

Environment, Planning & Countryside Committee

EPC(2)-07-06(p2) Annex 1

Forward Work Programme 2006-07

PART 1: Strategic Forward Work Programme

May 2006 to April 2007

Introduction

1. The Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee is one of the Assembly's seven subject committees. Standing Order 9.9 requires subject committees to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months. The Strategic Forward Work Programme sets out the Committee's priorities for the coming 12 months. It is complemented by detailed programmes covering each term.

Remit and responsibilities

2. In accordance with s57(4) of the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside, which covers: the environment and sustainable development; town and country planning; countryside and conservation issues; agriculture and rural development including forestry and food production.

3. The responsibilities of subject committees as set out in Standing Orders 9.7 and 9.8, which are:

9.7: Each Subject Committee shall:

(i) contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Minister is accountable to the Assembly and in the areas for which that Minister has been allocated other responsibilities (with the exception of the management of the Assembly's business and its finances and matters within the terms of reference of the Committees on Equality of Opportunity and on European and External Affairs);

(ii) keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and

(iii) keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields and areas of responsibility by public, voluntary and private bodies.

9.8 Each Subject Committee shall also, within the relevant fields and areas of responsibility,

- (i) advise on proposed primary, secondary and European legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under Standing Order 24;
- (ii) provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to the allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 21;
- (iii) perform its functions under Standing Order 23 (complaints);
- (iv) perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 22; and
- (v) consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields and areas of responsibility.

Aims

4. With such a broad remit, the Committee will develop a strategic approach to its work and aim to balance consideration of subjects across the portfolio and its range of responsibilities.

Priorities

5. Priorities for the coming period will be:

- Policy development (SO 9.7(i)) – the Committee will focus on those areas of policy development where it can make the greatest impact. In the coming period the Committee will:

examine the potential for growing biocrops the Committee examined the potential of the biomass and bio-fuel industry in Wales.

- consider planning aspects of electronic communications apparatus

- continue to monitor the work of the Welsh Assembly Government with regard to the management and control of bovine tuberculosis

- undertake work on the marine environment

- Scrutiny of the Minister (SO 9.7(i)) - the Minister will report to the Committee by providing written reports at alternate meetings on current developments within the portfolio. At all other meetings, the Minister, if appropriate, will provide an oral update of current or urgent issues

within his portfolio. The Committee may also undertake inquiries into topics in greater depth.

- Scrutiny of relevant bodies (SO 9.7 (iii)) – the Committee will scrutinise the work of relevant bodies undertaking activities within the EPC portfolio. Rather than undertake scrutiny of performance against the full range of targets, the Committee will concentrate on scrutinising particular aspects of relevant bodies' work, or joint delivery of services. The Committee will also advise on any quinquennial or other reviews of the public bodies.

Scrutiny of proposed legislation affecting Wales (SO 9.8(i) and 24) – the Minister will regularly outline forthcoming secondary legislation. The Committee will be informed of relevant proposed primary legislation and scrutinise and report on primary legislation remitted to it by Plenary. The Committee will identify for scrutiny those items of legislation where there is scope to influence content, and will also consider draft secondary legislation referred by the Deputy Presiding Officer, as appropriate. With regard to EU legislation, the Committee, in line with the method of working and protocol agreed by the Panel of Chairs identified, as its priorities, the Green Paper on adaptation to climate change, the Green Paper on a Future EU Maritime Policy; and the Review of the health rules on animal by-products. In addition, the Committee will receive regular updates on issues it identified within the 2005 Programme, as well as GMO co-existence, bio-fuels and energy crops.

Other items (SO 9.8) – the Committee will consider the following items as they arise:

- proposals for the Assembly's budget (SO 9.8(ii) and 21) – the Committee will indicate its budget priorities in the summer term and comment on the draft budget in the autumn term. It will monitor the Assembly Government's progress in the areas that the Committee will identify as priorities in the 2005-06 budget;
- complaints (SO 9.8(iii) and 23) – the Committee will consider any complaints referred to it under Standing Order 23;
- public appointments (SO 9.8(iv) and 22) – the Committee's two public appointment nominees will take part in the process of appointments to public bodies as vacancies arise;
- other matters referred by the Assembly (SO 9.8 (v)) – the Committee will consider other matters referred to it by the National Assembly, but would ask Assembly Members to consult the Committee Chair before tabling motions inviting plenary to remit work to the Committee.

The Assembly's Statutory Duties

6. The Government of Wales Act 1998 places certain duties on the National Assembly, the Committee's work will be guided by the following:

- Equality of Opportunity (s.48 and s.120) – Committee meetings will be held in public and on occasion away from the National Assembly building to increase the accessibility of its business to people across Wales. Over the range of issues within its portfolio, the Committee will have regard to equality of opportunity.
- Sustainable Development (s.121) – the Committee will scrutinise the relevant parts of annual

progress reports on meeting the commitments of the Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme and Welsh Assembly Government Action Plan, and the extent to which sustainable development is integrated in the work of ASPBs. As part of the budget planning round, the Committee will consider whether budget decisions support sustainable policy making. The Committee's own policy review recommendations will be consistent with the principles of sustainable development. As co-ordination for sustainable development forms part of the Minister's responsibilities, the Committee will undertake detailed policy development and scrutiny work in this area, such as scrutiny of the development of sustainability indicators.

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee
May 2006