

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 6 November 2002

Time: 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Attendance:

Members:

Richard Edwards, Chair Preseli Pembrokeshire

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

Tom Middlehurst Alyn and Deeside

Karen Sinclair Clwyd South

Phil Williams South Wales East

In attendance:

Rod Gritten (item 2) Snowdonia National Park Authority

Dave Keast (item 2) Powys County Council

Julia Korn (item 2) Wales Biodiversity Group

Steve Moon (item 2) Bridgend County Borough Council

Melanie Sutherland (item 2)	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Sarah Andrews (item 3)	Country Land and Business Association
Clive Faulkner (item 3)	Wildlife Trusts
Anne Meikle (item 3)	BTCV
Tony Prater (item 3)	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Julian Salmon (item 3)	Country Land and Business Association
Colin Brown (item 4)	Countryside Council for Wales
Malcolm Smith (item 4)	Countryside Council for Wales

Secretariat:

Siwan Davies	Committee Clerk
Vaughan Watkin	Deputy Committee Clerk

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

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members, attendees and members of the public to the meeting and thanked Tom Middlehurst for chairing the previous meeting in his absence. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to follow up common themes arising from submissions to the Committee's review of local biodiversity action.

Item 2: Biodiversity review: discussion with local officers

2.1 The Chair invited questions to local officers. Discussion focused on the following themes:

- Partnership – the benefits of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) partnerships generally, but continued need to emphasise the importance of biodiversity locally and within partner organisations. Ways of securing political and senior management commitment to local action, and of supporting delivery by farmers and land owners;
- National and local co-ordination – the need to integrate biodiversity into all the policies of the Assembly, local government and sponsored bodies, and in particular to strike a balance between economic development and conservation priorities. Work underway to improve communication between local and national levels via the Wales Biodiversity Group (WBG) LBAP officer;

- Resources – potential to build capacity for delivery through long-term LBAP officer contracts. Arguments for increasing Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) grant aid and streamlining funding sources, support for a move from annual grants to three year funding agreements, and scope for funding partnerships direct;
- Information and expertise – potential role of Local Record Centres (LRCs), support for volunteers, and ways of integrating biodiversity into national curriculum.

Item 3: Biodiversity review: discussion with voluntary sector partners

3.1 The Chair recorded apologies from the National Trust and invited questions to voluntary sector partners. Discussion focused on the following themes:

- Partnership – calls for a focus on action, not planning, and the need to involve local people in delivery. Ways of limited the burden on the already over-stretched capacity of the voluntary sector to support partnerships. Suggestions for gaining political commitment to biodiversity through pressure from the electorate;
- National and local co-ordination – the need for biodiversity to be cross-cutting and integrated with other local and national plans. The crucial impact of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on land managers' ability to deliver biodiversity objectives, and the need for greater co-ordination between other conservation schemes and LBAPs. The need for greater co-ordination between LBAPs, to reduce duplication of effort and free up resources;
- Resources – potential for greater transparency in setting funding priorities, and calls for dedicated resources for local priorities. Support for an increase in CCW grant-aid to support implementation, a move to three year funding cycles, and streamlining of funding sources;
- Information and expertise – potential of LRCs, ways of making better use of voluntary sector skills base and calls for increased training for land managers. Crucial role for educators in developing enthusiasm of young people for conservation.

Item 4: Biodiversity Review: discussion with statutory adviser

1. The Chair invited questions to the Countryside Council for Wales. Discussion focused on the following themes:

- Partnership – the role of CCW in supporting local partnerships through providing advice and grant aid, and importance of clear and simple communication in increasing

understanding and interest in conservation;

- National and local co-ordination – the need to ensure political leaders and senior managers understand why biodiversity is key to our future. The need for large scale habitat restoration projects, particularly marine, to supplement local initiatives. The impact of the CAP and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reforms on conservation priorities;
- Resources – CCW support for increased funding for local biodiversity action and a move to three year funding agreements, and call for partners to ring fence match funding for the whole funding period;
- Information and expertise – commitment to supporting LRCs, also potential for addressing the skills gap by matching university research to biodiversity priorities, and developing practical skills to deliver on the ground.

4.2 The Committee noted that the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission had not made submissions to its review.

4.3 The Chair thanked all attendees for contributing to the Committee's review. The next steps were a discussion of the key issues and policy statement from the Minister on 4 December, followed by agreement of draft recommendations on 18 December. The Committee's report would be agreed in the spring term and presented to plenary on 25 February.

Item 5: Minutes of the meeting 23 October 2002 - EPT-14-02 (min)

5.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October.

Date of next meeting

6.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be at 9.00 am on Wednesday 20 November at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat November 2002