

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 18 December 2002

Time: 9:15 am to 12:00 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

Officials:

Denzil Jones (item 2)	Head of Transport Policy Division
Kay Powell (items 2 and 3)	Head of Planning Division
Robert Williams (item 3)	Head of Waste Policy
Andy Rees (item 3)	Head of Waste Strategy Unit

June Milligan (items 4 and 5)

Head of Countryside Division

Grant Duncan (item 4)

Head of Wales Spatial Plan Unit

Neil Hemington (item 4)

Wales Spatial Plan Unit

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 Committee.

1.2 The Committee agreed to seek permission from the Business Committee to meet on 16 January rather than 22 January in order to consider the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, which was due to enter committee stage in the House of Commons earlier than anticipated.

Item 2: Report from the Minister for the Environment - EPT-19-02 (p 1)

2.1 In addition to the items in her written report the Minister advised the Committee that the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill had had its second reading in the House of Commons the previous day. She also advised that from April 2003 Wales would receive a Barnett share of the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, anticipated to be £5 million per annum.

2.2 The following were the main points covered in discussion:

Countryside

- Biodiversity – welcome for the launch of the Bridgend Local Biodiversity Action Plan;

Environmental Protection

- Environment Agency – the need for the Agency to be more responsive on the ground to meet increasing public expectations;
- Flood Defence – measures being taken to protect communities from flooding and the

need to base flood prediction modelling on reliable data;

- Keep Wales Tidy – the need to address the issue of litter as part of the Waste Strategy.

Planning

- Flood risk – the role of Local Planning Authorities in considering alternative options for existing permissions on land at risk of flooding;
- Technical Advice Notes (TANs) – a request for details of those TANs under review and estimated publication dates, which the Minister would provide out of committee.

Transport

- Network Rail Meeting – welcome for the Welsh Assembly Government membership of Network Rail;
- Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) – concern that the SRA were inviting bidders for rail franchises, including Wales and Borders, to outline services that could be delivered with a 10-20% reduction in subsidy, as well as options for enhanced services;
- Slower Speeds Initiative – a welcome for the initiative and request for a report on the outcomes next term;
- Congestion – some concern about mechanisms being used to reduce congestion on the road network.

Actions

- **Minister to provide list of revised TANs already revised, those under revision with timescales for publication, and TANs in need of revision.**

Item 3: Wales Waste Strategy Action Plan – EPT-19-02 (p 2)

3.1 The Minister and officials outlined the key actions underway to implement the Waste Strategy. The main issues covered in discussion were:

- Public awareness – the need to increase public awareness and education if targets for household waste minimisation and recycling were to be met;
- Recycling – some concern at progress to meet target of 15% recycling of municipal

waste by 2003, and greater emphasis on the monitoring of targets. The need for further measures to encourage waste minimisation, particularly of packaging, and to develop markets for recyclates, so that reuse and recycling could become more commercially attractive;

- Regional planning groups – recognition of the crucial role of local planning authorities in making sound decisions on the siting of facilities;

3.2 The Committee would follow up the development of markets for recyclates in the spring term with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the Wales Environment Trust.

Item 4: Update on Preparation of the Wales Spatial Plan – EPT-19-02 (p 3)

4.1 The Minister and officials outlined progress in preparing the Wales Spatial Plan. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill currently before Parliament proposed a duty on the Assembly to prepare a Wales Spatial Plan.

4.2 Discussion focused on the following issues:

- European best practice – support for drawing on the experience of European partners;
- Regional links – the need to reflect cross-border service provision in England and Wales, particularly in North East Wales;
- Relationship with development plans – the need to ensure co-ordination between the Spatial Plan and development plans by balancing bottom up and top down approaches;
- Data - some concern that key 2001 census data would not be available until February 2003.

4.3 A draft Spatial Plan would be published for consultation in the summer.

Item 5: Biodiversity review: draft report - EPT-19-02 (p 4)

5.1 The Chair invited the Committee to agree its report on the review of local biodiversity action. He explained that the table outlining progress in implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans (Annex 2) would be updated prior to the publication of the report.

5.2 The Committee agreed the text of the report, subject to the following amendment to recommendation 2:

the Welsh Assembly Government considers means of strengthening local government commitment to local biodiversity action, and encourages presses all Local Authorities in Wales to adopt Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) as supplementary planning guidance, in line with planning policy guidance, and use them to underpin Community Strategies;

5.3 The Chair would present the report to plenary on 25 February 2003.

Item 6: Minutes of the meeting 4 December 2002 - EPT-18-02 (mins)

6.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November and suggested that a list of actions should be recorded in future minutes.

Date of next meeting

7.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be at 2.00 pm on Thursday 16 January at the National Assembly for Wales.

Committee Secretariat December 2002