

North Wales Regional Committee

Report to the Assembly

1. Introduction

1.1 The North Wales Regional Committee is one of the Assembly's four regional committees. SO 10 sets out the geographical areas of the committees and also states their remit.

1.2 During its first year the Committee has been chaired by Gareth Jones. The other members of are Alison Halford, Ann Jones, Christine Humphreys, John Marek, Tom Middlehurst, Alun Pugh, Rod Richards, Peter Rogers, Janet Ryder, Karen Sinclair, Dafydd Wigley and Ieuan Wyn Jones. Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas is a member but does not attend meetings in view of his role as Presiding Officer.

1.3 The Committee has met eight times. Meetings have been held in every unitary authority area in North Wales.

Remit and Method of Working

2.1 The Regional Committees' remit is to advise on matters affecting their regions, the effect of policies in those regions and the work of public bodies there.

2.2 At its first meeting the Committee agreed that its role was to represent the people of North Wales and make their views and concerns known to the Assembly. Its biggest task was to convince people, particularly in North East Wales, of the relevance of the Assembly to them and it would be important to meet and develop relationships with local bodies.

2.3 In establishing relationships with key partners in the region, the Committee has met many of the main statutory bodies, such as the unitary authorities, health and fire authorities, and developed links with the North Wales Economic Forum. A full list of the bodies invited to meet the Committee during the year is shown in section 3.

2.4 The Committee has found it useful to arrange its meetings around a specific theme. This has the advantage of simplifying the meeting structure and delivering a more focused audience.

2.5 Where the National Assembly for Wales has been engaged in consultation on major issues the Regional Committees have taken part by holding 'roadshows' in their regions. During 1999/2000 two such events were held. The first was part of the consultative process on

Objective 1 funding and was held jointly with the Economic Development Committee. The second was part of the National Assembly's consultation on its Sustainable Development Strategy.

2.6 In the main, meetings have been held in local authority offices. This has advantages and disadvantages. Council offices can usually provide translation and recording equipment and are generally accessible to those with disabilities and well served with public transport. However, their layout is often formal and inflexible and does not always lend itself to participation by the general public. It is hoped that some alternative venues will be used in the coming year.

2.7 After a disappointing start, public attendance at Committee meetings has increased over the year. It is hoped that this trend will continue as publicity arrangements develop and public awareness of the Committee increases. The roadshow meetings on Objective 1 and sustainable development were particularly well attended.

3. Meetings to date

3.1 The Committee has met on eight occasions since last July.

Date	Venue	Topic
2 July 1999	Colwyn Bay	Initial meeting to discuss practical arrangements. An informal sub group was asked to consider north/south rail links. An initial proposal from the sub-group was passed to the Chair of the Environment, Planning and Transport Committee. The group also met the Babties group early in their work.
20 September 1999	Rhyl	Joint roadshow meeting with Economic Development Committee on Objective 1. Presentations were received from 20 organisations and individuals whose comments were fed into the development of the National Economic Development Strategy
8 October 1999	Wrexham	The Committee received presentations on the key issues facing the North Wales Health Authority and the North Wales Economic Forum

10 December 1999	Caernarfon	The Committee received presentations on the key issues facing the North Wales Fire Authority and the six North Wales unitary authorities
11 February 2000	Maentwrog	Roadshow on the Assembly's sustainable development scheme. Presentations and contributions were received from nearly 30 organisations and individuals which were fed into the consultation on the Sustainable Development Scheme
17 March 2000	Mold	The Committee received presentations from BT on information and communications technology in the region and from North Wales Tourism on the importance of tourism to the region's economy. A large number of public representations about local planning and tourism issues were relayed to the relevant division of the Assembly.
14 April 2000	Llangefni	The Committee discussed the state of the environment in North Wales from the Environment Agency Wales, Forestry Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales. Thirteen organisations and individuals contributed to the debate and comments and concerns raised were passed on to the Assembly staff responsible. The Committee also supported a call for the Post Office to use Anglesey/Ynys Môn in postal addresses for the Island
16 June 2000	Bangor	The Committee is to discuss progress in developing Objective 1 schemes in North Wales with the Welsh European Funding Office, North West Wales Objective 1 Strategy Group and the local partnerships for Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire and Gwynedd

4. Forward programme

4.1 The Committee will elect a new Chair at its next meeting and that Chair, in consultation

with the other Members, will develop the future programme of work. It has been proposed that 'roadshow' events are held to discuss the region's health improvement programme and as part of the consultation process on 'Communities First'.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The North Wales Regional Committee fulfils an important role as a link between the National Assembly and the people of the region. In its first year it has considered key policy areas such as Objective 1, transport, tourism, the environment, sustainable development and the development of information technology. It has developed links with key partners in the region - the Economic Forum, health, fire and local authorities, and it has encouraged an increasing level of public participation at its meetings. As well as being a chance for open, public discussion between Assembly Members, organisations and the public, the meetings offer a forum for people to meet, make contacts and share information. I hope the next Chair of the Committee will be able to build on the start we have made to develop the Committee's profile and the link between its work and the development of policies in the Assembly.

Gareth Jones
Chair

14 June 2000