustainable Development later in the Committee Meeting, on the basis on my separate paper, also tabled for this meeting.

However, as the lead Minister for sustainable development I am pleased to report on the following key Assembly Government achievements:

Assembly

- Making the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development a mechanism for driving progress
- Ensuring the Welsh Assembly Government's corporate plan, ***Plan for Wales 2001***, and strategic policies on economic development, farming, planning, transport, ICT and community regeneration are contributing to sustainable development
- Mainstreaming sustainable development into policy development and using sustainability criteria to assess individual schemes and projects in transport planning and the environment, for example ***'Wise About Waste'***, and ***'Planning: Delivering for Wales'***.
- A top-level sustainability appraisal methodology/ policy integration tool in place, and starting to make an impact on all Assembly policy-making.
- Launched a Green Policy Statement and Action Plan for the National Assembly for Wales, covering the Assembly's own operations.
- Launched the 'Business and Environment' Action Plan that focuses on resource productivity
- Excellent demonstration projects in place and successful (e.g. Sustainable Development Fund, Environment Wales)
- Issued a booklet for schools on education for Sustainable Development and global citizenship

Working with Partners

- Established an independent Sustainable Development Forum for Wales
- Agreed a Sustainable Development Compact between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association
- Finalised the Planning Agreement with WLGA, setting out our respective roles and responsibilities relating to the land use system in Wales.

European Level

- Successfully bid for funding for a Pan-European Regional Network on Sustainable Development, which was confirmed by the European Commission in August and is now under way
- Successfully bid for European Commission support for a €4 million programme involving 4 projects (now well under way) under the ERDF Regional Programme of Innovation Actions

Globally

- Ensured that Wales played a constructive role at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, in particular helping to establish a global network of regional governments committed to sustainable development

In summary I have sought to foster an increasingly 'can-do' approach to Sustainable Development within Wales.

Environmental Protection

My responsibilities in relation to Environmental Protection cover a wide range of policy areas, but I have highlighted below the key areas of waste management, water, air quality, and noise. I recognise the important work of the Environment Agency and have worked together with the Agency to make it more effective and accountable. The government has supported a number of their proposals for initiatives in Wales aimed at improvements in waste minimisation and environmental protection, and provided additional grant in aid of approximately £5.5 million for these and associated environmental protection activities. In comparison the Agency received £11 million in grant in aid in 1999/2000; in 2003-04 the Agency's provision is over £16.5 million for these purposes.

The Assembly was influential in the steps that led to the successful acquisition by Glas Cymru of Dwr Cymru in May 2001, the water and sewerage undertaker that serves a large part of Wales. Glas Cymru is a novel structure in the water industry being a non-profit company with no shareholders. As a consequence of financial and operational efficiency improvements since the Glas Cymru acquisition, the company has been able to announce cuts of £11 million in customers' water bills and additional investment of £41 million in part to alleviate sewage flooding.

Waste

We have published a comprehensive waste strategy for Wales in June 2002, **Wise about Waste**, backed by substantial additional resources (£50 million for 2001-02 to 2003-04) of which £42.5 million has been allocated to local authorities. We have established the Wales Waste Forum, representing stakeholders in the production and management of waste in Wales to advise on the development of **Wise about Waste** and its implementation.

The implementation of the waste strategy has started with a range of initiatives including the local authority high diversion exemplars scheme, **Waste Awareness Wales**, and more recently public sector waste minimisation.

We have taken forward the recommendations flowing from the work of the EPT Committee's Investigation and Report into Nantygwyddon. We have commissioned the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry from Atlanta, Georgia, USA to consider the health impact of

the landfill site at Nantygwyddon. The report makes some recommendations, but is reassuring in relation to any current risks from the landfill site. It confirms that on the basis of a review of available documentation and site operations, the current treatment and monitoring of landfill gases from the Nantygwyddon site appear to be protective of public health.

The Assembly Government has also commissioned the Earth Sciences Partnership (ESP) to consider the current and longterm stability of the site. The Assembly Government has published ESP's interim report which is generally reassuring about the site's stability while identifying issues that need further discussion with the site's operator, Amgen Rhondda; the owner, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, and the Environment Agency as the regulatory authority.

Water

The quality of drinking water provided in Wales has continued to be of a very high standard. In 2001, almost 99.8% of around 182,000 tests indicated compliance with required standards. This equates to a reduction of 12% in the number of tests breaching standards as compared with 2000.

Last year for the first time in Wales all of our identified bathing waters complied with the EC mandatory standards. A record number of 62 bathing waters also met the more stringent EC guideline standards (the standards that beaches must meet to be eligible for a European Blue Flag). The results represent a performance significantly ahead of the Plan for Wales target.

We supported the making of the Wye Navigation Order which has bestowed powers of a navigation authority for the River Wye on the Environment Agency, thereby safeguarding this important river against possible over use and environmental damage.

Flood Defence

Since Autumn 2000 I have increased financial support to the flood defence operating authorities to help them repair damaged flood defence infrastructure and to extend the flood defence network where necessary. I attach a high priority to promoting additional flood protection work by operating authorities. Provision for flood defence work is increasing from £8.2 million in 2003-04 to £11.9 million on 2005-06.

Since 2000 major flood defence improvements have been completed at Chepstow and Llandovery, construction work has commenced at Bangor on Dee and Ruthin and preparation work is well advanced at Isca Road, Newport and Monmouth. These additional funds have also enabled authorities to accelerate the promotion of schemes at locations flooded during

2000 and to improve their future flood risk management by better flood management planning.

Work is substantially complete on the Review of Flood and Coastal Defence Funding and institutional arrangements, and a public consultation exercise was undertaken in spring of 2002. This review will hopefully deliver improvements and I plan to make an announcement on its outcome shortly.

While awaiting the outcome of the review I have increased grant rates for Local Authority works to 85% from April 2001, made Assembly funds more accessible to Operating Authorities by rationalising budgets and have wholly funded strategic activities such as catchment flood management plans and specific studies.

With this support the Environment Agency has substantially completed two of its three flood management plans for pilot catchments in Wales and has undertaken a programme of annual public awareness campaigns as part of its strategy to improve the flood warning service in Wales. Local Authorities have completed flood studies on over 400 known flooding sites on their ordinary watercourse system and work has started on detailed studies relating to over 60 of these sites. This work will generally improve flood risk management and will support the development of more robust future work programmes in Wales.

Air Quality

Since the Air Quality Strategy for England Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland was published in 2000, work has continued on developing and amending the strategy, as new evidence becomes available.

By introducing regulations and issuing guidance the Welsh Assembly Government has provided a clear and simple policy framework for improving air quality with realistic but challenging objectives which are underpinned by monitoring and research. Advice booklets have raised public awareness about air quality.

We have made a range of secondary legislation to improve controls on air quality, including

- the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations which set objectives for seven key air pollutants and require local authorities to carry out periodic reviews of air quality
- a number of regulations controlling a range of specific air pollutants
- the Waste Incineration Directive which introduces stringent operating conditions and sets minimum technical requirements for waste- incineration, and consolidates new and existing controls into a single piece of legislation.

We have published:

- *Air Pollution – What it means for your health / the public information service* – advice booklet issued in May 2002 giving advice on air pollution and health and providing an easy to understand guide to the Air Pollution information Service.
- *Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – Addendum* - published in February 2003 the document consolidates the actions the Assembly and the others have taken to improve air quality. It provides an update of information on scientific and technical developments underpinning air quality objectives.
- *Local Air Quality Management Revised Statutory Policy and Technical Guidance* – published in February to provide advice to local authorities on their LAQM duties and also to consolidate the previous four policy and the four technical booklets into one document.

Countryside, coast, and conservation

The Welsh Assembly Government has worked closely and effectively with the Countryside Council for Wales in delivering the key objectives in Plan for Wales. Key achievements in the countryside and conservation policy areas relate to the implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in Wales, and taking forward the Natura 2000 designations.

Implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Regulatory framework for introduction of new right of public access to open country under Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 put in place. This has facilitated the formation of local access for a across Wales to advise on new and improved opportunities for access to the country, New statutory guidance on rights of way improvement plans has also been prepared and issued.

Countryside Council for Wales

Quinquennial review of Countryside Council for Wales undertaken and action plan put in place to implement agreed recommendations

National Parks

- Review of National Parks initiated to examine range of key issues, including possibility of direct election of members to National Park Authorities. The Assembly Government has assisted the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority in securing suitable accommodation, and is making a significant financial contribution to the provision of

refurbished accommodation for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

Coast and Conservation

A New Wales Coastal and Maritime Partnership has been successfully established.

The Sustainable Development Fund and Environment Wales grant schemes have been reviewed and adequate resources secured for the future. Wales' three National Parks Authorities and five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are being provided with £1million in total over the next three years to continue to administer the fund.

The suite of candidate Special Areas of Conservation in Wales (part of the European Commission's Natura 2000 network of protected areas) has been improved and extended to include 47 completely new sites. These designations will ensure that the special interests present in the sites will be protected for us, and future generations to enjoy.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 also introduced new powers for the Countryside Council for Wales to protect Sites of Special Scientific Interest and we have brought forward legislation that sets out procedures for owners and occupiers of land affected to appeal in certain circumstances

In addition, we have introduced legislation that will curtail the poisoning of wildfowl by preventing the use of lead shot over wetland areas

Biodiversity

Last year we presented to the National Assembly for Wales a list of Habitats and Species of Principle Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity. The list was approved and will be used alongside the Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) that are in place across Wales. LBAPS are an important mechanism for protecting biodiversity by encouraging action at a local level and I am pleased that I have been able to provide funding to progress this work. We have provided an additional £200,000, to local authorities (through the Countryside Council for Wales) to support local biodiversity action plans. Furthermore an additional £20,000 has gone to the National Museums and Galleries of Wales for the provision of skills training of key species listed under Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The Assembly Government chairs the Wales Biodiversity Partnership. The Partnership oversees the implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in Wales: the role and support that the Assembly Government provides is therefore pivotal to taking forward the biodiversity agenda

Wales Spatial Plan

A key element in ***Plan for Wales*** is the development of the Wales Spatial Plan, which has been undertaken keeping EPT Committee informed throughout. Following extensive research and early consultation exercises, the draft plan is on schedule for publication for consultation in Summer 2003.

The Assembly government secured a key clause in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, now going through Parliament, which places a duty on the Assembly to prepare and publish a spatial plan.

PLANNING

'Planning: delivering for Wales', issued for consultation in January 2002, set out the Assembly's aspirations to change and improve the planning system in Wales to better equip it to deliver sustainable development and economic regeneration. There was widespread support for its aims to make policies and plans more inclusive, integrated and strategic, to improve the quality and efficiency of planning decision making, and to assess the resources needed to bring about these changes.

In November 2002, I launched a comprehensive programme of change. Some of the proposals require primary legislation and we are working on this with the UK Government. Others will involve updating Assembly legislation and reviewing our policy, technical and procedural advice. In this we will continue to work with our partners, particularly those in the Planning Forum.

We have introduced a system of cross-party involvement in the determination of larger or more sensitive planning applications and appeals. All called-in applications and recovered appeals are now referred to Planning Decisions Committees for determination. Previously these decisions were taken by a Minister.

Planning Policy Wales

A full review of land use planning policy in Wales has been undertaken. The resulting document ***Planning Policy Wales*** provides distinctive planning policy for future land use. ***Planning Policy Wales*** (PPW) is the result of the Welsh Assembly Government's new, inclusive approach to reviewing land use planning policies. It underlines the importance placed by the Assembly Government on ensuring 'Made in Wales' planning policies are adaptable and able to deliver the best possible solutions appropriate for the needs of Wales.

The document is firmly based on the Welsh Assembly Government's goals of achieving sustainable development, building a dynamic and advanced economy, tackling social disadvantage and promoting equal opportunities. It is the culmination of an extensive review of

planning policy in Wales which has involved partnership with local government, business and the voluntary sector in the shape of the Land Use Planning Forum.

The following Technical Advice Notes (TANs) have been published (these provide supplementary advice to complement planning policy in 'Planning Policy Wales'):

- TAN 6 'Agricultural and Rural Development'
- TAN 20 'The Welsh Language - Unitary Development Plans and Planning Control'
- TAN 21 'Waste'
- TAN 19 'Telecommunications'
- TAN 12 'Design'.

Unitary Development Plans

I have actively encouraged planning authorities to work towards the adoption of their Unitary Development Plans including monitoring their progress at 6 monthly intervals, taking follow up action as necessary and publishing timetables on the Assembly website.

A Good Practice Guide on Sustainability Appraisal of Unitary Development Plans in Wales has been published

Design Commission for Wales

We have established the Design Commission for Wales. This is the product of an inclusive approach which encourages local Government, professionals, business and community organisations to work together to improve design outcomes. The idea for the Commission was developed with the help of a larger number of people working in design and related fields. Apart from establishing the Commission, the Design Steering Group also initiated work on the revised Design Technical Advice Note.

Wales Planning Research Programme

A programme of research is in place to inform the planning policy framework of Wales. The Wales Planning Research Programme is based on the objectives and themes identified in a Land Use Planning Scoping Study. The programme focuses on the needs and priorities of Wales, distinctive Welsh issues, management information for land use planning policy development, and assists the development of best practice guidance. Research undertaken includes

- Regional Strategies Scoping Study
- The Application of Accessibility Methodologies to Land Use Planning in Wales
- Farm Diversification and the Planning System

- Sustainability Appraisal of Unitary Development Plans
- Review of Land Use Planning Indicators
- Second and Holiday Homes and the Land Use Planning System
- Baseline Topographic Data for the Assessment of Flood Risk along the Dee Valley
- The Rural Economy and the Planning System.

Planning and Health

- Research is now under way to identify ways of improving consideration of health concerns in the planning system. The report, due in June, is intended to inform planning policy and provide advice and guidance for use in the planning decision making process.

Planning Aid Wales

In late February I announced funding for a research project to develop the services Planning Aid Wales can offer to individuals and communities. The project report is due to be published in June.

Waste Planning

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 21 was issued in November 2001. This provided detailed guidance to enable the planning system to help meet the demanding targets set out in Waste Directives and the Wales Waste Strategy "Wise about Waste". A key element was the requirement to establish voluntary joint regional arrangements to complete Regional Waste Plans by November 2003.

The 3 Regional Waste Planning Groups are on target to complete the Regional Waste Plans by the end of 2003 in accord with Technical Advice Note 21. This is a major piece of work that will ensure that the planning system will be able to deliver the waste management facilities that are necessary to meet national targets.

Draft Marine Aggregates Dredging Policy (dMADP)

Draft Marine Aggregates Dredging Policy issued for consultation in May 2001. It set out the Welsh Assembly Government's strategic level policy in relation to the extraction of marine sand and gravel from the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary. The objective of the document is to enable objective and transparent decisions to be taken about the most appropriate locations for dredging marine aggregates in Welsh Waters. This innovative approach introducing spatial planning in the marine environment is unique in the UK. The revised version of the draft dredging policy is likely to issue in the Summer this year

Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund for Wales

I launched this fund in June 2002 and to date I have committed over £1.8 million to projects throughout Wales. The Fund is aimed at encouraging the recycling of aggregates and the promotion of alternative materials to primary aggregates. In addition, communities affected by quarrying can apply to the Fund to support local amenity projects.

Transport

We have developed the Transport agenda for Wales working with partners throughout, including local authorities, Whitehall Departments, the Strategic Rail Authority, transport operators, and the voluntary sector.

To increase the involvement of key stakeholders in the process of creating and implementing our Transport policies, I set up the Welsh Transport Forum which represents a cross section of transport stakeholders. The Forum has taken forward a number of initiatives, including the review of Community Transport. The development of a motorcycling strategy, and a review of long distance bus and coach services was underway.

The Transport Framework for Wales was published in November 2001 and sets out how we aim to lead and support the delivery of the transport infrastructure and services that we need in Wales both internal and to connect us to the rest of the world.

The Framework is the translation of the aims and themes of the Assembly Government into what we want from our transport system having regard to the Assembly Government's policy aims under the headings of Economy, Environment, Safety, Accessibility and Integration.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Welsh Assembly Government wants to ensure that public transport in Wales is given a high profile here and beyond our borders. To achieve this, I have set up a Public Transport Unit with my Department to drive forward the policy and technical work that is needed to implement our commitments

Bus and Coach

We have taken forward a major element in ***Plan for Wales*** by introducing mandatory free travel by pensioners and disabled people on local bus services, and ensured this will be extended to include men aged 60-64 from April 2003.

We have steadily increased funding for local authorities under the Local Transport Services

Grant scheme, enabling authorities to subsidise local bus services and support community transport projects. We have raised the service subsidy agreements limits to 40% of an authority's total financial support for subsidised bus services. This has reduced the contract tendering requirements that apply to authorities, and so increased their flexibility to manage their resources most efficiently.

We have increased bus subsidies to local authorities from £2.25 million in 1998-99 to £8.45 million in 2003-04.

We have extended Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG - fuel duty rebate) to Section 19 community transport operators in Wales.

A comprehensive review of community transport in Wales has been undertaken, and we have endorsed a report containing 75 recommendations. The report was launched last October, and obtained Cabinet approval for officials to work with the Community Transport Association, the NHS, local government and the voluntary sector (among others) to implement the recommendations.

We have facilitated the establishment of a group looking into the provision of long distance bus and coach services in Wales (report anticipated in April), and approved in principle the extension of BSOG to long distance bus and coach services (regulations are in preparation).

We have expanded the Community Transport Association's legal and technical advice network throughout Wales.

For the first time, through dedicated funding, there is an officer of the National Federation of Bus Users in Wales, to represent the interests of bus passengers.

We have safeguarded the continued operation of the Trawscambria bus service that runs between North and South Wales. This support will continue at least until the recommendations of the long distance bus and coach group has been considered (reviewed quarterly).

We have given financial support to the new seven days a week Cardiff Bay Express bus service that began its operations on 3 March- a service which is jointly funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff County Council, and the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce.

We have supported a significant number of bus corridor improvements through Transport Grant, including raised boarding platforms and safe crossing points. Early evaluation from the projects in the Gwent area shows increased patronage.

We are also funding improved services in Deeside through the Demand Responsive scheme and the Wrexham – Barmouth bus route

We have provided more than £1m in support of the traveline multi-modal public transport information service, which is handling around 400,000 telephone calls per annum. The *Traveline Cymru* internet site went live in February 2003.

We are working closely with Department for Transport in England in taking forward Transport Direct, the new multi-modal travel information project covering public transport and roads.

Working with Crime Concern and others a Secure (bus) Stations accreditation scheme in Wales has been established, to help address passengers' concerns about security, and we are funding pilot schemes.

Rail

We have been instrumental in the Strategic Rail Authority delivering a rail franchise solution for Wales leading to improved services. Franchise process has reached Best and Final offer stage, bidders required to tender by 7 April 2003 and a decision is likely to be made by the SRA in May-June, with implementation expected in autumn 2003.

We have provided a grant of over £2.4 million to allow Wales and Borders Trains to roll out a 12-month programme to modernise station facilities and enhance safety.

We will meet the full capital costs of the Vale of Glamorgan line, of upgrading the Ebbw Vale line to carry passenger trains (together with the additional capacity and stations required) and of the projects developed with SWIFT for additional capacity at Queen Street and on the Rhymney and Taff Vale lines.

We have developed rail freight and modal interchange proposals, and re-launched Freight Facilities Grant. We have made three offers of grant under the Freight Facilities Grant scheme.

We are supporting improvements to train services between North and South Wales – this followed from consultation with key stakeholders, including Assembly Members from North Wales.

Transport Grant is being used to provide funding for rail projects in Wales, including improvements to the Valleys lines and Cambrian line.

We contributed £250,000 towards the Project Inform system which is being funded by the SRA's Rail Partnership fund – this scheme provides up to the minute train information, new information screens and bilingual announcements at major stations, as well as information points at rural stations.

Local Transport Strategies

Local Authorities have been encouraged to draw up Local Transport Plans, and draft Regional Bus Strategies.

A Walking and Cycling Strategy for Wales has been developed, and through Transport Grant funding, a significant amount of cycling routes across Wales have been produced.

We have developed an initiative to encourage green travel plans and appointed Green Travel plan co-ordinators to encourage a shift from the use of the private car to public transport, walking, and cycling.

We have published report under the Road Traffic Reduction (National Targets) Act 1998 in January 2000, which has been updated in March 2003.

An updated scheme for disabled motorists has been developed and launched.

ROADS

Trunk Road Programme

The Trunk Road Forward Programme was published in March 2002 and will help support economic aims and growth in Wales, and this is reflected in A Winning Wales. It also reflects the aims of The Transport Framework. It is a major programme which is designed to achieve an integrated, accessible and sustainable transport system which will help support economic aims and growth in Wales. Funding for the Trunk Road Programme totals £36.5 million for 2003-04 rising to £59.5 million in 2005-06. This compares with £42.5 million in 1999-2000 and £32 million in 2000-01.

Since 1999 we have completed the following major schemes:

- A40 Carmarthen Eastern Bypass (Dec 99)
- A40 Fishguard Western Bypass (Feb 00)
- A55 Anglesey Dualling (DBFO) (March 01)
- A487 Llanwnda to South of Llanllyfni (Aug 01)
- A40 Travellers Rest Grade Separated Junction (March 02)

- A477 Sageston Reberth Bypass (Sept 02)

Work is under way on two major schemes

- A470 Dolwyddelan to Pont yr Afanc (Completion 2005)

- A465 Tredegar- Dowlais Top dualling (Completion 2004)

Transport Grant

Transport Grant decisions have been delivered on time and with transparent process. The annual budget had increased from £34.3m in 1999-2000 to £75.3m in 2003-2004. As well as funding improvements to public transport, Transport Grant also funds Local Authority Road Schemes.

Road Safety

The first Road Safety Strategy for Wales was launched in January 2003, aimed at reducing real and perceived danger on Welsh roads in order to promote safe and sustainable access for all members of society.

All local authorities have been funded to enable them to appoint a Child Pedestrian Training Co-ordinator for three years from 2002-2003.

The Slower Speeds for Safer Streets Initiative has been launched - £1.5 million has been made available to local authorities to help them reduce speeds in vulnerable areas such as schools, libraries, leisure centres and residential developments in 2002-2003.

An office for Sustrans in Wales has been funded - £180,000 made available over three years.

A new road safety special grant to local authorities has been introduced to help them deliver improvements to road safety in their local areas. We have increased the grant from £3.6 million in 2000 to £6.7 million in 2003-04.

We have continued the Safe Routes to School Initiative – for a further 4 years from 2001-02.

Transport and the environment

The Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (Wales) Regulations 2003 have been approved. This provides local authorities with powers to enforce vehicle emission standards in areas of poor air quality and will come into force on 1 May 2003.

We have funded the PowerShift Demonstration Project in Gwynedd, which has helped to provide LPG refuelling sites in Trawsfynydd and Barmouth.

Managing the Road Network

In addition to the new road schemes described previously we have funded a wide range of improvements to the road network, including road repairs, improvements to signalling, and developing new information and management systems. Details are provided below:

- Special Local Road Grant for local authority road repairs at £25m spread over 2 years (2001-02 and 2002-03)
- 160 schemes as part of the Rural Town and Village Initiative with a value of £2.6m with a further 40 planned for 2003-04 with a value of £1m. The schemes are carried out to improve the quality of life in towns and villages
- 171 Local Safety Schemes over the past 3 years with a value of £5.2m. The completion of these schemes would contribute to accident reduction throughout Wales.
- £4.4m spent on measures for cyclists at NCN/Trunk Road interfaces.
- Signing up with Safety Camera Partnerships to reduce excessive speed where accidents are the result.
- Publication of the Report on the Noise Mitigation Study on trunk roads and motorways throughout Wales and the introduction of low noise surfacing.
- A470 Ty Nant to North of Maentwrog Road Railway Station Improvement - Cost £1.9m; Start of Works - February 2000; Completion - February 2001.
- A494 Improvement at Tafarn y Gelyn - Cost £1.2m; Start of Work - Oct 2000; Completion - August 2001.
- A470 and M4 Making Better Use (of the network) Schemes
- Renewal of the M4 winter maintenance fleet

Signals and Lighting

- Upgraded 80% of trunk road pelican pedestrian facilities to user friendly PUFFIN crossings;
- Energy and maintenance efficient light emitting diode (LED) signals installed at 60% of trunk road signals
- Trial to be launched in March 2003 of automated pedestrian facilities for the disabled at 2 sites
- First Government organisation to obtain energy accreditation
- Awarded by the British Astronomical society for environmentally reduced lighting and testing of remote dimming systems for lighting in North Wales

Intelligent Transport Systems

- Publication of ITS strategy and 5 year implementation programme
- Preparation and provision of 34 Variable Message Signs on the M4 and A55 by Summer 2003 - pictogram signs to address language issues
- Provision of data collection and processing systems from SSC to M4 J34, and sections of A55
- Automatic queue protection and sign setting systems on M4 in Gwent
- Tunnel safety and risk reduction systems installed for A55 and Penmaenbach headland
- Provision of CCTV on the trunk road and motorway networks to assist with network and incident management
- South Wales Traffic control centre upgraded to undertake duties of the Gwent police control offices and deal with Emergency telephone calls - first in the UK.

Information and Network Management Services

- Designed and tendered for the construction of new traffic management centre - award expected March 2003
- Provision of CCTV to emergency services, TRA's and media for TV broadcast (S4C expected to use from March 2003)
- Broadcasting of travel information from TCC during events
- Delivery of new travel information services to the public by the WWW, bilingual telephone line and more recently the automatic notification of incidents via email and SMS text messaging
- Delivery of Transport Direct Wales - user needs studies, workprogramme, RTI and Smartcard recommendations.

Trunk Road Estate Biodiversity Action Plan

A technical consultation on plans to conserve and enhance wildlife along the Welsh Assembly Government road network was announced on 21 February. The draft Trunk Road Estate Biodiversity Action Plan sets out proposals for actions to be undertaken between 2004 and 2014 to safeguard species and habitats such as otters, Welsh clearwing moths and orchid rich grassland. It will support the Transport Directorate's work in relation to wildlife, in line with the duty on the Assembly Government in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to have regard for the conservation of biological diversity in its work.

HERITAGE

My portfolio includes the historic environment of Wales, where Cadw undertakes my

responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. Cadw was established to protect, conserve and to promote an appreciation of the historic environment of Wales and in addition to having a range of statutory duties it also has a number of monuments of national importance in its care. Cadw plays a key role, in partnership with other heritage organisations in Wales, in managing the heritage of Wales and it is essential that we have developed, clear policies and integrate the role of heritage through all policy bases.

Heritage Policy Development

Last July I hosted a conference (*'An Asset for the Future'*) which explored the role of heritage in our society and considered the contribution that the historic environment makes to our day to day lives, and how this could be enhanced in economic and social terms by exploring new ways of managing the historic environment.

Subsequently, to examine this theme further and in more detail, I commissioned a review and drew together a small drafting group of independent experts to prepare a consultation document, on the basis of which I could invite the views of people and organisations throughout Wales on the way forward. I plan to issue this consultation document shortly and the response to it will be available to inform the policies and priorities of the next administration.

Other key activities that I would like to highlight are:

Conservation Programme

Major conservation projects on two castles in state care - St Quentins at Llanblethian in the Vale of Glamorgan, and Dolforwyn in Powys. This work has been completed, and I was able to open them to the public. Cadw also restored a building in Margam to serve as a museum for inscribed stones

Industrial Heritage

With help from the Assembly through Cadw, the Blaenavon industrial landscape achieved designation as a World Heritage Site. Cadw has reinforced its focus on industrial heritage with grants in the region of £300,000 for major projects at the Tondu and Cyfartha Ironworks and the offer of grant of £570,000 for proposals to regenerate the former Penallta Colliery.

Historic Buildings Grants

We have offered over £8 million in grant for the repair of buildings of historic or architectural significance in Wales.

Town Schemes

Twenty-two town schemes have been established with local authorities, many of them involving the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as Cadw, to help historic repair and regeneration in the towns of Wales. Over £1.2m grant from Cadw has gone into these schemes which acts as a lever to releasing additional resources from other agencies

Equality Issues

In order to improve access for disabled people to historic buildings and sites, last year we published advice (***Overcoming the Barriers***) on the sort of alterations that might be necessary, and have embarked upon access audits of all of the monuments in the Assembly's care.

Listing Resurvey

The listing resurvey of Wales, which both the Welsh Affairs Committee and the Assembly's own Audit Committee have identified as a priority, has progressed over the last three years and is still on target for completion in 2005. Over this period roughly a quarter of the building stock in Wales was surveyed.

Religious Buildings

The Welsh Historic Buildings Trust has been established to care for the most important of Wales' chapels, which are no longer used for religious worship.

Listed Building Consent Delegation

We have recently invited local authorities to bid for delegation to decide most listed building consent cases themselves. Only those authorities that demonstrate that they have sufficient conservation expertise will receive a delegation. The Vale of Glamorgan Council and Monmouthshire CBC has submitted successful applications. Delegation ensures a better and more efficient service to the public.

Landscape Registers and Information

We have recorded in detail the historic landscapes of Wales in the form of Landscape Registers, to serve both as an educational tool and to inform major planning decisions. Over the last three years we have published another five booklets on caring for aspects of the historic environment, and I launched the most recent – which addresses small rural dwellings – in Conwy only last week.

Traffic Management in Historic Areas

Guidance has issued to local authorities in Wales and other interested organisations offering advice on ways in which traffic engineering and highways improvements can be handled sensitively in historic areas.

Sue Essex

Minister for Environment