

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 13 June 2001

Time: 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

EPT Committee Members:

Richard Edwards, Chair

Preseli Pembrokeshire

Mick Bates

Montgomeryshire

Rosemary Butler (substituting for

Newport West

John Griffiths)

David Davies

Monmouth

Geraint Davies

Rhondda

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

Head of Transport, Planning and Environment
Group

David Timlin (item 3)	Head of Roads Administration Division
David Rose (item 3)	Roads Administration Division
Julian Dawkins (item 3)	Roads Administration Division
Tom Cassidy (item 4)	Chief Executive, Cadw
Denzil Jones (item 5)	Head of Transport Policy Division

In Attendance:

David Purchon (item 2)	Independent Investigator
Roger Chaffey (item 2)	Project Manager
George Watson (item 5)	Babtie Group
Denys Morgan (item 5)	Expert Advisor

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, and informed the committee that:

- an update on the Road Safety Strategy would now be discussed on 27 June, with the Transport Framework being discussed on 11 July;
- the Chair of the Victoria Government's Hazardous Waste Siting Advisory Committee would be at the National Assembly on 4 July and would like to discuss hazardous waste facilities and programmes with committee members;
- the slot for additional committee business next Thursday afternoon (21 June) would be used for a formal meeting.

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions and declaration of interests

1. Apologies had been received from John Griffiths, for whom Rosemary Butler was substituting.

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 the independent investigator -

EPT-10-01 (p 1)

2.1 David Purchon introduced his progress report, and updated members on the following issues:

- he was considering commissioning further work from the British Geological survey on the stability of the landfill site;
- the administrator of Rhondda Waste Disposal Ltd had responded to the letter from the Committee Chair, and had been sent a list of questions.

2.2 The following points were covered in discussion:

- Co-operation of witnesses – there was concern about the reliability of the evidence gathered, as not all those involved in issues relating to the site had given evidence. It was now clear what events had happened, but not so clear why, and some of the final conclusions would inevitably be based on informed speculation. The committee asked the investigator to contact those that had not given evidence, and reiterate the offer of answering questions in writing, if they did not wish to attend a public session;
- Related issues – the investigator would take account of issues relevant to the investigation, such as those arising from the recent foot and mouth outbreak;
- Budget – there were sufficient funds to complete the investigation. Further detailed work by the British Geological Survey would increase the projected costs, but could be met from within contingency reserves.

2.3 The Chair thanked David for his last progress report. The final report would be discussed on 17 October.

Item 3: Report from the Minister for the Environment – EPT-10-01 (p 2)

3.1 Sue Essex introduced her report, and took the opportunity to update members on recent progress in encouraging local authorities to open up the countryside to the public. She invited the committee to approve the Transport Act 2000 (Commencement) (No1) (Wales) Order 2001 and transfer of resources outlined in the paper.

3.2 The committee approved a draft report on the Transport Act 2000 (Commencement) (No1) (Wales) Order 2001 (copy attached as an annex to the minutes). The proposed transfer of resources from the Habitat Regulations Sub-Group Expenditure Group (SEG) to Environment Agency SEG was also approved, in accordance with Standing Order 19.

3.3 The following points were covered in discussion:

- Earth Summit 2000 – the Minister would discuss National Assembly representation with the First Minister, information would be submitted within the time-scales required;
- European Blue Flag Award – feedback would be sought from the Environment Agency on reasons for the reduction in the number of Welsh beaches being awarded a Blue Flag;
- Access for the Disabled to Historic Buildings – the committee welcomed the progress made and suggested that the consultation paper be sent to the Equal Opportunities Committee for information;
- Dwr Cymru – members were concerned at reports of job losses following the recent acquisition of Dwr Cymru, particularly in light of assurances given by Glas Cymru at the joint meeting with the Economic Development Committee. The Committee would consider this against the evidence given at the joint meeting, and if necessary raise the issue with the Chair of the Economic Development Committee;
- Waste Technical Advice Note (TAN) – the TAN would be consistent with the Waste Strategy, which was due to issue for public consultation in July. A list of respondents to the consultation on the TAN would be sent to members;
- Trunk Road Compensation Payments – the protocol for dealing with cases was discussed, and it was conformed that, where appropriate advance payments were available to cover property owners' legal costs.

Action Points

- *Committee Chair to send copy of Cadw consultation document on giving advice on achieving physical access to historical buildings to the Equal Opportunities Committee*
- *Minister to provide members with a list of respondents to the consultation on the Waste TAN*

Item 4: Discussion of budget priorities - EPT-10-01 (p 3)

4.1 Sue Essex sought the committee's views on the priorities set out in the paper. Priority would also need to be given to environmental protection work, following the recent foot and mouth outbreak.

2. The following points were covered in discussion:

- Cadw – the possibility of free access to historic monuments (in line with policy on museums) was discussed. Conservation and presentation of the monuments was already heavily subsidised from public funds (receipts provided around £3million per annum but expenditure amounted to £7 million) and there were competing demands within the Committee's portfolio;
- Waste strategy – litter was being addressed as part of the waste strategy, and funds would be available to support voluntary organisations in carrying out their role in reducing waste;
- Transport – the Minister's five-year transport funding package had been welcomed, but additional resources would be required to deliver the Transport Strategy. It was agreed that transport funding could be announced following the approval of the budget in the autumn, and would take into account the recommendations of the committee's policy review of public transport. Members asked the Minister to ensure that the £4.8m allocated to Wales for the Road Haulage Modernisation Fund was made available;
- Cross-cutting priorities - it was suggested that there be greater co-ordination between the environment and rural affairs portfolios, e.g. on Tir Gofal administered by the Countryside Council for Wales. The Minister confirmed that the Cabinet sub-committee on sustainable development would be looking at this issue.

4.3 The Chair reminded members that the Finance Minister had requested responses on budget priorities by 20 July. The committee's response would be agreed following the session on sponsored bodies' work programmes the following week.

Item 5: Policy Review: Committee discussion (alternative organisational structures) – EPT-10-01 (p 4)

5.1 The Chair set out options for alternative organisational structures, some of which would require changes in primary legislation. He suggested that the committee's report for consultation purposes invite respondents to test the options. George Watson briefly introduced the Babbie report 'Organisational Structures for Transport Planning' attached as an annex to the committee paper.

5.2 The following points were covered in discussion:

- Alternative structures - in establishing any new organisation value for money would need to be demonstrated. Babbie's tests for alternative organisational structures would be included in the report, and respondents would be invited to explain the benefits and the estimated financial cost for each particular model. The committee's consultation report would also include a copy of the Executive Summary of the Babbie report as an annex;
- Consultation report – the consultation report would include a clear set of consultation questions, and the Chair's foreword would set out the next steps following the consultation exercise;
- Consultation process – the consultation would take place over the summer recess, and run for at least ten weeks. The report would be bilingual (Welsh and English) and available on request in Braille.

5.3 The committee agreed to consult on options for alternative organisational structures in their report, which would issue for consultation over the summer recess.

Item 6: Minutes of the meeting of 23 May 2001 – EPT-09-01(min)

6.1 Members asked whether the Food Standards Agency information on acceptable levels of dioxins in relation to foot and mouth disposal sites, requested at the 9 May meeting, was available. The Minister agreed to report back to the committee.

6.2 The committee adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 23 May.

Date of next meeting

5.1 The next meeting of the committee would be at 2.00 pm on Thursday 21 June at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat June 2001