

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 26 February 2003

Time: 9.15 am to 12.30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

Members:

Richard Edwards, Chair	Preseli Pembrokeshire
Eleanor Burnham	North Wales
David Davies	Monmouth
Janet Davies	South Wales West
Sue Essex	Cardiff North
Brian Hancock	Islwyn
Val Lloyd	Swansea East
Tom Middlehurst	Alyn and Deeside
Karen Sinclair	Clwyd South
Phil Williams	South Wales East

Officials:

Gerry Quarrell (item 2)	Countryside Division
Angharad Huws (item 2)	Countryside Division
Robert Williams (items 4 and 5)	Environmental Protection Division

In attendance:

Katherine Bryan (item 3)	Chair, JNCC
Deryck Steer (item 3)	Managing Director, JNCC
John Lloyd Jones (item 3)	Chairman, Countryside Council for Wales
Roger Thomas (item 3)	Chief Executive, Countryside Council for Wales
Ray Georgeson (item 4)	Waste and Resources Action Plan
Steve Bentley (item 4)	Wales Environment Trust
Lindsey Jones (item 4)	Wales Environment Trust

Secretariat:

Siwan Davies	Committee Clerk
Vaughan Watkin	Deputy Committee Clerk

Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members, attendees and members of the public Committee.

Item 2: CROW Act Implementation - EPT-03-03 (p 1)

2.1 The Minister introduced the paper reporting progress in implementing the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act in Wales.

2.2 Questioning from Members focused on:

- Mapping – clarification of the appeals mechanism and timetable for mapping open country and registered common land. The Minister was confident that the timetable for publishing conclusive maps by the end of 2004 would be met;
- Rights of Way – progress with the accurate and comprehensive recording of existing public rights of way and need for facilitating usage, e.g. by linking Rights of Way Improvement Plans and Local Transport Plans;

- Infrastructure – need for investment in facilities for the public and for wardening services. It was noted that local authorities had received an additional £2.4 million to assist with implementing the CROW Act provisions, however this was not ring-fenced;
- Countryside Opportunities Steering Group – the composition of the membership and call for greater user representation, particularly of urban communities;
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) – reasons for not establishing conservation boards to manage AONBs. This would be kept under review;
- Organic Farms – whether access to farmland affected qualification for the National Assembly's organic farming scheme. Officials would seek advice from the National Assembly's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department.

Actions:

- ***Officials to advice on whether access to farmland affects qualification for the National Assembly's organic farming scheme.***

Item 3: Joint Nature Conservation Committee - EPT-03-03 (p 2)

3.1 The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) had been invited to discuss their work and relationship with the National Assembly and Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). The Chair welcomed attendees and congratulated Katharine Bryan on her recent appointment as Chair of JNCC.

3.2 Following a short presentation (copy available on request), discussion focused on:

- Role of JNCC – the relationship between the JNCC, the devolved administrations and country agencies, and the potential for the JNCC to raise awareness of the environmental leadership of Wales. Also JNCC's flexibility to adapt to structural change, e.g. the potential establishment of a single environment and nature conservation agency for Wales;
- JNCC members – the role of, and method for, appointing independent members, which was based on expert knowledge, rather than geographic representation;
- Staffing – progress underway to standardise terms and conditions by employing staff directly, rather than via the country agencies, and the need for staff to have understanding of Welsh issues;

- Advice – the work of the JNCC in advising on the impact of off-shore wind farms on the marine environment, and in predicting the impact of climate change on habitats and species;
- Foreign travel – value for money considerations associated with business travel in support of the Government at European and international events and UK overseas territories in meeting international obligations.

Item 4: Developing Markets for Recyclates – EPT-03-03 (p 3)

4.1 The Chair welcomed attendees and explained that following consideration in December of a report from the Minister on the implementation of the Waste Strategy, the Committee had invited the Waste and Resources Action Programme and Wales Environment Trust to outline work to develop markets for recyclates in Wales.

4.2 Following short presentations from WRAP and WET (copies available on request), discussion focused on:

- Public awareness – ways of encouraging a shift in consumer lifestyle towards waste minimisation, re-use and recycling. Experience from other countries showed that retailers would introduce ‘greener’ practices where there was consumer demand. Marketing the quality of recycled products was also effective;
- Self-sufficiency – benefits of kerb-side collection and development of local recycling facilities to cut down on transportation cost and impact on the environment. Also the development of local markets for recyclates;
- Financial support – potential of financial incentives for re-use and recycling, such as favourable rates of tax, and fiscal penalties, such as increase in Landfill Tax, and producer responsibility for cost of waste disposal. Also the economic value of ‘waste’ and commercial viability of recycling and re-use projects;
- Partnership – the work of WRAP and WET in supporting local projects and in providing training for local authority officers, politicians and waste operatives.

Item 5: Waste and Emissions Trading Bill - EPT-03-03 (p 4)

5.1 This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Item 6: Minutes of the meeting 5 February 2003 - EPT-02-03 (mins)

6.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2003.

Date of next meeting

7.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be at 9.15 am Wednesday 12 March at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat February 2003