

**Mid 02-02(min)**

## **Meeting of the Mid Wales Regional Committee**

**Date:** Friday 8 March 2002

**Time:** 10.30am

**Venue:** Knighton Community Hall, Knighton

### **Attendance:**

<b>Delyth Evans, Chair</b>	Labour	Mid and West Wales
<b>Mick Bates</b>	Liberal Democrat	Montgomeryshire
<b>Cynog Dafis</b>	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
<b>Glyn Davies</b>	Conservative	Mid and West Wales
<b>Kirsty Williams</b>	Liberal Democrat	Brecon and Radnor

### **Committee Secretariat:**

<b>Stephen Thomas</b>	Deputy Committee Clerk
<b>Martha da Gama Howells</b>	Committee Support
<b>Phil Mulraney</b>	Committee Support

### **Apologies:**

<b>Elin Jones</b>	Plaid Cymru	Ceredigion
<b>Nick Bourne</b>	Conservative	Mid and West Wales

**Substitutions:** None

**Declarations of Interest :** None

## **Introduction**

The Chair thanked Trevor Johnson and Kevin Kell of the Knighton Community Hall Management Committee for their assistance with the arrangements for the meeting.

Cllr Bob Reeves, Deputy Mayor of Knighton welcomed the Committee to Knighton.

Joyce Price, Secretary of the Knighton Hospital League of Friends, gave a short presentation outlining local concerns over the proposed reduction in maternity services resulting from the Powys Midwifery Services Plan. The Chair undertook to pass on these concerns to the Minister for Health and Social Services and feed back her response.

## **Feedback from previous meetings**

- Following the meeting on 1 February in Machynlleth the Chair had written to the Wales Tourist Board about the importance of cultural tourism to the Mid Wales economy, and expressing the Committee's concern about the future of Mid Wales Tourism. The Tourist Board's response had been circulated to Members and copied to Mid Wales Tourism.
- The Chair had also written to the Chair of the Arts Council for Wales about Y Tabernacl's suitability for core public funding.

## **Agenda Item 1: Discussion on the planning consultation document 'Delivering for Wales'**

Kay Powell, Chief Planning Officer for Wales, gave a short presentation outlining the key objectives of the consultation and its main themes. The main aim of the consultation was to recognise those features of the planning system which worked well, and to build on these fundamentals to produce a system in which sound decisions are made which are open, consistent, fair and timely. The system should also be consistent with the objectives set out in the Welsh Assembly Government's Plan for Wales.

## **Ceredigion County Council**

### **Paper MID 02-02(p1)**

Representatives:

Councillor Alun Lloyd Jones

Russell Hughes-Pickering, Chief Planning Officer

The following key points were made in presentation:

- Ceredigion County Council welcomed the positive references in the document to the ability of the system to deliver sustainable development and economic regeneration.
- There was concern that the emphasis on speeding up the planning process could mean a reduction in opportunities for community involvement. The Council considered it vital that the correct balance between the interests of the community and of developers be achieved.
- The consultation process by its nature brings up unexpected matters which both the authority and applicant needed to address. Informal advice, providing a clear statement from the authority on what information they expect from an applicant in order to determine an application, was a more appropriate vehicle than a contract allowing these matters to be dealt with.
- Different forms of consultation may be appropriate in urban and rural communities. 'Standard' application forms may not allow for local concerns to be fully expressed and more area-based guidance would be welcomed.
- There was concern that the resource implications for Local Authorities had not been fully recognised.

## **Council for the Protection of Rural Wales**

### **Paper MID 02-02(p2)**

Presenter: Helen Mrowiec, Deputy Director

The following key points were made in the presentation:

- The Council for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) welcomed the consultation and was broadly supportive of the thrust of the proposals. However it planned to consult internally on a number of points before submitting a formal response.
- The question of how to deal with Major Infrastructure Projects was an important one and could not be left unresolved. The provisional view of the CPRW was that decisions must reside within the Assembly in order to avoid the development of a dual planning system.
- CPRW strongly supported the idea of a third party right of appeal under certain circumstances, as recently proposed in a report commissioned by the Council for the Protection of Rural England.
- The need for Business Planning Zones was questioned in the context of a swifter and

more efficient planning system.

- Local Public Inquiries were supported as a transparent forum in which to discuss matters in detail but the CPRW would like to see proposals which allowed the procedure to be less confrontational.
- CPRW also expressed concern that the cost of planning documents could be prohibitive, and authorities should seek ways in which to make them available to the public outside office hours.

The following points were noted in the subsequent question and answer session:

- The ability of authorities to adequately enforce planning consents and to take action in the event of breaches was dependent on the level of resources allocated for this purpose. Authorities have to prioritise and the scale of the development was inevitably a factor in that decision.
- Statutory status for the Wales Spatial plan would assist authorities by providing a context for local plans and decision making, and giving a stronger lead to sub-regional planning.
- In response to a question about the relative role of third parties and Councillors in the planning system, the CPRW stressed that third party rights were an important element in enabling broader concerns to be considered as part of the process.
- In response to a question about the position of statutory consultees, the CPRW considered it important that the quality of responses should not be compromised by the application of strict deadlines.
- The contribution of the voluntary sector should be recognised; the CPRW believed that the sector should have a role in the establishment of a Local Planning Advisory Service.

The Chair thanked the presenters for their contributions and said that the views would be fed back to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Transport as part of the consultation process.

## **Item 2: Discussion on sports facilities in Powys**

### **Powys County Council**

Representative:

Paul Griffiths, Joint Acting Director for Community, Leisure and Recreation

The following points were made in presentation:

- It was clear that sport had a significant and important role to play within Powys. Sports provision in the county is provided by a range of organisations including the County Council and schools.
- The facilities in Powys included leisure and sports centres situated in towns with a population of more than 2,000. The county is also home to two synthetic athletic tracks.
- The Council operates a capital grant scheme for the non-statutory and voluntary sector and numerous sporting organisations have benefited from this scheme.
- In 1998-9, the Council embarked on a wide-ranging consultation exercise about sporting facilities. Respondents to that survey indicated an 89% approval rate for the Council's service.
- The stock of buildings in Powys was in need of considerable investment. Lack of investment had meant that customer and user expectation was less than it should be.
- Some of the Council's key objectives included improving access to sports facilities, particularly for young people, and encouraging applications to local sports development grants.
- Examples of recent initiatives in the county include the Powys accredited coach scheme, the coronary heart disease project, the sport and crime youth initiative and the Girls Football Festival.

## **Powys Youth Forum**

Representatives:

Jenny Griffin

Mark Westlake

The following points were made in presentation:

- Sports provision for young people in Welshpool was mainly confined to the under-12s; more staff supervisors were needed for the 12-16 age group.
- Sports and leisure facilities in Llandrindod Wells were insufficient, with only a small pool and sports hall.
- Provision in parks was also inadequate in both Welshpool and Llandrindod Wells. Many parks closed early and were poorly equipped.
- There was inadequate skateboarding provision in both towns.
- Access to sports facilities could also be improved, but Mark Westlake commended the new bus service which operated in Llandrindod.

The following points were made in the subsequent question and answer session:

- In response to a question about the lack of skateboarding provision in Powys, Paul

Griffiths said that development grants were available for this purpose, but that in general, the support mechanisms around the provision of skateboarding needed to be more robust.

- In response to a question about the participation of girls in sport, Paul Griffiths agreed that both sports facilities and the staff who ran them, needed to be welcoming and open to all. Powys County Council were working with the Sports Council on this matter.
- The total revenue spent on sport and leisure in Powys was £6m. Mr Griffiths acknowledged that the funding process could at times be dealt with more speedily and that the system was rather cumbersome.
- Jenny Griffin said that it would be perfectly possible for children to look after skateboarding parks themselves; all skateboarding parks needed to have adequate refuse provision.
- Paul Griffiths agreed that access to sporting facilities was a major obstacle in Powys and that young people wanted to have the ability to choose when and where transport was available.
- There was some discussion about the lack of a sparsity element in the grants allocated from the New Opportunities Fund. Mr Griffiths said that Powys County Council shared these concerns and that in addition, also had concerns about the administrative costs of the scheme.

## **Sports Council for Wales**

Representatives:

Huw Jones, Chief Executive

Claire Davies, Development Officer

The following points were made in presentation:

- The Sports Council for Wales operates on the principles of partnership, decentralisation and subsidiarity.
- Its two main priorities are to increase participation in areas that currently have low participation levels, and to create more participation opportunities for women and girls.

The following points were made in the subsequent question and answer session:

- Huw Jones agreed that it was more expensive to deliver sports facilities in rural areas. He said that the Sports Council had no input into the decision of the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) not to build in a sparsity element in its grant allocation process. The Sports

Council works closely with NOF on the distribution of grants and in ensuring that grant schemes meet a particular standard.

- In response to a question about how the grant application process could be made easier, Huw Jones said that this presented a challenge to the Council. SCW's officers often advise potential applicants on the processes and their chances of success. The application form for community chest monies is only two pages long, but the process becomes more complex as the size of the grant application increases.
- There was some discussion about the amounts spent on sport per head in Powys in comparison with other counties. Huw Jones said that the amount spent in Powys was considerably less than in areas such as Ceredigion and Blaenau Gwent but that not all counties were starting from the same level. Over a period of time there would be a levelling out of the grants awarded.
- The Sports Council has a clear strategy until 2005 and would now concentrate its efforts on delivery.

### **Item 3: Open microphone session**

**Dorian Williams from Tregaron High School, also Secretary of the Ceredigion Sports Association** - Mr Williams spoke about the conditions of the sports facilities in Ceredigion, which, in his opinion were insufficient to meet the needs of residents. Mr Griffiths stated that Ceredigion had the highest percentage of participation in sports activities in Wales and that in 1991 it was fourth on the Sports Council for Wales' list of counties applying for grants. Spending of £40 per capita was not considered sufficient in a rural county where, for example, he had to arrange transport for 100 children each Saturday to Aberystwyth. He stated that an artificial playing surface was needed as well as a gymnasium.

**Councillor Ken Harris, Knighton Town Council** - Mr Harris voiced his concerns about the sewage system serving Knighton which he felt, was out of date and inadequate. He urged the Assembly to put pressure on Severn- Trent Water Authority to improve the situation. The Chair agreed to take the matter up with Severn-Trent and the Environment Minister.

**Islwyn Watkins** - Mr Watkins spoke of the potential of a former factory site near Knighton. He felt that the site could potentially house a National Museum of Modern Art, and stressed that cultural tourism could bring economic benefits to the local area. He also stressed that the site was unsuitable for industrial development because the local transport infrastructure was inadequate for heavy traffic.

**Kevin Kell, Chairman of the Local Footpath Group** - Mr Kell voiced his concerns about the provision for footpath users and walkers in the area. Walking is a leisure activity and therefore deserves funding from sports organisations. The rights of walkers were not represented because local authorities were dominated by landowners.

**Michael Jones, Powys County Council** - Mr Jones spoke of the problems of maintaining sports facilities in a rural area. The maintenance costs involved were similar to urban areas but usage was much lower. An all-weather playing surface was badly needed in Presteigne. The Sports Council does not fund small schools which were key providers of sports facilities.

**Brian Morgan, Whitton Community Council** - Mr Morgan commented on the relative wealth and poverty of parts of Great Britain. He had heard reports that average earnings in Chelsea in London were £36,000 pa and those in Blaenau Gwent were £18,000 pa. He argued that poverty in Radnorshire was worse than that in Blaenau Gwent.

**Mr Trevor Johnson, Knighton Community Council** - Mr Johnson complained about the fact that the population of East Radnorshire were unable to receive Welsh terrestrial television signals. He asked if the National Assembly would be willing to make a contribution to the cost of installing a broadcasting mast in the area. The Chair commented that broadcasting was not a devolved matter but that the point had been noted and would be taken up with the appropriate parties.

**Sam Taylor, student from John Meadows school / college** - Mr Taylor felt that Regional Committee meetings should be held either in the evenings or on Saturdays to allow students and teachers to play a full part in the democratic process.

#### **Item 4: Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February – MID-01-02(min)**

These were agreed without amendment.

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 May in Harlech.

**Committee Secretariat March 2002**