

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & COUNTRYSIDE COMMITTEE STRATEGIC FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2003-04

Introduction

1. This work programme sets out the strategic priorities of the Committee for the next twelve to eighteen months.

Remit and responsibilities

2. The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside, which covers: the environment and sustainable development; town and country planning; countryside and conservation issues; agriculture and rural development including forestry and food production.

3. The responsibilities of subject committees as set out in Standing Order 9 are principally: policy development; scrutiny of Ministers and relevant bodies; and scrutiny of legislation.

Aims

4. With such a broad remit, the Committee will develop a strategic approach to its work and aim to balance consideration of subjects across the portfolio and its range of responsibilities.

Priorities

5. Priorities for the coming period will be:

- *Policy development (SO 9.7(i))* – the Committee will focus on those areas of policy development where it can make the greatest impact. In the coming period the Committee proposes to review topics from the following policy areas:
 - planning aspects of affordable housing and sustainable communities in the countryside;
 - progress towards meeting the 2003-04 targets of the waste strategy *Wise About Waste*;
 - the marine environment.
- *Scrutiny of the Minister (SO 9.7(ii))* - the Minister will report to the Committee every three weeks on current developments within the portfolio. The Committee will keep developments in the following areas under review, and may also undertake inquiries into one or more topics in greater depth:
 - bovine tuberculosis;
 - disposal of fallen stock;
 - fisheries strategy;

- flood defence arrangements;
 - forest re-design project;
 - planning issues associated with siting of mobile phone masts;
 - policy on Genetically Modified Organisms;
 - restriction of animal movements and impact on viability of livestock markets.
- *Scrutiny of relevant bodies (SO 9.7 (iii))* – the Committee will scrutinise the work of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales, Environment Agency, Welsh National Parks, Welsh Development Agency and other relevant bodies undertaking activities within the EPC portfolio. Rather than undertake scrutiny of performance against the full range of targets, the Committee will concentrate on scrutinising particular aspects of relevant bodies' work, or joint delivery of services. The Committee will also advise on any quinquennial or other reviews of the public bodies.
 - *Scrutiny of proposed legislation affecting Wales (SO 9.8(i) and 22)* – the Minister will regularly outline forthcoming secondary legislation and the Committee will be informed of relevant proposed primary legislation. The Committee will identify for scrutiny those items of legislation where there is scope to influence content, and will also consider draft secondary legislation referred by the Deputy Presiding Officer, as appropriate.
 - *Other items (SO 9.8)* – the Committee will consider the following items as they arise:
 - *proposals for the Assembly's budget (SO 9.8(ii))* – the Committee will indicate its budget priorities in the summer term and comment on the draft budget in the autumn term;
 - *complaints (SO 9.8(iii) and 21)* – the Committee will consider any complaints referred to it under Standing Order 21;
 - *public appointments (SO 9.8(iv) and 20)* – the Committee's 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))* – the Committee will consider other matters referred to it 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.

The Assembly's Statutory Duties

6. The Government of Wales Act 1998 places certain duties on the National Assembly, the Committee's work will be guided by the following:

- *Equality of Opportunity (s.48 and s.120)* – Committee meetings will be held in public and on occasion away from the National Assembly building to increase the accessibility of its business to people across Wales. Over the

range of issues within its portfolio, the Committee will have regard to equality of opportunity;

- *Sustainable Development (s.121)* – throughout its deliberations the Committee will focus on the need to balance economic and social growth with the conservation of the environment, through sustainable development. Its own policy review recommendations will reflect this principle. As co-ordination for sustainable development forms part of the Minister's responsibilities, the Committee will undertake detailed policy development and scrutiny work in this area.

Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee
12 June 2003