

Date: Thursday 12 December 2002
Time: 9.00am – 12.30pm
Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay
Title: SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS ACTION PLAN FOR WALES

Purpose

1. To request the committee's views on the consultation draft of 'Sustainable Business Wales – the Welsh Assembly Government's Action Plan for Sustainable Business' (Annex A)

Background

2. The action plan is a commitment falling from "A Winning Wales" and 'Plan for Wales'. It aims to raise the profile of sustainable development in a business context and focuses on maximising the impact of the support infrastructure in Wales by targeting the following Winning Wales aspirations to:

- improve access to good practical advice within a strategic framework;
- promote and develop the environmental goods and services sector in Wales, and
- help business become more competitive through the adoption of environmental best practice.

3. The action plan was produced and published for consultation on 2nd October with a deadline for responses on the 26th November 2002.

4. In the 32 responses there was unanimous support for the draft action plan, with many of the respondents especially supporting the idea of a well co-ordinated, coherent, holistic approach which avoids a plethora of new initiatives. The suggested amendments were as follows:

- environmental, academic and public sector respondents wanted a much wider definition of sustainable development covering: economic, social, local community, regeneration (including older industrial estates), voluntary and public sectors, ethical investment funds, biodiversity, transport, health, tourism and national parks issues. There were also recommendations for closer links to the EU's 6th environmental action plan and some of these respondents also suggested the inclusion in the final version of the plan of much more background/explanatory text.
- Many respondents requested greater clarity on operational/implementation matters, with pleas for more proactive, needs-based services but above all from the company

perspective, services which were practical and customer focused. Positive ideas were also expressed on how the sustainable business portal could be integrated with other business-support access sites.

- There were some requests for more targets, evaluation proposals and clearer timescales and in one or two cases, ideas for some restructuring of the three major themes.
- The WDA recommended some clarification of its roles, especially in the training area with ELWa offering, as did local authorities, to become more involved.
- On the one hand there was a plea for more sub-contracting of services to private sector consultants, whilst others thought Arena Network should have a wider role and perhaps be funded as a public interest company as is the Carbon Trust. Also on the financial front here were suggestions for a £10 million climate mitigation fund and the availability of low interest loans to help companies make the appropriate investments.

Action for Committee

6. The committee is invited to consider the action plan and comment on it. A bilingual copy of the document is available in PDF formats on the Assembly website at:

<http://www.businessenvironment.wales.gov.uk/>

**Innovation and Sustainable Growth division
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