

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

REPORT TO PLENARY UNDER STANDING ORDER 9.9: MAY 2001 TO APRIL 2002

1 Introduction

1.1 This report summarises our activities from May 2001 to April 2002. Copies of our reports, agendas, papers, minutes and transcripts of meetings can be found on the National Assembly website (1).

2 Membership

2.1 Our current membership is: Richard Edwards (Chair), Eleanor Burnham, David Davies, Janet Davies, Sue Essex (Minister for Environment), Brian Hancock, Val Lloyd, Tom Middlehurst, Karen Sinclair and Phil Williams. There were several changes to our membership during the reporting period (2).

3 Remit and Responsibilities

3.1 Our remit mirrors the portfolio of the Minister for Environment, Sue Essex, which embraces: environmental protection; countryside issues; planning; transport; sustainable development; and ancient monuments, listed and historic buildings.

3.2 The responsibilities of subject committees are set out in SO 9.

4 Priorities

4.1 We have sought to develop a strategic approach to our work, focusing during the reporting period on two key priorities: the independent investigation into the Nantygwyddon landfill site; and the policy review of public transport in Wales.

4.2 We are committed to making our proceedings more accessible to the people of Wales. To this aim, we met in Brecon in the summer term and twice in the Rhondda in the autumn term as part of the Nantygwyddon investigation, and launched our public transport consultation report at the bus/rail interchange in Caerphilly.

5 Work and Achievements to Date

5.1 During the reporting period we met eighteen times. Our principal achievements were as follows:

Nantygwyddon investigation

5.2 Following concerns expressed by local residents about the effect of the Nantygwyddon landfill site in Gelli, Rhondda, on their health and environment, the National Assembly resolved that we should undertake an independent investigation into the establishment, management and regulation of the site (3).

5.3 Our independent investigator reported to us in December 2001 and we reported to plenary in February 2002 (4). Some recommendations were specific to the Nantygwyddon landfill site, others drew general lessons for the future of waste management in Wales, including the need to address health concerns associated with waste disposal facilities. Our recommendations were endorsed in full by plenary, and the Minister of Environment will be reporting back on progress before the summer recess. The site has been closed.

5.4 Our investigation was a first for the National Assembly, using an independent investigator to meet locally to undertake detailed evidence gathering and analysis on behalf of a committee, and has set a precedent for the work of our subject committees. We will now be reviewing the process to identify lessons for any future investigations.

Policy development (SO 9.7 (i))

- **Policy review of public transport**

5.5 We reviewed public transport in Wales, to identify action needed to facilitate improved and integrated services. Our consultation report was published in July and our final recommendations presented to plenary in December 2001 (5). We defined a vision for public transport in Wales, and recommended increased investment, structural change and greater powers for the National Assembly.

5.6 The Welsh Assembly Government accepted all our recommendations, implementation is underway. The Minister for Environment will be bringing further proposals for structural change to plenary in the summer term and the Welsh Assembly Government has included a Passenger Transport Bill in its proposals for Westminster primary legislation.

5.7 We also presented our recommendations to the UK Parliament's Welsh Affairs Committee (the first subject committee of the National Assembly to do so), and they will be addressing our calls for primary legislative change as part of their transport inquiry.

5.8 Linked to our review of public transport, we also scrutinised the performance of train operating companies providing passenger services in Wales, and met the Strategic Rail Authority to discuss their emerging plan for Britain's railways.

Contribution to policy development

5.9 In addition to our own review, we also contributed to the Culture Committee's policy review of the Welsh language, as well as key policy developments being taken forward by the Minister for Environment (6).

Review of Expenditure and Administration (SO 9.7 (ii))

5.10 We regularly scrutinised the Minister for Environment via her Report.

Review of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (ASPBs) (SO 9.7 (iii))

5.11 We scrutinised the performance against annual targets of the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency and Welsh National Parks (Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia) (7), and Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments (8). We also contributed to quinquennial reviews of Cadw (terms of reference) and the Countryside Council for Wales (draft final report), and joint England and Wales Financial Management and Policy Review of the Environment Agency (stage 1).

Legislation (SO 9.8(i))

5.12 We reported to plenary on the draft Transport Act 2000 (Commencement No.1) (Wales) Order 2001, which had been remitted to us (9). We scrutinised various draft proposals to implement the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, including amendment of existing regulations (10). We were also advised of progress during various stages of the development of other secondary legislation (11).

Budget (SO 9.8 (ii))

5.13 Our budget preferences were set out in the summer term, and we commented on the draft budget in the autumn term (12).

Complaints (SO 9.8(iii))

5.14 No complaints were referred to us during the reporting period.

Public Appointments (SO 9.8(iv))

5.15 Our public appointments nominees (13) were consulted on numerous appointments (14) to public bodies during the reporting period.

6 Forward Programme

6.1 Looking to the future, our strategic work programme for 2002-03 (Annex A) and detailed work programme for May to July 2002 (Annex B) are attached.

Environment, Planning and Transport Committee May 2002

FOOTNOTES

- (1) See www.wales.gov.uk pages for Environment, Planning and Transport Committee at the following address www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemplantrans/index.htm
- (2) Eleanor Burnham replaced Mick Bates (Liberal Democrats) on 16 October 2001; Val Lloyd replaced John Griffiths (Labour) on 27 November 2001; Janet Davies, Brian Hancock and Phil Williams replaced Geraint Davies, Helen Mary Jones and Rhodri Glyn Thomas (all Plaid Cymru) on 21 March 2002.
- (3) See www.wales.gov.uk record of proceedings of the Assembly 4 July 2000. Further information on the investigation can be found on our pages of the website.
- (4) See www.wales.gov.uk for copies of the Independent Investigator's report and our report (ISBN 0 7504 2873 2).
- (5) See www.wales.gov.uk for copies of our consultation report (ISBN 0 7504 2699 3) and final report (ISBN 0 7504 2820 1).
- (6) Planning Policy Wales, Review of flood defence, Road Safety Strategy for Wales, Transport Framework, and the Waste strategy.
- (7) EPT-11-01 21 June 2001 see www.wales.gov.uk for agenda, papers and minutes.
- (8) EPT-16-01 14 November 2001 see www.wales.gov.uk for agenda, papers and minutes.
- (9) See www.wales.gov.uk documents laid before the Assembly dated 14 June 2001.
- (10) The Countryside Access (Draft Maps) (Wales) Regulations 2001, The Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001, and forthcoming draft regulations on access restrictions, voluntary dedication of land as access land, and (amending existing regulations) procedures governing appeals relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- (11) The Transport Act (Concessionary Fares) (Reimbursement Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2001; The Travel Concessions (Extension of Entitlement) Wales Order 2001; The Air Quality Limit Values (Wales) Regulations 2001; The Water Supply (Water Quality) (Amendment) Regulations 2001; The Special Waste (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2001; The Service Subsidy Agreement (Tendering) (Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2001; and forthcoming commencement of The Transport Concessions Eligibility Act 2000, and regulations governing road traffic vehicle emissions.

(12) See www.wales.gov.uk budget and strategic planning pages for copies of our responses.

(13) Current nominees are Eleanor Burnham and Tom Middlehurst. During the reporting period this duty was undertaken by: Mick Bates and Richard Edwards (May – 17 October 2001), and Eleanor Burnham and Richard Edwards (17 October 2001 – 13 March 2002).

(14) Design Commission for Wales (Chair and Members), Regional Flood Defence Committee (Member), Countryside Council for Wales (Members), National Park Authorities (Members).

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

**STRATEGIC FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
May 2002 to May 2003**

Introduction

1. This work programme sets out our strategic priorities between May 2002 and the next Assembly elections in May 2003. A detailed work programme for the period May to July 2002 is attached.

Remit and responsibilities

2. Our remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Environment, Sue Essex, which embraces: environmental protection; countryside issues; planning; transport; sustainable development; and ancient monuments, listed and historic buildings.

3. The responsibilities of subject committees are set out in SO 9.

Aims

4. We aim to champion: the sustainable management of the environment; development that respects the environment and sustains local communities; a sustainable integrated transport system; and Welsh heritage.

Priorities

5. With such a broad remit, we have developed a strategic approach to our work. Priorities for the coming year are as follows:

- *Policy development (SO 9.7(i))* - we will focus on those areas of policy development where we can make the greatest impact, and will seek to complement, rather than duplicate policies being developed by the Minister. In the coming year we propose to review topics from the following policy areas:
 - Biodiversity
 - Radioactive waste (and possibly hazardous waste generally)
 - Incineration of waste
- *Scrutiny of the Minister (SO 9.7(ii))* - the Minister for Environment will report to us regularly on current developments within the portfolio. Once a year we will scrutinise the Minister on performance against targets, but may also undertake thematic scrutiny sessions from time to time. We also intend to scrutinise the delivery of the Sustainable Development Action Plan.

- *Scrutiny of sponsored bodies (SO 9.7 (iii))* - we will hold an annual session in the summer term to scrutinise the work of the Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency and Welsh National Parks and comment on their future work programmes. Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments will also be scrutinised annually in the spring term, when we will also comment on Cadw's draft Corporate Plan. We will continue to advise on the quinquennial reviews of the sponsored bodies and Cadw at the relevant times.
- *Other items (SO 9.8)* - we will consider the following items as they arise:
 - *proposed legislation affecting Wales (SO 9.8(i) and 22)* – each term the Minister will outline forthcoming secondary legislation to enable us to identify areas where we wish to be consulted. Following the National Assembly's consideration of the Queen's speech, we will consider any draft primary legislation remitted to us by plenary. We will also consider draft secondary legislation referred to us by the Business Committee, as appropriate;
 - *proposals for the Assembly's budget (SO 9.8(ii))* – we will indicate our budget priorities in the summer term and comment on the draft budget in the autumn term;
 - *complaints (SO 9.8(iii) and 21)* – we will consider any complaints referred to us;
 - *public appointments (SO 9.8(iv) and 20)* – our two public appointment nominees will take part in the process of appointments to public bodies as vacancies arise;
 - *other matters referred by the Assembly (SO 9.8 (v))* – we will consider other matters referred to us by the National Assembly, but would ask Assembly Members to consult the Committee Chair before tabling motions inviting plenary to remit work to the Committee.

**Environment, Planning and Transport Committee
May 2002**

ANNEX B

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

DETAILED FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - SUMMER TERM 2002

Meeting	Item No.	Agenda Items
Wednesday 17 April 2.00 – 4.00 pm	1 2 3 4 5	Apologies and substitutions Report from Minister for Environment Draft annual report Work programme Minutes of the last meeting
Wednesday 1 May 2.00 – 5.00 pm	1 2 3 4 5	Apologies and substitutions Subordinate Legislation: forward look Policy review: draft terms of reference Glas Cymru: performance review and forward look Minutes of the last meeting
Thursday 9 May 2.00 - 5.00 pm Slot for informal session or, with Business Committee approval, a formal meeting		Visit by Northern Ireland Regional Development Committee (12.30 – 1.30)
Wednesday 15 May 2.00 – 5.00 pm Off-site meeting (Blaenavon)	1 2 3 4 5 6	Apologies and substitutions Report from Minister for Environment Walking & cycling strategy Cadw quinquennial review: draft interim report Draft guidance on CROW Act Rights of Way Improvement Plans Minutes of the last meeting
Wednesday 29 May 2.00 – 5.00 pm	1 2 3 4 5	Apologies and substitutions Nantygwyddon: review of process (feedback) Wales Spatial Plan Health and the Planning System Minutes of the last meeting
Whitsun recess: 3 – 7 June 2002		
Wednesday 19 June 2.00 – 5.00 pm	1 2 3 4 5	Apologies and substitutions Report from Minister for Environment Policy review: background and consultation [Discussion of budget priorities] Policy review of public transport: progress report from Minister for Environment

	6	Planning: delivering for Wales and Planning Obligations – report back on consultation
	7	[Draft statutory guidance to Environment Agency Wales]
	8	Minutes of the last meetings
Wednesday 3 July 2.00 – 5.00 pm	1	ASPBs – scrutiny session around bids/draft Corporate Plans
Thursday 11 July 2.00 – 5.00 pm		Informal session on waste disposal options
Slot for informal session or, with Business Committee approval, a formal meeting		
Wednesday 17 July 2.00 – 5.00 pm	1	Apologies and substitutions
	2	Report from Minister for Environment
	3	Nantygwyddon: progress report from Minister for Environment
	4	Planning: delivering for Wales – way forward
	5	[Flood and Coastal Defence Funding Review]
	6	[Community Transport strategy]
	7	Minutes of the last meeting
Summer recess: 22 July – 11 October 2002		

ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED:

Legislation

- UK Safety Bill (remitted by plenary)
- Draft subordinate legislation (as appropriate)

**Committee Secretariat
May 2002**