

**Pwyllgor yr Amgylchedd, Cynllunio a Chefn Gwlad
Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee**

Gwenda Thomas AM
Chair
Committee on Equality of Opportunity
National Assembly for Wales

13 October 2006

Dear Gwenda,

Welsh Assembly Government's Seventh Annual Report on Equality of Opportunity

Following consideration of the Welsh Assembly Government's Seventh Annual Report on Equality of Opportunity at a meeting of the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee on 11 October 2006, I am writing to convey the Committee's views.

The Committee raised the following issues:

- Access to the countryside by black and ethnic minority communities
- Poverty in rural Wales and whether there was any rural proofing to address the impact of policies on rural communities
- The status and funding of the rural observatory's work on providing improved data and monitoring of policy development and implementation in rural areas
- The perceived conflict between securing disabled access to buildings and the requirements of the planning regime
- Whether access to pathways on farms is taking into consideration when Tir Mynydd, Tir Cymru and Tir Gofal agreements are signed

In response, the Minister informed the Committee that guidance would soon be issued to planning applicants that access statements would have to be produced as part of the application process for planning approval. He also explained that securing access was part of the grant mechanism.

Members agreed that the Committee should regularly scrutinise equality of opportunity issues and requested that all briefings prepared for use by the Committee contain advice and questions on equality issues, where appropriate.

Later in the meeting, when scrutinising subordinate legislation, Members suggested that all explanatory memoranda should have a section explaining how equality of opportunity was taken into account in drafting the legislation and any impact the legislation might have on equality issues.

I trust that your Committee will take into account the issues raised by the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee when you discuss and take evidence on the report on 25 October.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glyn Davies', written in a cursive style.

**Glyn Davies AM
Committee Chair**

A second handwritten signature in black ink, identical to the one above, appearing to read 'Glyn Davies' in a cursive style.