

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 23 October 2002

Time: 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Venue: Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

Members:

Tom Middlehurst, Temporary Chair	Alyn and Deeside
Eleanor Burnham	North Wales
David Davies	Monmouth
Janet Davies	South Wales West
Brian Hancock	Islwyn
Sue Essex, Minister for Environment	Cardiff North
Val Lloyd	Swansea East
Karen Sinclair	Clwyd South
Phil Williams	South Wales East

Officials:

Martin Evans	Director of Transport, Planning and Environment Department
Barry Dare (item 2 and 3)	Environmental Protection Division
Nicola Donlon (items 2, 3 and 4)	Countryside Division
Denzil Jones (items 2 and 3)	Head of Transport Policy Division

Robin Shaw (items 2 and 3)

Director of Transport

Secretariat:

Siwan Davies

Committee Clerk

Vaughan Watkin

Deputy Committee Clerk

Peter Jones (item 6)

Counsel to Assembly Committees

Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

1.1 In the absence of Richard Edwards, Tom Middlehurst was elected temporary Chair under Standing Order 8.17. The Chair welcomed the Committee, officials and members of the public to the first meeting of the term.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Richard Edwards.

1.3 Declarations of interest, in accordance with Standing Order 4.5, were as follows:

- Brian Hancock - prior to election to the National Assembly worked as a Health, Safety and Environmental consultant;
- Val Lloyd - Member of Swansea City and County Council.

Item 2: Report from the Minister for Environment - EPT-14-02 (p 1)

1. In addition to the items in her written report the Minister informed the Committee of the following events:

- Historic Environment conference on 10 July;
- Meeting of Environment Ministers of the Motor Regions of Europe on 18 October;
- Europarc 2002 conference on 3/4 October.

2.2 The following were the main points covered in discussion:

Countryside

- Conservation regulations – the need to balance economic development and conservation, protect ‘derelict’ sites now rich with biodiversity, and streamline the requirements of the various conservation regulations with the planning system. There

was a welcome for the working group established to examine practical ways to amend the habitat and species lists appended to European Directives;

- Candidate Special Areas of Conservation – clarification that the amendments related only to those sites listed in the report, and did not replace existing candidate sites.

Environmental Protection

- Sensitive Areas – request for details relating to Lake Bala, which the Minister would provide out of committee;
- UK Strategy for Radioactive Discharges – request for a definition of ‘historic levels’ of radioactivity, which the Minister would provide out of committee;
- Codes of Practice (Noise) – request for details of the programme for replacement of surfaces on the trunk road network near residential areas, which the Minister would provide out of committee;
- National Air Quality Strategy – the nature of the targets in Wales and the need to work with industry to ensure that they would be met. The Minister would circulate the consultant's report on targets to Members out of committee;
- Waste regulations – the need to assess the impact on business of forthcoming regulations relating to packaging and electrical materials.

Planning

- Research – the need to incorporate the outcomes of research into ‘Second and Holiday Homes and Land Use Planning’ into planning guidance;
- Dredging - the Minister would issue a policy statement shortly in relation to extraction of sand and gravel.

Transport

- Quality Partnership Schemes – clarification that current facilities could be included by joint agreement between local authorities and the bus companies;
- Concessionary fares – support for the review of the formula for funding local authorities’ delivery of the scheme;

- North South rail services – welcome for the new service;
- Wales and Borders Rail Franchise – the need at the meeting on 4 December to discuss with the Strategic Rail Authority their specifications to bidders for existing and enhanced services;
- Aviation – the need to discuss the impact of the Severnside airport proposal on Wales at the meeting on 20 November, and suggestion that the Economic Development Committee be invited to attend;
- Escort of heavy loads – request for an update on work being undertaken by the UK Department for Transport, which the Minister would provide out of committee.

Item 3: Draft Budget - EPT-14-02 (p 2)

3.1 The Minister sought the Committee's views on the draft budget for the EPT portfolio.

3.2 Discussion focused on the following areas:

- Conservation – some concern at the reduction in funding for the implementation of Special Areas of Conservation, and support for continued funding for conservation measures;
- Integrated transport - welcome for the additional resources, in particular the trunk road programme, and a call for local authorities to ensure adequate funding for improvement to local feeder roads;
- Bute Avenue Phase 2 – clarification that the Assembly was funding the rail link, a commitment inherited from the wind-up of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation;
- Concessionary fares - welcome for the additional funding made available to meet the demand for free bus travel by disabled people and pensioners;
- Flood protection – welcome for the increased allocations for flood and coast defence schemes.

3.3 The Chair would write to the Minister formally setting out the Committee's response to the draft budget (see copy at Annex).

Item 4: Biodiversity Review: consultation and next steps - EPT-14-02 (p 3)

1. The Chair reported back on the main themes arising from the consultation and proposed arrangements for following up these issues in more detail at the next meeting.
2. The Committee agreed the proposed arrangements for the meeting on 6 November.

Item 5: Work Programme - EPT-14-02 (p 4)

5.1 The Committee was invited to agree its detailed work programme for the autumn term.

5.2 The Committee agreed the draft programme annexed to the paper. In addition, the Minister was asked to provide the following information to the Committee:

- European legislation – regular updates on forthcoming European legislation affecting Wales;
- Spatial Plan – as part of the update on 4 December, details of the co-ordination between the development of the Plan and revision to Technical Advice Note 8;
- (out of committee) Review of the Environment Development Fund – a copy of the report.

Item 6: Legislation: Forward Look - EPT-14-02 (p 5)

1. The paper from the Chair invited the Committee to identify draft legislation for future scrutiny.

6.2 The Committee agreed to leave space in its work programme to accommodate scrutiny of any new Planning Bill, rather than scheduling consideration of draft secondary legislation at this stage. However, Members asked for further information from the Minister on the following items in her subordinate legislation forward look:

- Environmental Protection (Combustion Plants) (Wales) Direction 2002;
- Private Water Supplies Regulations;
- Special Waste Amendment Regulations.

Item 7: Minutes of the meeting 17 July 2002 - EPT-13-02 (min)

7.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July.

Date of next meeting

8.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be at 9.30 am on Wednesday 6 November at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat October 2002