

TRANSPORT (WALES) BILL

Evidence from The Civil Engineering Contractors Association (Wales) to Welsh Affairs Select Committee and Economic Development and Transport Committee

Introduction

The Civil Engineering Contractors Association – CECA – is the representative body for more than 350 of Britain's civil engineering firms, both large and small, which undertake some 75%-80% of all civil engineering work in Great Britain.

CECA comprises a national body and eight regional Associations covering the whole of Great Britain.

Construction, improvement, repair and maintenance of Britain's transport infrastructure - roads, railways (heavy and light), harbours, inland waterways, airports - are the mainstay of the workload of the country's civil engineering contractors, accounting for around 45% of all their work.

This gives CECA members a unique perspective on the adequacy of the nation's existing transport networks, and what must be done to develop them to meet the needs of a growing population, and of a growing economy that is experiencing significant structural change, whilst safeguarding the environment

In Wales, CECA (Wales) is the single, wholly representative body for construction companies in the civil engineering industry and represents the interests of civil engineering contractors from both North and South Wales,

Many of its members have been engaged in the delivery of the transport, environmental and industrial infrastructure of Wales, making major contributions to its economic growth.

CECA Wales undertakes regular liaison with the National Assembly, local Authorities and major clients and also liaises with other bodies whose activities relate to their members interests.

In particular, the Association is a strong supporter of 'Constructing Excellence for Wales', in promoting 'Constructing Excellence' principles and 'Best Practice' in construction.

General

We have looked at the Bill Sections and also reviewed the accompanying Schedule, Explanatory Notes and the Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment, all of which provide a clear picture of the need and intentions of the Bill.

CECA Wales is broadly supportive of the Bill in its entirety.

However, we include the following comments in particular: -

TRANSPORT (WALES) BILL

Section 1 General Transport Duty

Section 2 Wales Transport Strategy

First, CECA Wales supports the obligation on the National Assembly to prepare a new document- Wales Transport Strategy- and to keep the Strategy under review.

Second, we believe the value of the current strategy document 'Transport Framework for Wales' lies in the wide consultation and contribution of professionals and interested parties in the process that led to its publication.

CECA Wales made a contribution at that time and has a very good working relationship with the Transport Directorate of the Welsh Assembly Government.

We look forward to the National Assembly maintaining that wide consultation in the preparation and review of the Wales Transport Strategy document.

Third, and not least, whilst we recognise that a new Wales Transport Strategy document could be expected to include consideration of transport in Wales on a 'global' basis, we should like to see included, under section 2 of the Bill, an obligation / strong recognition of the need to

- a) Take cognizance of the strategic transport policies in England and
- b) To give a high priority to improving and maintaining the Trans European Network routes

These aims, we suggest, are missing from the Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment, Section 3- Policy Aims, where the emphasis under 3.1 and 3.2, is acknowledged to provide, quite rightly, for efficient infrastructure for those working and living in Wales

However, the wider need for Wales to remain competitive internationally and nationally (UK) is vitally important and efficient connections with the 'outside world' are essential particularly, with the enlargement of the EU and a shift in the centre of gravity towards the East.

To improve the economic growth in Wales and compete effectively internationally for investment of industry, jobs and people and equally important, their retention, transport strategy in Wales must develop and be implemented in the context of England, Ireland, and Europe.

Finally, given the importance for Wales, in every sense, to have a good strategy transport policy, it has been a major concern of CECA Wales (and others) that subsequent funding of transport (as one of the recipient sectors under a the block grant to Wales) has been insufficient and disproportionate to that in England.

It is important therefore, that the Transport Bill as proposed, and its implementation, does not indirectly further isolate Wales, as indicated in our comments above, from wider transport considerations.

Wales could be worse off by not being part of a **UK Strategic Transport Policy** and the necessary funding to implement that policy.

Section 3 Local Transport plans

CECA Wales fully endorses the provisions under this clause, stated in Schedule 1, in section 109A, that local Transport plans prepared by local authorities shall be submitted to the National Assembly for approval and which can only be approved by the National Assembly if they are "...consistent with the Wales Transport Strategy" and "the policies contained in the plan are adequate for the implementation in the authority's area of the Strategy".

In addition, the integral link between transport and land use planning should be recognised by placing an obligation on Local Transport Plans to comply with the Wales Spatial Plan

It has long been our view that the situation arising from local transport plans being 'parochial' and a 'wish list' is detrimental to achieving progress towards achieving an overall Wales transport strategy.

Also, we support the requirement, in section 109B, for review of the local transport plan and replacement "not later than 5 years" after approval.

Furthermore, the provision of Section 113B for National Assembly to issue directions to a local transport authority is considered an important and essential component of this part of the Bill.

Section 4 Arrangements for discharge of transport functions

and

Section 5 Joint transport authorities

CECA Wales welcomes the proposed arrangements under these clauses.

The limitations of smaller local authorities and lack of specialist expertise within some authorities has been evident and the consortia of local authorities currently adopted (voluntarily) for Wales seems very sensible as a basis for strategic policy to be prepared and implemented on a regional basis.

Section 9 Power to give directions to the Strategic Rail Authority

Ceca Wales supports very strongly the necessity of providing increased powers to enable the National Assembly to have more control and direction for rail transport in Wales.

It is important in achieving an efficient integrated transport policy for Wales.

Financial Assistance: air transport services

In the wider context of Wales and the 'rest of the world' this sector of Transport is increasingly important and this additional power to be given to the Assembly is necessary.

At the same time, we should like to believe that our comments under Section 2 above would create an overriding obligation on the National Assembly, when considering allocation of transport funding.