

## ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 21 March 2001

Time: 2:00 pm to 4:20 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

John Griffiths

Newport East

Sue Essex, Minister for Environment

Cardiff North

Helen Mary Jones

Llanelli

Tom Middlehurst

Alyn and Deeside

Karen Sinclair

Clwyd South

Rhodri Glyn Thomas

Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

#### ***Officials:***

Martin Evans (item 1)

Director of Transport, Planning and Environment  
Group

Keith Bush

Office of the Counsel General

Bob Macey (item 1)

Head of Environment Division

Michael Trickey (item 3)

Financial Planning Division

Ian Thomas (item 3)

Financial Planning Division

***In Attendance:***

Chief Executive, Countryside Council for Wales

Paul Loveluck (item 3)

Chair, Countryside Council for Wales

John Lloyd Jones (item 3)

***Secretariat:***

Siwan Davies

Committee Clerk

Vaughan Watkin

Deputy Committee Clerk

Juliette Selby

Committee Secretariat

## **Opening Remarks from Chair**

0.1 The Chair welcomed members, officials and members of the public to the meeting, and informed the committee that:

- The independent investigator into the Nantygwyddon landfill site, David Purchon, had a very constructive meeting with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT) the previous week and had agreed a timetable for RCT's involvement in the investigation. RCT had given evidence at the public session that had taken place earlier in the day, and further sessions were scheduled for 3 and 11 April. The Chair had written to Purolite seeking their co-operation with the investigation, and they had arranged to meet David Purchon on 23 March to discuss their involvement. Given that not all public sessions would have been completed before the next meeting, it was agreed that the next progress report be taken on 9 May;
- The Strategic Rail Authority would be attending the next meeting on 4 April to present their strategic agenda. Ann Hemmingway, SRA board representative for Wales, had been invited;
- Following agreement of priorities for the policy review at the last meeting, work had been commissioned from the expert adviser on the quality standards and assessment of existing organisational structures. Officials had offered to commission a desk-study of

EU and UK regional organisational structures from independent consultants, which would provide a basis for the committee to assess various options. The committee agreed that the study be commissioned.

## **Item 1: Apologies, substitutions and declaration of interests**

1.1 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 Minister for Environment - EPT-05-01 (p1)**

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

- Green Transport Plan – a travel audit questionnaire had been issued to Assembly members and staff;
- Quinquennial review of JNCC – the first stage review of the financial management and policy arrangements of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) had been published on 16 March. A copy of the executive summary and full text of the report would be circulated to committee members;
- Water Resources Strategy – the Minister had that morning launched ‘Water Resources for the Future: Wales’, the Environment Agency's framework strategy for managing water resources in Wales over the next 25 years.

2.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

- Green Transport Plan – members welcomed progress on the plan, but were concerned that the lack of integrated transport in Cardiff presented a barrier to reducing car usage in travelling to work. It was suggested that the Assembly look to work in partnership with other employers to call for more frequent and direct public transport services;
- Air Quality Regulations – an assessment of costs and benefits was included in the consultation and affected industries would have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the impact of the Regulations, implementing EU Directives, during the consultation exercise. The impact of traffic congestion was being addressed in local authorities’ air

quality management plans. A Climate Change Plan for Wales was being developed as part of the UK programme, and was expected to be available in June;

- Flooding - members felt that the renewal of flood defences was a priority. Whilst there had been an injection of resources for non-emergency flood defence work, there were few schemes in place, with call on resources unlikely before at least 2002-03. The National Audit Office report on flooding in England had been critical of the state of defences. It was noted that although 35-40% of new flood defence structures had been deemed fair or worse in England, the figure was around 15% in Wales, with a similar figure to England of 35% fair or less for traditional flood defences;
- Trunk roads compensation payments – there was some concern about delays in making compensation payments, and that the process was not transparent. The Minister agreed to provide members with details of the compensation scheme and figures on timeliness of claim resolution;
- Freight facilities grants – members were disappointed at the lack of take-up, and would raise the need for pro-active encouragement of new projects with the Strategic Rail Authority at their next meeting;
- Water resources – there was some concern about Wessex Water taking over responsibility for sewerage in parts of Wales. It was noted that Dwr Cymru had put these services out to tender following the last price review. More generally with an increase in contracting out by WPD/Glas Cymru proposals, OFWAT were proposing conditions to ensure that legal responsibility for services would remain with WPD/Glas Cymru.

2.3 The committee noted the transfer of resources set out in the report, in line with Standing Order 19.

***Actions:***

- *Minister for Environment to provide members with details of the trunk roads compensation scheme and figures on timeliness of claims resolution*

**Item 3: Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) quinquennial review - draft interim report - EPT-04-01 (p 2)**

3.1 Michael Trickey and Ian Thomas introduced the paper, which invited the committee to comment on the findings of the draft interim report and on whether the terms of reference for the second stage of the review should be amended.

3.2 The following were the main points covered in discussion:

- Analysis of options – the committee noted that the review was taking place slightly in advance of the DETR-lead review of the Environment Agency. Members felt that the options analysis in the CCW review would need to take account of the findings of the Agency review, and any other relevant reviews now taking place, before they could be sure that the National Assembly had arrived at a robust conclusion on structural options for the longer term;
- Integration - linkages between CCW and related bodies would be set out diagrammatically in the final report;
- Committee sessions - the committee would seek to structure future sessions with ASPBs on their corporate planning on a co-ordinated basis, rather than focus on the work of individual organisations.

3.3 Members asked that the terms of reference be revised to include:

- Separate and more prominent question addressing the extent of CCW's contribution to, and championing of, the National Assembly's commitment to promote sustainable development (the Minister emphasised her commitment to place sustainable development at the heart of the remit and responsibilities of all ASPBs);
- Assessment of scope for developing closer partnerships and joint working between CCW and other organisations.

3.4 The committee agreed that the second stage of the review should proceed on the basis of the interim report, subject to the suggested adjustments to the terms of reference. Before the review was finally concluded, members wished to take account of the outcomes of the related reviews taking place, most notably the FMPR of the Environment Agency.

### ***Actions:***

- *Review team to revise terms of reference for second stage of review*
- *Review team to submit a note on the implications for options of the Human Rights Act*
- *Review team to include diagram setting out functions and links between related ASPBs in the final report*

## **Item 4: Policy Review of Public transport: presentations**

4.1 As Age Concern Wales and Young Voice presenters had sent their apologies that morning, this item was cancelled.

## **Item 5: Minutes of meeting 7 March – EPT-04-01 (min)**

5.1 The committee adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March.

### **Date of next meeting**

6.1 The next meeting of the committee would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 4 April at the National Assembly for Wales.

**Committee Secretariat March 2001**