



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY PANEL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN,
ON WEDNESDAY, 25TH JULY 2012 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor K. James - Chairman

Councillors:

M. Adams, S. Kent & J.A. Pritchard.

Together with:

P. Cooke (Team Leader, Sustainable Development & Living Environment), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property), T. Evans (Education for Sustainable Development Officer), S.M. Kauczok (Committee Services Officer).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs A. Blackman, K. Dawson, Mrs. D. Ellis, C. Elsbury, D. Havard and C.P. Mann; Mr A. O'Sullivan (Chief Executive) and Mr. M. Williams (Building Consultancy Manager).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Sustainable Development Advisory Panel meeting held on 13th June 2012 (minute nos. 1-6; page nos. 1-5) were approved and signed as a correct record.

3. PRESENTATION - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

The Panel welcomed Mike Pitcher, Wood Energy Business Scheme (WEBS) Programme Manager, Forestry Commission Wales. The Wood Energy Business Scheme is part funded through the European Regional Development Fund through Welsh Government. A four-year project between 2009 and 2013 and managed by Forestry Commission Wales, it offers capital investment to small and medium enterprises for wood fuel heating systems, small-scale wood fuel Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plants and wood fuel processing equipment.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr Pitcher outlined how the Forestry Commission is making connections with sustainable development issues. The presentation covered the following areas: -

- Wood energy markets in Wales.
- How wood energy fits into the wider context of sustainable forestry policy;
- The scale of ambition for Wales and its implications for sustainability;
- Opportunities in the Heads of the Valley area.

It was noted that in terms of wood energy markets in Wales, there are two pellet manufacturers i.e. at Ruthin and Bridgend. There is also a proposal for a pellet mill in the Heads of the Valleys area, working with the Forestry Commission and a large wood burning power station project is underway at Port Talbot.

Mr Pitcher explained how wood energy fits into the wider context of sustainable forestry policy, in three key areas i.e. fuel, building material and fossil carbon substitution. Using wood from well-managed woodlands provides a renewable source of fuel and other products as well as giving woodland owners an incentive to manage their land productively, improving conditions for wildlife and amenity. Wood energy also plays an important role around integrated and competitive industry. A lot of companies that have made large strides are those that have diversified.

The UK Government is committed to combating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% (1990 levels) by 2050. Wood fuel is a sustainable and low carbon source of bio energy that can make a substantial contribution to achieving these targets. In terms of ambition for Wales and its implications for sustainability, the Panel's attention was drawn to the targets set out in the Welsh Government's Bio energy Action Plan for Wales, which was published in 2010.

Mr Pitcher concluded his presentation by referring to the work being undertaken to the woodlands in the Heads of the Valleys area. Existing and potential woodlands provide a valuable backdrop through improving environmental quality and offering opportunities for community and local economic development. Valleys Woods is a partnership looking at how the 12,000ha of woods in the Heads of the Valleys region can provide the maximum social, environmental and economic benefits to the area. Forestry Commission Wales has been driving the project forward through a dedicated HoV Officer and the HoV Woodland Plan has been adopted by FCW with Coed y Cymoedd Forest District investing in work in the priority HoV woodlands it manages.

The Chairman thanked Mr Pitcher for his very interesting presentation and discussion took place on the issues raised. Clarification was sought on the availability of land for the creation of new woodlands in terms of the LDP process.

In terms of a carbon hierarchy of use point of view, clarification was sought on whether compressed wood is being used as a material for walls in the building industry. It was noted that in Wales, Coed Cymru, a partnership of organisations dedicated to bring Welsh broadleaf woodlands into sustainable management, gives free help and advice on the sensitive management of woodlands and the sustainable use of woodland products. It covers the whole spectrum from the growth of new trees through to high quality Welsh timber products and has a mechanism in place for developing timber products and markets to ensure that broadleaf woodlands have a firm economic base, which will ensure their continued management.

Members' attention was drawn to the work being undertaken by the RDP Team who are engaging with farming and rural businesses in the County Borough to promote sustainable energy solutions, local agri-food development, on-farm woodland management and timber use to help support the local economy and improve the quality of life of local people.

In terms of the increasing interest in wood burning stoves in domestic and commercial properties, a Member reflected on problems that had been experienced with a system that had been installed in a local school several years ago. Whilst there had not apparently been any problems with the system for several years, it was agreed that officers would report back on the lessons learned.

4. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION - COMPLYING WITH THE STATUTORY GUIDANCE

Paul Cooke, Team Leader Sustainable Development and Living Environment, presented the report, which outlined the Authority's responsibilities under the Climate Change Adaptation statutory guidance and sought the Panel's endorsement of the proposed approach.

In January 2012 the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development published new statutory guidance in terms of climate change. The guidance follows a five stage management system styled approach under the headings 'starting, investigating, planning, implementing and reviewing'. The Minister expects all key reporting authorities to make continued progress in preparing for a changing climate and identified the challenge as being to embed consideration of climate change impacts and possible responses into decision-making processes.

Paul advised the Panel of what has been done to date and what is proposed for the future. Support and some funding have been secured from the WLGA to initiate the process and two workshops have been run. The workshops were designed to introduce climate adaptation to a range of key personnel from across the Authority and to develop a suitable approach to the issues. Services will be given an opportunity to take part in 2 half-day workshops, supported by a small facilitation team. The aim is to create a bespoke approach for each service area to which managers and operational officers can relate their work. It is anticipated that as a result of the workshops an action plan and report will be produced to meet the initial requirements of the statutory guidance on the Authority.

The Sustainable Development Advisory Panel endorsed the proposed approach to Climate Change Adaptation within the Authority.

The meeting closed at 6.30 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman of the Sustainable Development Advisory Panel subject to any amendments being recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2012.

CHAIRMAN