

## **ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

**Date:** Wednesday 29 May 2002  
**Time:** 2.00 to 4.45 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

## **WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT**

### **WALES SPATIAL PLAN - UPDATE ON PROGRESS AND RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION**

#### **Purpose**

1. To inform the Committee of progress on the preparation of the Wales Spatial Plan and to report the outcome of the recent consultation on the Wales Spatial Plan - Pathway to Sustainable Development.

#### **Summary**

2. This report describes the preparation of the Wales Spatial Plan to date and outlines the main issues arising from the recent consultation exercise on the scope and delivery of the Plan.

#### **Timing**

3. Consultation on the scope and delivery of the Plan took place between September and December 2002. The Wales Spatial Plan will be prepared by March 2003.

#### **Background**

4. Betterwales provided the basis for the preparation of the Wales Spatial Plan (WSP). It included a commitment to prepare "a new spatial development framework, linked to Assembly policies, which is updated regularly with the help of those affected". It also included a commitment to have the framework (Plan) in place by March 2003. The commitment to prepare the Wales Spatial Plan has been reaffirmed by Plan for Wales.

Consultation on scope and delivery

5. Between September and December 2001 public consultation took place on the document Wales Spatial Plan - Pathway to Sustainable Development. The consultation document charted the background to the Wales Spatial Plan, including its purposes, possible issues and delivery. By the close of the consultation period 75 responses mainly, from local authorities, business and environmental organisations, had been received. **The document at the Annex provides an analysis of the comments received.** The document will be published as a record of the consultation exercise, and the full text of responses placed in the Assembly library.

6. Although, the consultation exercise raised many issues that will need to be taken into account during the remaining stages of Plan preparation there was overwhelming support for the preparation of the Plan. A number of recurring issues emerge including the status of the Plan, the role for collaborative regional working and the time available for preparation of the Plan.

### *Status*

7. I have carefully considered the representations for and against statutory status for the Plan. On balance I agree with the majority of respondents that the first version of the Plan should have the status of national planning policy, the same as Planning Policy Wales and Minerals Planning Policy Wales. Should an opportunity for primary legislation arise, I will wish to introduce a statutory duty for the Assembly to prepare a Spatial Plan, along the lines of the requirement to make a Sustainable Development Scheme. I intend to keep the possibility of future plans being part of the statutory development plan system under review, and will be considering carefully the responses to Planning: Delivering for Wales in this regard.

### *Collaborative regional working*

8. In terms of collaborative regional working it is not my intention that the Wales Spatial Plan should replace the valuable work undertaken by local authorities and others producing regional statements. Rather the Plan will concentrate on those strategic issues that are of national importance. The Plan will build upon existing collaborative regional work, where appropriate, and identify those issues and geographical areas where further work is necessary. It could also propose a mechanism for the Welsh Assembly Government to support and formally recognise collaborative regional work.

### *Timetable*

9. The timetable to have the first Wales Spatial Plan in place by March 2003 is ambitious yet

achievable. The first innovative Plan will not attempt to answer every question: part of its role will be to identify the key spatial issues, acknowledging where work is already underway to address them, and stimulating further work where that is not the case.

### Partnership working

10. The WSP is being prepared in an inclusive way in partnership with local government, business and the voluntary sector. A Management Board drawn from these sectors, the Welsh Assembly Government and its agencies is guiding preparation of the Plan. A larger Spatial Planning Network has also been established to provide a forum for informed participation and consultation on the Plan. It includes wide representation from key interests including, local authorities, the voluntary sector, academia, business and Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies. The Network has met, in conference format at key stages in the Plan preparation process. In addition meetings or presentations have taken place or are proposed with the Welsh Local Government Association, the business sector, and the Assembly's Business and Rural Partnerships. The three workshops held across Wales during the last month have provided an opportunity for those with an interest to help shape the preparation of the Plan.

### Underpinning research

11. A research contract has been let to provide an evidence base to underpin the Plan. The outcome of the research, undertaken by ECOTEC Research and Consulting in association with Cardiff University Department of City and Regional Planning, Welsh Economy Research Unit, Cambridge Econometrics and WS Atkins will examine the spatial implications of current Welsh Assembly Government policy, provide background socio-economic data, analysis and mapping, and identify likely drivers of change. To test emerging findings a series of workshops recently took place in Carmarthen, Caerleon and Llandudno. In the final phase of the research contract a range of spatial options will be developed and their transport and land use implications assessed. The final research report will be available in later in the Summer.

### **Compliance, Financial Implications and Other Impacts**

12. Preparation of the Plan is covered by Section 40 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 which permits the National Assembly to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive, or incidental to, the exercise of any of its functions, including those relating to planning. There are no additional financial implications arising from the preparation of the Wales Spatial Plan.

### **Cross-Cutting Themes**

13. The Wales Spatial Plan provides an opportunity to provide a spatial perspective for the development and implementation of policy. It has a clear relationship to the Assembly's

Sustainable Development Scheme and other policies and strategies. It will also reflect the Assembly's commitment to tackling social disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity.

### **Action for Environment, Planning and Transport Committee**

14. The Committee is invited to note the report. A further report will be provided in the autumn following receipt of the final report from the research contract.

### **Contact Point**

Neil Hemington ext. 3351