

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee

EPC(2) 12-06(p8)

Date: 28 September 2006

Venue: Committee Room, Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Title: Environment Strategy - Update

Purpose

1. This paper updates Members on progress with implementing the Environment Strategy Action Plan.

Summary / Recommendation

2. As requested by the Committee, this paper provides an update on the implementation of the Environment Strategy Action Plan.

Background

3. The Environment Strategy for Wales and its supporting Action Plan were published on 17 May 2006.

4. The Environment Strategy sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's long term strategy for the environment of Wales, setting the strategic direction for the next 20 years.

5. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide the framework within which to achieve an environment which is clean, healthy, biologically diverse and valued by the people of Wales. The vision is that: "By 2026, we want to see our distinctive Welsh environment thriving and contributing to the economic and social wellbeing and health of all of the people of Wales."

6. The Strategy was developed through an extensive consultation process and in partnership with key stakeholders. It reflects the results of the consultation Our Environment - Our Future - Your Views launched in July 2005, and the results of a pre-consultation held in summer 2004. The consultation process helped to identify the key environmental issues we need to address the actions we need to take to address them.

7. The Strategy has five main environmental themes:

- Addressing climate change – covers climate change mitigation and adaptation

- Sustainable resource use – covers material consumption and waste; water; soils; minerals and aggregates
- Distinctive biodiversity, landscapes and seascapes – covers biodiversity; the marine environment; landscapes and seascapes and their historic component
- Our local environment – covers the built environment and access to green space; environmental nuisances; walkability in urban areas and access to the countryside and coast; and flood risk management
- Environmental hazards – covers pollution and chemicals and radioactivity

8. For each of these subjects, the Strategy explains the issues and where we are now. It sets out the environmental outcomes we want to achieve and the associated indicators and timelines for delivery.

9. The Environment Strategy Action Plan contains details of specific, additional actions that will be taken to deliver the outcomes in the Environment Strategy. The Action Plan is not the only route for delivering the Environment Strategy, our current legislative obligations, policies and programmes also make an important contribution and their role is highlighted in the accompanying policy map.

10. The Environment Strategy Reference Group, which steered the development of the Strategy, will continue to meet on an annual basis to review progress on delivering the outcomes in the Strategy and to consider updates to the Action Plan.

11. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually, with completed actions being replaced with new ones and milestones being updated.

12. The table at Annex A provides an update on implementation of the Action Plan after three months.

Cross Cutting Themes

13. The Environment Strategy contributes to the delivery of our sustainable development duty, highlighting the links between a healthy environment and our economic and social wellbeing.

14. Equality of opportunity was given specific consideration in developing the consultation document. Race Equality Impact Assessment Screening exercises were carried out on the consultation document, the Strategy and the Action Plan.

15. Organisations representing a minority and disadvantaged groups were invited to contribute to the consultation. Representatives from Black Environment Network and Welsh Environment Link Creating Opportunities for Muslim Engagement (W.E.L.C.O.M.E) participated in the workshop events. The Children and Young People Wrexham workshop was held at St Christopher's Special School and a diverse group of children and young people participated in the event. Disability Wales made a written response to the consultation.

16. The equality audit, which examined a range of Assembly government policies in response to the Mainstreaming Equality Report of the Equality of Opportunity Committee, considered the

Environment Strategy. The auditors noted that it was too early to report any outcomes but that:

- Social cohesion is demonstrated as a fundamental value on which this strategy is built
- Resource plans related to this Strategy take due account of equality and diversity needs
- The strategy demonstrates how it intends to improve health / social / economic status for all groups
- Robust consultation and involvement processes were influential in setting policy direction

Action for Committee

17. The Committee is invited to note the update on implementation.

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