

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 19 June 2002

Time: 2:00 pm to 4:40 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

EPT Committee Members:

Richard Edwards, Chair Preseli Pembrokeshire

Eleanor Burnham North Wales

Rosemary Butler Newport West

(substituting for Karen Sinclair)

David Davies Monmouth

Janet Davies South Wales West

Geraint Davies Rhondda

(substituting for Brian Hancock)

Sue Essex, Minister for Environment Cardiff North

Val Lloyd Swansea East

Tom Middlehurst Alyn and Deeside

Phil Williams South Wales East

Officials:

Martin Evans Director of Transport, Planning and Environment Department

Bob Macey (item 2)	Head of Environmental Protection Division
Denzil Jones (items 2 and 3)	Head of Transport Policy Division
June Milligan (item 4)	Head of Countryside Division
Nicola Donlon (item 4)	Countryside Division
Robin Shaw (item 5)	Director of Transport

Outside Organisations:

Julia Korn (item 4)	LBAP Facilitator for Wales, Wales Biodiversity Group
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Secretariat:

Siwan Davies	Committee Clerk
Vaughan Watkin	Deputy Committee Clerk

Opening Remarks

0. 1 The Chair welcomed Members, officials and the public to the meeting and thanked Tom Middlehurst for undertaking the duties of Chair during his absence. Tom Middlehurst placed on record his thanks to Members and the Secretariat for their support during his period as temporary Chair. Richard Edwards would now resume his role as one of the Committee's public appointments nominees.

0.2 The Committee agreed the following changes to its work programme:

- 11 July – session on waste disposal options to be deferred until autumn term, as speaker unavailable;
- 17 July – inclusion of a short item on a response to a letter from the Nordic Council's Environment and Natural Resources Committee seeking support for its call for a reduction in the emissions from the Sellafield nuclear processing plant.

Item 1: Apologies, substitutions and declaration of interests

1.1 Apologies had been received from Brian Hancock, for whom Geraint Davies was substituting, and Karen Sinclair, for whom Rosemary Butler was substituting.

1.2 Geraint Davies declared an interest as a Member of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Val Lloyd declared an interest as a Member of Swansea City and County Council.

Item 2: Report from the Minister for Environment - EPT-11-02 (p 1)

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

- She had met Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg on 18 June to discuss matters relating to her Portfolio and would give a full report to the Committee at its next meeting.
- Wise about Waste – the waste strategy had been launched on 14 June. The Minister recorded her thanks to officials and the National Assembly's partners for all their work.

2.2 The Chair advised Members that, following the first meeting of the informal cross-party group co-ordinating group on sustainable development, the Panel of Chairs would be considering mechanisms for mainstreaming sustainable development in subject committee agendas at its next meeting. He would report back to the Committee.

2.3 The following points were covered in discussion:

Countryside

- CROW Act seminars – the focus of the seminars on the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act on the practicalities of implementing the provisions of the Act;

Environmental Protection

- Blue Flags – praise for the record number of Welsh beaches receiving Blue Flag awards;
- Waste - the need to address the issue of value from waste, so that reuse and recycling could become more commercially attractive than energy from waste (e.g. incineration). It was recognised that there would still be a limited role for landfill, which would be controlled via permits to local authorities. Greater pressure should be placed on companies to limit packaging waste, the EU Waste Packaging Regulations are helping to tackle this;

Planning

- Waste planning –the three regions (north, south and west) had been defined in consultation with local planning authorities;
- Mineral planning – the query about the equitable distribution of the aggregates levy, as there was a deficit between the funds distributed and collected in Wales;
- Marine aggregates – concern about erosion of the south east Wales coast and export of sand for use outside Wales. A copy of the executive summary of the research project was available on the National Assembly website;
- Renewable energy – the need to ensure that planning considerations did not delay the economic benefits associated with renewable energy. The Minister would look into a request to provide data from the Crown Estate’s Windbase system to the Economic Development Committee for its energy review;

Transport

- Airport for Severn Levels – enquiries into proposals for an international airport. The Committee would have the opportunity to offer its views when research into the future of aviation sponsored by the Department for Transport and Welsh Assembly Government was published for consultation. There would be separate reports for Wales, Scotland and English Regions.

Item 3: Policy Review of Public Transport: Report from Minister for Environment - EPT-11-02 (p 2)

3.1 The Minister reported back on progress in implementing the recommendations of the Committee’s policy review of public transport and sought the Committee’s views on the proposed organisational arrangements outlined in the paper.

3.2 The Committee agreed that the regional consortia should be strengthened in the short term, and supported the proposal to increase the National Assembly’s transport functions and seek primary legislative power to establish a Passenger Transport Authority/Executive, as an option. The Committee agreed that a PTA for Wales *along the existing urban model* was not appropriate; but there were differing views on preferred organisational arrangements for the longer term and discussion focused on:

- arguments in favour of an all-Wales body, which could take the form of a Public Transport Partnership for Wales underpinned by regional consortia;
- arguments in favour of retaining local decision making and the need for cross-border England and Wales co-ordination, particularly in North Wales;

- how to ensure that regional consortia delivered the Assembly's vision for public transport, given the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to unhypothecated revenue funding for local authorities;
- the nature of the Greater London Act 1999 powers for transport, which could enable the Assembly to require that local transport plans be implemented in line with national strategy;
- the need for significant increases in investment in public transport in Wales, particularly for rail.

3.3 The Minister would take account of Members' comments in drawing up her final proposals, which would be presented to plenary on 2 July.

Item 4: Review of Local Biodiversity Action Plans: background and consultation - EPT-11-02 (p 3) and EPT-11-02 (p 4)

4.1 The Chair sought the Committee's views on the proposed arrangements for consultation as part of its review of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs).

4.2 The Committee approved the themes for consultation and the consultees, subject to the addition of the following organisations:

- Countryside Alliance
- Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
- Institute of Directors
- Master of Foxhounds Association
- Merched y Wawr
- Women's Institute

4.3 The consultation would run from 1 July to 20 September. An analysis of the consultation responses would be considered at the first meeting of the autumn term, where the Committee could decide which individuals and organisations to invite to give evidence in person.

Item 5: Discussion of budget priorities - EPT-11-02 (p 5)

5.1 The Minister sought Members' views on proposed budget priorities for 2003-04 to 2005-06 as part of the budget planning round.

5.2 The Committee supported the Minister's priorities for investment in an integrated transport

system, waste strategy, flood and coast defence schemes, biodiversity, further sustainable development activities, and developing the design initiative. Members also asked that sufficient resources be made available for the following areas:

- monitoring of sustainable development indicators;
- management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs);
- implementing the trunk road forward programme - the Minister was asked to provide up to date figures for the estimated cost of schemes in phases 1 & 2 of the Trunk Road forward programme.

5.3 The Chair would write to the Minister formally setting out the Committee's views on the budget priorities.

Item 6: Minutes of the meeting 29 May 2002 - EPT-10-02 (min)

6.1 The Committee adopted the minutes of the meeting held on 29 May.

Date of next meeting

7.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 3 July 2002 at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat June 2002