

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

**Date:** Wednesday 18 December 2002  
**Time:** 9.15 am to 12.00 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

### **WALES SPATIAL PLAN – CURRENT POSITION**

#### **Purpose**

1. At the meeting of the Committee on 29 May 2002 the Committee requested to be kept informed of progress.

#### **Summary**

2. This paper outlines the current position on the Wales Spatial Plan.

#### **Timing**

3. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill will be debated in Parliament in early 2003. This proposes a duty on the Assembly to prepare a Wales Spatial Plan.
4. As explained below, it is intended to publish the Wales Spatial Plan for consultation in summer 2003. The Committee will wish to discuss the Wales Spatial Plan prior to publication.
5. My original intention was to publish the first draft of the Wales Spatial Plan March 2003 but, however, some key 2001 census data will not be available until February 2003 and I wish to ensure that the baseline data on which we are building is as relevant as possible. This inevitably means a delay in publicising the draft for consultation. Following this consultation the Wales Spatial Plan will be presented for approval to the Assembly.
6. The Committee is aware that we have commissioned research work to inform the development of the draft Wales Spatial Plan, including stakeholder events. I consider that this will be incomplete without reflecting the most up to date picture available from the 2001 census. I intend therefore to seek for the research to encompass the census material before finalising their work.
7. The Committee will also be aware that the Assembly held consultation workshops in the summer. Since then we have held further seminars with both the WLGA and business

partners. We will be seeking further opportunities to engage with interested parties ahead of formal consultation as the work proceeds. I have secured funding to facilitate the development of the plan, in particular to promote collaborative regional work, and will be discussing with our partners how this can best be targeted.

8. I recently made a presentation to the European Council of Town Planners to demonstrate our commitment to spatial planning as a means to promote sustainable development. Our approach was welcomed by delegates who recognised that, in UK terms, Wales is at the forefront of policy development in this area. We in turn will be drawing on the experience of our European contacts.

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

9. 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**

10. 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. At key stages of the development of the plan, a Sustainability Appraisal will be carried out, facilitated by Forum for the Future.

### **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill**

11. I informed the Committee in May that I proposed to seek an opportunity to make it a statutory duty for the Assembly to prepare a Wales Spatial Plan. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill which has been laid before Parliament this month proposes such a duty. Annex 1 is the relevant clause within the Bill and the explanatory notes. This demonstrates the importance and ongoing commitment of the Assembly to the preparation of the Plan and its significance in relation to the land use planning system.
12. In seeking this duty, I have taken a flexible approach to help to ensure that the spatial plan is effective with regard to the land use planning system whilst remaining of broader policy relevance. The Wales Spatial Plan will therefore also address issues traditionally outside the remit of land use planning.
13. The Assembly will be required to consult widely when preparing the Plan, keep the Plan under review and where necessary revise it. The Assembly either sitting in Committee or plenary session will undertake the scrutiny role before the Plan is adopted in plenary

session.

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

14. The Committee is invited to note this paper and to use it as a focus for discussion. A further report will be given prior to the publication of the Wales Spatial Plan for consultation. The Committee will be kept informed of the progress of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill.

**Sue Essex AM**

**Minister for Environment**

**ANNEX 1**

## **PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE BILL, Page 39**

### **PART 6**

### **WALES**

### *Spatial plan*

## **54 Wales Spatial Plan**

1. There must be a spatial plan for Wales to be known as the "Wales Spatial Plan".

(2) The Wales Spatial Plan must set out such of the policies (however expressed) of the National Assembly for Wales as it thinks appropriate in relation to the development and use of land in Wales.

(3) The Assembly must—

(a) prepare and publish the Plan;

(b) keep under review the Plan;

(c) consider from time to time whether it should be revised.

(4) If the Assembly revises the Plan, it must publish (as it considers appropriate)—

(a) the whole Plan as revised, or

(b) the revised parts.

(5) The Assembly must consult such persons or bodies as it considers appropriate in preparing or revising the Plan.

(6) The Plan and any revision of it must be approved by the Assembly.

(7) The Assembly must not delegate its function under subsection (6).