

Local Government and Public Services Committee

LGPS(2)-12-06(p.4)

Date: 21 September 2006

Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: The draft Regional Transport Planning (Wales) Order 2006

Purpose

1. To provide the Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the draft Order (a copy is attached at Annex A). The Committee has identified this Order for scrutiny.

Recommendation

2. The Committee should consider the draft Order.

Purpose of draft Order

3. The purpose of this draft Order is to enable local authorities to work together jointly to produce their transport plans on a regional as opposed to on an individual local authority basis.

Summary of what the Order does

4. The intended effect of this Order is to ensure that transport infrastructure and services are planned and implemented on a regional basis, to more effectively meet the travel needs both of individuals and businesses. The move to regional transport planning is a key element of the revised transport planning arrangements being put in place under the Transport (Wales) Act 2006. These involve the Assembly Government preparing and publishing a statutory Wales Transport Strategy, which will set a framework for the development of the transport system. Local authorities, working together in transport consortia, will then prepare and implement Regional Transport Plans on a basis which is consistent with the Wales Transport Strategy.

5. A draft of the Wales Transport Strategy, which has a strong regional dimension, was issued for consultation on 13 July.

6. The development of transport planning at a regional level reflects the relatively small geographic area covered by many Welsh local authorities, with numerous transport issues crossing local authority boundaries. This means that the effective exercise of many local authority transport functions requires a wider perspective than the individual authority area. Therefore, with support and

encouragement from the Assembly Government, local authorities have organised themselves into regional consortia to collaborate on transport issues. There are currently four transport consortia in Wales, covering South East Wales (SEWTA); South West Wales (SWWITCH); Mid Wales (TraCC); and North Wales (TAITH).

7. Section 108 of the Transport Act 2000 places a duty on each local authority to produce a Local Transport Plan for their area. The Assembly Government wishes to use its power in Section 113A of that Act to modify this duty. Instead of the current statutory requirement on each of the 22 Welsh local authorities to produce an individual Local Transport Plan, they will instead be under an obligation to work together to produce joint plans, which will be known as Regional Transport Plans. It is proposed that these Regional Transport Plans will be prepared for regions consistent with the areas covered by the four transport consortia.

8. Guidance on how to prepare the new Regional Transport Plans is currently being developed by the Assembly Government in partnership with the transport consortia and local authorities. It will be the subject of a separate consultation. Under the new arrangements there will be no requirement on local authorities to produce a separate Local Transport Plan for their area, although they will be free to prepare such Plans if they wish.

9. The Order reflects the timetable for the preparation of Regional Transport Plans to which we have been working with local government for some time. The intention is that the regional transport consortia will submit their Plans for the five-year period from 2008-09 to 2013-14 to the Assembly Government by 31 March 2008. The Order specifies that the old Local Transport Plans must be replaced by 30 June 2008. This date allows time for any last minute problems to be resolved, as well as for the Assembly's approval process (under the new transport planning arrangements, Regional Transport Plans have to be approved by the Assembly).

Consultation on the draft Order

10. A full public consultation on the draft Regional Transport Planning (Wales) Order took place between 5 June and 28 July. It covered all key stakeholders, including local authorities in Wales and border authorities in England, transport consortia, members of the Wales Transport Forum, professional bodies and environmental organisations.

11. There were 21 responses to the consultation, with all respondents in favour of the Order and the proposal to have four Regional Transport Plans based on the existing consortia areas.

12. One substantive issue raised in the consultation was that the Welsh Local Government Association did not support the inclusion in the Order of a date by which Regional Transport Plans have to be replaced. There is however a statutory requirement to include such a date in the Order under the transitional provisions for Local Transport Plans in the Transport Act 2000. In particular, Section 109C of the Act, as inserted by the Transport (Wales) Act 2006, requires all Local Transport Plans produced prior to 1 August 2001 (all of the first round of Plans in Wales come into this category) to be replaced no later than a date specified in an Order.

Timetable for progressing draft Order

13. The draft Order is due to be considered by the Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee on 20 September, Business Committee on 17 October and the Legislation Committee should consider the Order on 7 November. Subject to the National Assembly's approval process, the Order will come into force on 23 November.

Financial Implications

14. It is envisaged that the new transport planning arrangements should be broadly cost-neutral. Some additional costs will be incurred by the transport consortia in preparing the Regional Transport Plans and indeed two of the consortia made this point in their response to the consultation. The Assembly Government already provides funding direct to the transport consortia to support their development and ensure that they have adequate administrative capacity for work such as the preparation of the Plans. There will also be a modest increase in costs to the Assembly Government as a result of appraising the Plans and offering advice to the consortia.

15. Conversely there should be offsetting savings in local authorities as a result of no longer having to prepare Local Transport Plans. Authorities will of course still need to engage in the transport planning process.

Cross Cutting Themes

16. As noted above, the Order is due to be scrutinised by the Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee on 20 September.

Action for Subject Committee

17. To consider and scrutinise the purpose and effect of the draft Regional Transport Planning (Wales) Order 2006.

Andrew Davies AM

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and

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