

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 23 May 2001

Time: 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

EPT Committee Members:

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| Richard Edwards, Chair | Preseli Pembrokeshire |
| Mick Bates | Montgomeryshire |
| Rosemary Butler (for Karen Sinclair) | Newport West |
| David Davies | Monmouth |
| Geraint Davies | Rhondda |
| Sue Essex, Minister for Environment | Cardiff North |
| John Griffiths | Newport East |
| Tom Middlehurst | Alyn and Deeside |
| Rhodri Glyn Thomas | Carmarthen East and Dinefwr |

Officials:

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| Keith Bush | Office of the Counsel General |
| Martin Evans (item 2) | Head of Transport, Planning and Environment Group |
| Denzil Jones (items 2 and 3) | Head of Transport Policy Division |
| Bob Macey (item 2) | Head of Environmental Protection Division |

Robin Shaw (item 3) Director of Transport

In Attendance:

Mike Simkins (item 3) Wrexham County Borough Council (representing WLGA)

Justin Cooper (item 3) Caerphilly County Borough Council (representing WLGA)

Victoria Winckler (item 3) Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Denys Morgan (item 3) 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:

- the Minister's paper on options for direct elections to the National Parks would be tabled at a future meeting;
- the previous day he held a very constructive meeting with Bro Taf Health Authority and had agreed a timetable for their submission of evidence to the Nantygwyddon investigation. In view of the nature of the allegations made against the Health Authority by Dr Van Steenis, the committee agreed to publish his evidence and that of the Health

Authority together.

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions and declaration of interests

1.1 Apologies had been received from Karen Sinclair, for whom Rosemary Butler was substituting, and 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-09-01 (p 1)

2.1 Sue Essex introduced her report, and took the opportunity to inform members of the following additions:

- Transport Act 2000 (Commencement) (No1) (Wales) Order 2001 - following discussion in the Business Committee, the Deputy Presiding Officer determined that the draft order would be referred to the committee with a remit to report back within 4 weeks, before moving to Plenary on 19 July. As the committee was familiar with the provisions of the Act, it was agreed that the draft order be tabled as an annex to the Minister's report at the next meeting;
- European Innovative Actions - bids were being finalised and four projects had gone forward;
- Foot and mouth - access to the countryside was still limited and the Minister, following advice from the Chief Veterinary Officer, was encouraging local authorities to opening up more areas to the public.

2.2 The following points were covered in discussion:

- Earth Summit 2000 – the Minister agreed to discuss Wales' representation at the summit with the First Minister as a matter of urgency;
- Restrictions on lead shot – some concern was expressed about the impact of the

restrictions on jobs. The Minister explained that a number of stakeholders were involved in drafting the regulations, which offered a compromise between meeting international obligations, and minimising the impact on the shooting industry;

- Draft report on renewable energy – the Minister would speak to the Minister for Economic Development about the timetable for publishing the report;
- Meeting with Flood Defence Committee Chairs – the Minister updated the committee on her recent meeting and members stressed the need for the re-organised committees to draw on local expertise;
- Transport Act 2000 (Commencement) (No1) (Wales) Order 2001 – this would give the National Assembly and Local Authorities powers under various sections of the Transport Act 2000, including power to the National Assembly for Wales to make further regulations relating to work place parking charges. These further regulations, when made, would authorise local authorities to introduce charging schemes.
- National Spatial Planning Framework – the framework was being prepared, and would integrate land use planning, transport and other strategies on an all Wales basis;
- Human Rights and planning – the House of Lords ruling meant that the National Assembly’s planning decision procedures were not in breach of Article 6 of the ECHR. However, the Minister intended not to sit on Planning Decision Committees considering applications that she had called-in;
- Environment Development Fund – the Minister would provide members with further details of the assessment panels and selection criteria for projects in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2.3 The committee noted the revisions to the structure of the Transport Directorates Sub Expenditure Groups (SEGs) and Budget Expenditure Lines (BELs). Future expenditure reports would indicate where provision had been adjusted, to enable trends to be measured.

Item 3: Policy Review: Discussion of existing structures - EPT-09-01 (p 2) and EPT-09-01 (p 3)

1. The Chair invited Denys Morgan to outline the main conclusions of his report (EPT-09-01 (p 2) Annex A), and Mike Simkins, Justin Cooper and Victoria Winckler, representing the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), to set out the WLGA’s suggestions for strengthening the existing voluntary regional transport consortia (EPT-09-01 (p 3) and presentations at annex 1).

3.2 Members were invited to discuss the recommendations set out in paragraph 9 of committee paper 2, and discussion focused on the following:

- Regional transport consortia - local authorities recognised the need to work together to deliver integrated services, and the voluntary regional transport consortia had made good progress, SWIFT in particular. Nevertheless, members felt that the National Assembly required certainty that the voluntary consortia could deliver what was required to bring about significant improvements to public transport;
- Strengthening the consortia – various options were discussed. The WLGA suggested that "compacts" be drawn between local authorities within the consortia and the National Assembly, and welcomed the suggested regional public transport strategies. There were a number of issues to be addressed, such as the "constitution" and membership of the consortia, and their accountability to the National Assembly;
- Alternative structures – the WLGA were strongly of the view that local authorities working together could deliver any proposed services that any proposed Passenger Transport Authority would be expected to provide. The committee would be considering further options at the meeting on 13 June;
- Funding – given the success of the ring fencing of capital (and some revenue support) funding for public transport projects, the committee considered there to be merit in hypothecating part of local authorities' revenue support grant for public transport. The WLGA welcomed this additional support, but did not agree with hypothecation of local authority expenditure. The implications for financial resources and the ability of local authorities to establish joint priorities for funding, while complying with their statutory obligations and best value requirements as individual authorities, would need to be considered;
- Cross Border issues – members felt that cross-border co-operation in North and East Wales was also key to delivering integrated services. There was currently good liaison at local level, although funding cross-border projects was often difficult.

3.3 The Chair thanked the WLGA for their contribution, and the committee agreed that the recommendations would form part of its consultation report, subject to the following addition:

- *that the consortia raise their profile amongst passengers by developing their own "branding" linked to quality services.*

Item 4: Minutes of the meeting of 9 May 2001 – EPT-08-01(min)

4.1 The committee adopted the minutes of the meetings held on 9 May.

Date of next meeting

5.1 The next meeting of the committee would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 13 June at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat May 2001

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

Environment Planning and Transport Committee

23 May 2001

Policy Review of Public Transport

1. Better Wales

- a better co-ordinated and sustainable transport system to support local communities and the creation of a prosperous economy

2. Transport Framework

- better integration with environment and land use planning
- improved public transport
- action at local and regional level
- increase in cycling and walking
- targeted roads programme at strategic and local level
- adequately maintained

3. Public Transport a key contributor but not the only important element of Integrated Transport.

4. Local Authorities have the powers and duties:

- economic, social and environmental well-being
- community planning - Community Strategy
- land-use planning - Unitary Development Plan

- highway, traffic and transport authority - Local Transport Plan
- education authority - school transport
- economic development - community regeneration

5. Local Authorities best placed to deliver a truly integrated transport system.

6. Separating public transport from all other elements of integrated transport would be a nonsense.

7. Local Authorities recognise the regional and strategic dimension and work together on:

- regional planning guidance
- regional transport strategy
- public transport provision.

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Regional Consortia - TAITH

1. North Wales Economic Forum

- 6 Unitary Authorities
- WDA
- CBI
- TUC
- WTB
- ELWa

2. Transport Group - TAITH

- integrated and sustainable transport system to satisfy transport needs and support local communities
- address strategic transportation issues
- emphasis on public transport

3. Membership:

- 6 Unitary Authorities - Members and Officers
- WDA
- CBI
- TUC
- FTA
- Cheshire County Council - Cheshire/Cheshire/Wrexham/Flintshire Liaison Group

4. Attendance as appropriate:

- National Assembly - Ministers and Officials
- Strategic Rail Authority
- Railtrack
- Bus and train operators
- Rail Passengers Committee
- Community Transport Association

5. Achievements

- Regional Transport Strategy
- Rail infrastructure improvements - N Wales Coast linespeed upgrade

- Rail services improvements - re-franchising
- Information and marketing
- Co-ordination

6. Diverse Region

- Local partnerships
- Cross-border dimension.

Regional Consortia - Mid-Wales Partnership

1. A strategic framework for Mid-Wales

- 16 organisations representing public, private and voluntary sectors.
- 3 Unitary Authorities - Powys, Ceredigion, Gwynedd (Meirionnydd)

2. Integrated Transport Strategy

- social, economic and environmental needs
- consistent with the principle of sustainability.

3. Public Transport

- improvement
- co-ordination
- accessibility
- promotion
- transfer of people and freight.

NOTES FOR NAFW EPT SESSION - 23RD MAY 2001 - NOTE FROM JC TO WLGA

My formal contribution will concentrate on service delivery issues in south east Wales. I shall make the following points:

- 1) The area is unique in Wales in its concentration of a large population ($\frac{1}{2}$ of Wales) in a small area (15% of the Welsh land area.) It has a population density about 6 times the rest of Wales.
- 2) We need horses for courses. What is appropriate in south east Wales is not elsewhere and vice versa. The problems and opportunities are different.
- 3) SWIFT has already established a good track record on delivery. I will mention Taff Vale renewals (pre SWIFT), Vale of Glamorgan, Queen Street, line speed and resignalling improvements in the Valleys, Caerphilly Interchange and the Smartcard project. TIGER is working up its first Quality Partnership. I doubt if any PTE has achieved as much in the last 5 years. (I think I made this last point but I am not sure whether I did.)
- 4) I shall mention the views of the operators and their preference for dealing with SWIFT.
- 5) SWIFT and TIGER are talking with SEWTF to bring all 3 groups under one heading. We recognise the problems we have in supporting the consortia. Officers have been told to report back to members with workable answers.
- 6) SEWTF members have generally recognised the need to get tied into

long term commitments on cross boundary issues. That effectively means nearly all public transport and any road above the local road network.

7) I shall refer to the grant making power that NAFW already has and the way they influence what happens on the ground. NAFW already has substantial sanction power over us and we should point that out.

8) Our members want AMs on the regional consortia. The door is open to them.

9) We are interested in the DETR proposals to review Section 16 of the 1999 LG Act to make it more effective in bringing forward more partnership working.

10. With a PTE you will get buses, buses, buses (and trains if you are very rich). With the LA leading the way you get buses, school transport, community transport, health alliance, planning controls, economic development, WDA etc. You will get appropriate solutions not constrained by the function of a single body. There are equally effective but different rejoinders in urban areas. A PTE is like one coat gloss paint - superficially attractive but not appropriate in most circumstances and very expensive in the long run."