

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 31 January 2001

Time: 2:00 pm to 5:30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, 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

John Griffiths

Newport East

Tom Middlehurst

Alyn and Deeside

Karen Sinclair

Clwyd South

Rhodri Glyn Thomas

Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

External Organisations:

Sian James (item 5)

Prism Rail (for Welsh Train Operating Companies)

Justin Davies (item 5)

First Cymru (for Confederation of Passenger Transport)

Martyn Walker (item 5)

Civil Engineering Contractors' Association

Byron Broadstock (item 5)	Civil Engineering Contractors' Association
Stuart Watkins (item 5)	Institution of Highways and Transportation (South Wales)
Jon Harris (item 5)	Institute of Logistics and Transport
<i>Officials:</i>	
Martin Evans	Director of Transport, Planning and Environment Group
Robin Shaw	Director of Transport
Bob Macey (item 1)	Head of Environment Division
Phil Bishop (item 1)	Environment Division
Charles Coombs (item 4)	Head of Sustainable Development Unit
Lisa Dobbins (item 4)	Sustainable Development Unit

In Attendance:

Denys Morgan (items 5, 6 and 7)	Expert Adviser
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Secretariat:

Siwan Davies	Committee Clerk
Vaughan Watkin	Deputy Committee Clerk

Opening Remarks from Chair

0.1 The Chair welcomed members, officials and members of the public to the meeting. He asked members to report back the views of party groups on proposals for reforming planning decision procedures (paper EPT-01-01 (p 3)). All political groups, with the exception of the Conservative Group, were content with the proposals. Officials were drawing up proposed revisions to Standing Orders, which the Minister for Environment would submit to the Business Committee.

0.2 The slot for informal committee business on Thursday 8 February would be used for a discussion on the policy review of public transport. Traws-Newid, a community regeneration group from Trawsfynydd, had been invited to give a short presentation to members following

the meeting on 14 February at 5pm.

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions, and declaration of interests

1.1 Apologies had been received from Helen Mary Jones.

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: Report from the Minister for the Environment – EPT-02-01 (p 1)

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

- Nantygwyddon investigation – the National Assembly had submitted evidence to the independent investigator. Preparation of evidence had diverted resources from policy development and other priorities;
- Flooding - £25m was now available for flood and coastal defence works in Wales over the next 3 years, including the additional £3m announced in November. This extra money would be targeted towards additional investment in river flood defence works, both by the Flood Defence Committees and by local authorities;
- Glas Cymru – OFWAT had that day announced that it would not move to block Glas Cymru's plans for Dwr Cymru if Glas Cymru follows a six-point plan set out by the Regulator. Copies of OFWAT's press release and position paper had been sent to members. The Minister saw this as good news given the potential for lower prices for customers and the recognition of the National Assembly's position and views by the Regulator.

2.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- Flooding – the additional £25m was separate from the provision under the Bellwin scheme, which was for immediate reinstatement and repairs;
- European "Innovative Actions" fund - members asked for further details on the

composition and membership of the Innovative Actions Steering Committee;

- Glas Cymru – there was some concern about Glas Cymru's ability to deliver price reductions. Members noted that OFWAT set price limits for all water companies, but that the anticipated further reduction in prices was subject to Glas Cymru raising the requisite amount of capital on the terms consistent with its financing plan;
- Review of call-in procedures - members felt that the National Assembly called-in too many renewable energy applications, and that call-in criteria were not clearly communicated to applicants. The Minister advised members that these issues would be addressed both by her review, and the Deputy First Minister's developing Renewable Energy Strategy;
- Community Transport review – the Minister confirmed that the review group would look at the issue of fuel duty rebates;
- Earth Summit 2002 - members asked whether the National Assembly would be represented at the 2002 Earth Summit, and the Minister agreed to report back to the Committee.

Actions:

- *Sue Essex to provide committee members with further details on composition and membership of Innovative Actions Steering Committee*
- *Sue Essex to inform committee members of how the National Assembly will be represented at Earth Summit 2002*

Item 3: Draft Sustainable Development Action Plan - EPT-02-01 (p 3)

3.1 Sue Essex invited comments on the early draft Action Plan. This was work in progress, and members were asked to confirm whether the level of detail was right. The Action Plan had been produced in parallel with the revised "Better Wales", and the two documents complemented one another.

3.2 Overall members felt that good progress had been made and congratulated the Sustainable Development Unit, but asked that more be said in the Plan about cross-cutting priorities, engaging partners, internal structures, and targets, and that links between Best Value methodology and sustainability appraisal tools be explored.

3.3 The Chair suggested that the Assembly review of procedures group and Panel of Chairs give consideration to options for internal structures.

3.4 Officials would now work on costs and constraints, before submitting further proposals to the Minister. There would be a plenary debate on the draft Action Plan on 15 February [subsequently rescheduled, subject to Business Committee consideration, to 27 February].

Item 4: Strategic Forward Work Programme - EPT-02-01 (p 2)

4.1 The Chair sought members' comments on the draft strategic work programme for May 2001 to December 2002, in particular potential areas for policy reviews in 2002.

4.2 Members suggested that the committee focus on the following areas:

- Waste Management;
- Sustainable Development;
- European and Domestic legislation affecting the committee's portfolio;
- Urban and rural regeneration – it was suggested that members be sent copies of the Rural Development Plan;
- Road safety issues.

4.3 The committee agreed that priorities for 2002, such as potential policy reviews, would be finalised in the autumn term. These were likely to focus on issues emerging from the developing Waste Strategy and Sustainable Development Action Plan, and would seek to complement, rather than duplicate policies being developed by the Minister.

4.4 The draft work programme would now be sent to other Subject Committees and Cabinet for comment. In the meantime, members asked the Minister to consider how best to advise them on future legislation affecting the committee's portfolio.

Actions:

- *Secretariat to circulate copy of Rural Development Plan to committee members*

Item 5: Policy Review of Public Transport: Presentations

5.1 The committee heard brief presentations from the following organisations that had contributed to the policy review. Copies of consultation documents and/or briefing papers had been sent to members and published on the National Assembly website.

- Welsh Train Operating Companies;
- Confederation of Passenger Transport;

- Civil Engineering Contractors' Association;
- Institution of Highways and Transportation;
- Institute of Logistics and Transport.

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

- Fuel tax – there was a need to look at changing legislation to permit rebates on fuel tax for public transport vehicles, with savings being passed on to customers;
- Integration between modes – this was essential to increasing the take-up of public transport services;
- Structures – many of the presenters supported the concept of a Passenger Transport Authority, or similar co-ordinating body, for Wales;
- Concessionary fares - there was a need to include the school transport and young adult market, as they were the passengers of the future;
- Congestion - there were conflicting opinions on how best to address congestion on the M4 corridor around Newport;
- Cross-border co-operation - the Assembly should encourage greater co-operation between local authorities and cross border organisations;
- Safety - Sian James extended an open invitation to members to a behind the scenes look at how operators ensured the safety of passengers travelling to major events at the Millennium Stadium and other venues.

5.3 The Chair thanked all presenters for their contributions. The committee would be hearing from the final group of presenters on 14 February.

Item 6: Policy Review of Public Transport: Expert Advisor's report - EPT-01-01 (p 4)

6.1 Denys Morgan introduced his report and outlined some gaps in evidence received to date where further information might be commissioned, namely:

- Community transport;
- Future investment plans of operators;
- Local authority road maintenance plans.

6.2 The committee thanked Denys for his report and agreed that further information should be

commissioned in these areas.

Item 7: Policy Review of Public Transport: Rapporteurs report back

7.1 The Chair gave a brief report on his visit to the City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Parliament on 26 January. A written report would be sent to members and published on the National Assembly website.

7.2 The main lessons learnt were:

- Legislative provision – the Transport (Scotland) Act 2000 and (England and Wales) Transport Act 2000 confer differential powers on the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly in relation to rail. There is provision in the Scottish Act to insist on inter-authority co-operation;
- Best practice - a huge chasm exists between public transport provision in Edinburgh and the Welsh capital and other cities;
- Vision – political will in Scotland has created different legislative and regulatory frameworks.

Item 8: Minutes of meeting 17January - EPT-01-01(min)

8.1 The committee adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2001.

Date of Next Meeting

9.1 The next meeting of the committee would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 14 February 2001 at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat February 2001