

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 17 April 2002

Time: 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

EPT Committee Members:

Tom Middlehurst, Chair

Alyn and Deeside

Lorraine Barrett

Cardiff South and Penarth

(substituting for Richard Edwards)

Eleanor Burnham

North Wales

David Davies

Monmouth

Janet Davies

South Wales West

Sue Essex, Minister for Environment

Cardiff North

Ann Jones

Vale of Clwyd

(substituting for Karen Sinclair)

Val Lloyd

Swansea East

Phil Williams

South Wales East

Officials:

Martin Evans

Director of Transport, Planning and Environment Group

Keith Bush

Office of the Counsel General

Denzil Jones (item 2)

Head of Transport Policy Division

Kay Powell (item 2)

Head of Planning Division

Secretariat:

Siwan Davies

Committee Clerk

Vaughan Watkin

Deputy Committee Clerk

Opening Remarks

0. 1 Tom Middlehurst welcomed Members, officials and the public to the committee. He recorded the Committee's thanks to former Members Rhodri Glyn Thomas and Geraint Davies for their contribution to the work of the Committee.

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions and declaration of interests

1.1 Apologies had been received from Brian Hancock, Richard Edwards, for whom Lorraine Barrett was substituting, and Karen Sinclair, for whom Ann Jones was substituting.

2. Val Lloyd declared an interest as a Member of Swansea City and County Council and that her husband was a member of South Wales Police Authority.

Item 2: Report from the Minister for Environment - EPT-07-02 (p 1)

1. In addition to the items in her written report, the Minister advised the committee of the following issues:

- Subordinate legislation – regulations for the packaging of waste had been introduced via executive procedure;
- Wales and Borders rail franchise - the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) would shortly issue core franchise proposals to the eight pre-qualifying bidders who would have 60 days to respond. A short list was expected to be available in the summer, with a preferred bidder identified in the autumn, and the franchise commencing in May 2003;
- Vale of Glamorgan railway line - approval for the reopening required notification to the European Commission under State Aid rules. This was underway, and the impact on the timing of the re-opening of the line was as yet unclear.

2.2 The following points were raised in discussion:

Environmental Protection

- Nantygwyddon – the Minister would report back to the Committee on the communication from the European Commission to the UK Government concerning the regulation of the Nantygwyddon landfill site;
- EC Directive on refrigerators – the regulations for the licensing of mobile disposal plants had come into force. Additional funding had been made available to local authorities for the first year to implement the Directive.

Planning

- Planning guidance – further work on health assessments was being proposed as part of the reforms set out in the green paper 'Planning – Delivering for Wales'. A working group was looking at revised guidance on renewable energy, and it was expected that a revised Technical Advice Note (TAN 8) would issue for consultation in the autumn. This would not affect the determination of called-in applications for wind farms due for consideration by a Planning Decision Committee.

Transport

- Wales and Borders rail franchise – the SRA would be holding consultation meetings across Wales to seek passengers' views on the franchise proposals. The SRA were due to attend a meeting of the Committee later in the term;
- Safe Routes to School – details of the scheme would be sent to new Members of the Committee;
- Safety Camera Partnership – the pilot scheme in South Wales was being extended, North Wales had its own scheme;
- Free travel on local buses – Members congratulated the Minister on the scheme. It was operated as a partnership between local authorities and transport operators in Wales, and any queries should be directed to the relevant local authority;
- Trunk Road Programme – the programme assumed a budget uplift of £30m to deliver the programme by 2008, subject to various statutory requirements.

2.3 The Minister agreed to report back on the Sustainable Development Conference being held that day at a future meeting.

Item 3: Annual Report - EPT-07-02 (p 2)

3.1 The Committee agreed the draft annual reports. The Minister suggested that the Committee review the operation of the Planning Decision Committees at a later date.

Item 4: Work Programme – EPT-07-02 (p 3)

4.1 The Committee agreed the strategic and detailed work programmes. The Economic Development Committee would be invited to attend the meeting with Glas Cymru on 1 May. An informal session would be held on 11 July to examine the key issues associated with waste disposal.

4.2 The topic of the next policy review would be biodiversity. The review would be short and focused, so that it could be completed before the Assembly elections in May 2003. Members suggested reviewing the management issues of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, reviewing the Technical Advice Note on nature conservation and planning (TAN 5), and raising public awareness of biodiversity generally. The Secretariat would draft terms of reference and a work programme for consideration at the next meeting.

Item 5: Minutes of the meeting 13 March 2002 - EPT-06-02 (min)

5.1 The Committee adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March.

Date of next meeting

6.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 1 May 2002 at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat April 2002