

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 14 February 2001
Time: 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

EPT Committee Members:

Richard Edwards, Chair	Preseli Pembrokeshire
Mick Bates	Montgomeryshire
David Davies	Monmouth
Geraint Davies	Rhondda
Sue Essex, Minister for Environment	Cardiff North
Delyth Evans	Mid & West Wales
Helen Mary Jones	Llanelli
Tom Middlehurst	Alyn and Deeside
Karen Sinclair	Clwyd South
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

External Organisations:

Richard Ninnes (item 4)	Countryside Council for Wales
Stephen Cole (item 5)	Federation of Small Businesses
Llew Rhys (item 5)	Federation of Small Businesses
David Rosser (item 5)	Director, CBI Wales

Officials:

Martin Evans	Director of Transport, Planning and Environment Group
Keith Bush	Office of the Counsel General
Robin Morgan (item 3)	Network Management Division
June Milligan (item 4)	Head of Countryside Division
Gerry Quarrell (item 4)	Countryside Division
Bob Evans (item 4)	Planning Division
Denzil Jones (items 3, 5, 6 and 7)	Head of Transport Policy Division

In Attendance:

David Purchon (item 2)	Independent Investigator
Denys Morgan (items 5, 6 and 7)	Expert Adviser

Secretariat:

Siwan Davies	Committee Clerk
Juliette Selby	Committee Secretariat

Opening Remarks from Chair

0.0 The Chair welcomed members, officials and members of the public to the meeting. He informed members that Planning Decision Committee 2001/1 had met on 7 February, and thanked David Davies (Chair), Karen Sinclair and Geraint Davies for making themselves available.

0.1 The draft interim report on the quinquennial review of the Countryside Council for Wales would be discussed on 21 March (and not 7 March as advertised). Trawsfynydd community regeneration company, Traws-Newid, would be making a presentation to members after the meeting.

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions, and declaration of interests

1.1 Apologies had been received from John Griffiths and Delyth Evans was present in his place.

1.2 The Chair invited members to declare any interests under Standing Order 4.5, which were as follows:

- Mick Bates - partner in a farming business;
- Geraint Davies - member of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and a pharmacist.

Item 2: Nantygwyddon: Progress report from independent investigator – EPT-03-01 (p 1)

2.1 David Purchon introduced his report and highlighted the following issues:

- The British Geological Survey has agreed terms for studying, sampling and preparing a report on hydro-geological aspects of the site;
- Good contacts have been made with Government Departments and Public Bodies. Purolite were yet to submit evidence as were Rhondda Waste Disposal Ltd (in administration) and 3C Waste, who were corresponding via their solicitors;
- Public Hearings had started well, but there had been delays whilst public bodies prepared their evidence;
- Lessons for the future could be learnt in relation to the establishment and management of landfill sites, but there would be difficulty assessing any associated health effects.

2.2 Some members recorded their dissatisfaction that the investigator's written report did not adequately recognise the full degree of co-operation shown by the Environment Agency, National Assembly officials, and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. David Purchon congratulated the bodies on the quality of evidence submitted, but repeated that delays in the submission of evidence had put pressure on the investigation timetable. The Chair reminded members that the committee was scheduled to present its recommendations to plenary by the end of the summer term.

2.3 The following points were made in discussion:

- The investigation had acquired vast amounts of detail, imposing significant and

unexpected demands on public bodies in reviewing papers covering involvement over many years, which inevitably took time. This, together with the complexity of issues raised, was causing timing issues;

- The investigation covered the period of office of seven secretaries of state, and officials pointed out that it was not appropriate to mention two as raising particular issues;
- Requests for information from three former Directors of Rhondda Waste Disposal Ltd had been made and two had agreed to co-operate;
- Health Studies had not provided "cause and effect" evidence. Health information was poor and no further studies were being pursued by Bro Taf Health Authority;
- The Committee Chair would write to Purolite requesting that they co-operate with the investigation.

Actions:

- *Committee Chair to write to Purolite on behalf of the investigator*

Item 3: Report from Minister for Environment – EPT-03-01 (p 2)

3.1 In addition to the items in the report, the Minister updated members on the following issues:

- Renewable Energy - the Minister had met renewable energy companies that morning. A Technical Advice Note (TAN) was being produced by a Technical Advisory Group, and Mick Bates was representing the National Assembly Sustainable Energy Group (NASEG);
- Transport – a local transport service grant order, which would bring together bus subsidy grant and community transport, would be brought to plenary on 27 February. The Minister offered to discuss any issues of concern with members before the special grant order implementing these changes and allocating funds to local authorities was debated in plenary;
- Reducing Accidents and Making Life Better – members' attention was drawn to the proposals at annex 1 of the report.

3.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- Concessionary Fare Policy - implementation arrangements were being drawn up by a

working party;

- Rail franchise - the new franchise should be awarded by the late autumn, with the existing franchise operator delivering services in the transition period. The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) had confirmed that the timetable would be met;
- Reducing accidents on trunk roads – members suggested that the scheme be extended to valleys communities, the Minister pointed out that most of the roads in the valleys are not part of the trunk road network, but she hoped local authorities would adopt similar initiatives. A report on a draft full road safety strategy was due to come before plenary in April, it was suggested that it might be more appropriate for this to come to the committee;
- Renewable Energy – the Chair would discuss co-ordination of work with the Chair of the Economic Development Committee;
- Earth Summit 2002 - the Minister agreed to inform committee members as soon as possible of how the National Assembly would be represented at Earth Summit 2002.

Item 4: Countryside and Rights of Way Act – Implementation / Legislation - EPT-03-01 (p 3)

4.1 Introducing the paper, the Minister asked for members' views on: the committee's role in implementing the Act; whether coastal land should be included in the definition of open land; and whether a pilot area of open access in part of Wales should be introduced at an early stage.

4.2 The committee endorsed the programme of secondary legislation outlined in the paper, and expressed an interest in being consulted on the main elements.

4.3 Members were sympathetic to the extension of 'open access' to include coastal land, but felt that the existing 'upland' programme should be completed in the first instance. A pilot area approach would be supported, provided that it would not delay the overall programme.

4.4 Members asked the following issues be addressed as part of the implementation programme:

- Control of dogs;
- Forestry access;
- Exclusions and restrictions;
- Adequate funding for management and wardening.

4.5 CCW would provide further information to members on the responsibilities of the various agencies' responsibilities in relation to open access to forestry land.

Item 5: Policy Review of Public Transport: Presentations

5.1 The committee heard brief presentations from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and CBI Wales. TUC Wales had sent their apologies. Copies CBI Wales' presentation had been sent to members and would be published on the National Assembly website.

5.2 The main points made by FSB during their presentation were as follows:

- Survey - an in depth study of FSB members' views had revealed that poor public transport was perceived as a barrier to growth - 65% were dissatisfied with public transport, only 10% were satisfied. The Welsh dissatisfaction level was the highest recorded in the UK. The 65% saw poor public transport as stunting their growth, and appealed for ways to alleviate the problem;
- Problems - there were many and varied problems. Small town retailers had problems with public transport service frequencies and times, and felt that public transport was not convenient. There was the view that public transport was peripheral, and did not provide "joined up" access to train and other bus services;
- Tourism - there was a lack of public transport services for tourists, and connections to rail and/or coach into Wales were not perceived as convenient. There were also a lack of connections within Wales;
- Rail - recent rail disruption had led to problems and some would be put off public transport for good;
- Possible improvements - regular and recognisable public transport; conveniently timed return journeys between adjacent towns; accessibility increased to local stations to promote integration; services with "joined up" timetables; infrastructure to include tourism improvements; better consideration of employees and their journey to work.

5.3 The following issues were discussed in greater detail with presenters:

- The transport framework - this would set out the National Assembly's vision for transport, and how it could be delivered within the limitations of devolved powers;
- Transport for employees - it was suggested that large enterprises play a role in encouraging use of, or even providing public transport for employees, but noted that services need to be improved to get employees out of their cars. Public transport

provision also needed to meet needs of those working flexible hours;

- Tourism - public transport information was limited for travellers and small businesses alike;
- Safety – personal safety was an issue at unmanned bus and railway stations. Location of small businesses at stations might help address this.

5.4 The Chair thanked presenters for their contributions. He suggested that Llais Ifanc and Age Concern be invited to a future meeting to represent the views of younger and older passengers.

Item 6: Policy Review of Public Transport: Rapporteurs report back

6.1 Geraint Davies reported back to the committee following the visit to Amsterdam on 9 February. A written report would be sent to members and published on the National Assembly website. The main features of Amsterdam's public transport system were:

- Government support - public transport subsidised by The Netherlands state Government, also have concessionary fares (but not as generous as Wales). Limited role for provinces, with funding going direct to local authorities;
- Regulation - no national Regulator, local authorities act as regulators for local transport systems;
- Integration - full integration and inter-ticketing on bus, metro and tram;
- Planning - tradition of integration of land use and transport planning. 3 zones for local planning: A - only accessible by public transport (inner area), B - accessible by public transport and car, C - accessible by car only;
- Stringent car parking policy (1 space per 10 workers) and 50% increase in parking charges next year;
- Forthcoming changes - following recent changes to legislation, subsidy levels for public transport would decrease (currently 62% subsidy/38% revenue, to move to 50/50, and 42/58 by 2010) and market forces would be introduced. Amsterdam city council had set up a new Department and established arms length relationship with operator. Council will establish desirable service levels, and put some services out to tender.

6.3 The main lessons learnt were:

- High levels of state revenue subsidy are unsustainable, though in order to ensure that public transport is a realistic alternative to the car there needs to be large scale investment in infrastructure and services;
- To achieve integration we need traffic management controls to work alongside public transport;
- Dutch have made use of a pre-existing system and developed it. Applying the Amsterdam model (minus the metro) has limited opportunities in Wales, but in Cardiff and the Valleys rail system is capable of development covering a large population.

6.4 Members suggested that in addition to existing visits, exemplars of best practice in public transport provision in rural areas be identified.

Item 7: Policy Review of Public Transport: Emerging issues

7.1 Due to lack of time, this item was deferred to the next meeting. The committee invited officials to submit a paper suggesting how the review might dovetail with the developing transport framework, which would shortly issue for public consultation.

Item 8: Minutes of meeting 31 January - EPT-02-01(min)

8.1 The committee adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2001.

Date of Next Meeting

9.1 The next meeting of the committee would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 7 March 2001 at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat February 2001