

# SOUTH WEST WALES REGIONAL COMMITTEE

## REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY 1999 - 2000

### Introduction

1. The South West Wales Regional Committee is one of the Assembly's four regional committees constituted under Standing Order 10.
2. Standing Order 10.2 provides that

"Regional committees shall advise the Assembly on matters affecting their regions, the affect of Assembly policies in those regions and the work of public bodies there." The Committee is required to meet at least twice a year in the region.

3. There are 17 members:

|                            |                       |                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Peter Black (Chair)        | South Wales West      | Liberal Democrats |
| Nicholas Bourne            | Mid and West Wales    | Conservative      |
| Alun Cairns                | South Wales West      | Conservative      |
| Cynog Dafis                | Mid and /West Wales   | Plaid Cymru       |
| Andrew Davies              | Swansea West          | Labour            |
| Glyn Davies                | Mid and West Wale     | Conservative      |
| Janet Davies               | South Wales West      | Plaid Cymru       |
| Richard Edwards            | Preseli Pembrokeshire | Labour            |
| Delyth Evans (from 1.5.00) | Mid and West Wales    | Labour            |
| Val Feld                   | Swansea East          | Labour            |
| Brian Gibbons              | Aberavon              | Labour            |

|                              |   |             |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|
| Christine Gwyther            | Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire | Labour      |
| Edwina Hart                  | Gower                                   | Labour      |
| Helen Mary Jones             | Llanelli                                | Plaid Cymru |
| Dai Lloyd                    | South Wales West                        | Plaid Cymru |
| Alun Michael (until 30.4.00) | Mid and West Wales                      | Labour      |
| Gwenda Thomas                | Neath                                   | Labour      |
| Rhodri Glyn Thomas           | Carmarthen East and Dinefwr             | Plaid Cymru |

A new Chair will be elected at the next meeting on 14 July.

## Meetings

The Committee has met seven times between July 1999 and June 2000. Apart from two meetings which took the form of roadshows dealing with Objective One and Sustainable Development, most of the agendas have been drawn up in response to suggestions from members.

## Method of working

At its first meeting in July, the Committee considered its role and decided that it should focus on strategic issues and the scrutiny of public services in its area, while taking care to complement, rather than duplicate, the functions of local authorities and other public agencies.

The Committee has sought to forge contacts with external partners and agencies. It has regular dialogue with the South West Wales Economic Forum, which is invited to contribute to every meeting.

Members took the view that the Regional Committee provides the ideal forum for the members of the public to be actively involved with the work of the Assembly, and for the Assembly to

listen to the public. At the start of each meeting there is a 30-minute open microphone session in which members of the public can put questions and comments to members. If members are unable to provide a comprehensive answer to their questions, the Chair writes to the appropriate Assembly Secretary requesting that they provide a full answer.

In recent meetings public involvement has been extended, with the public being invited to participate in the discussion of other agenda items.

## **Meeting Venues**

The Committee feels strongly that its meetings should be accessible to all people in the region. It has met in towns across its area in council chambers, community halls and a social club. It has met at least once in each of the four local authority areas. Wherever possible it has chosen venues that are accessible to wheelchair users and others with particular needs. The Clerk now seeks the advice of the local Assembly Member and any local disability access group in selecting venues.

## **The Issues**

The committee has dealt with a range of substantive agenda items across the spectrum of the Assembly's responsibilities.

### The Economy.

In September the Committee staged a roadshow with the Economic Development Committee as part of the Assembly's consultation on Objective One. 21 organisations made presentations to the Committee. The details of the presentations were fed back into the Economic Development Committee's deliberations. The main points that emerged from the meeting were there was a need to manage demand and expectations; attract higher quality jobs to the region and ensure that there was a skilled workforce; and to secure the balance between national and local programmes, with local participation. The Committee looked subsequently at proposals for implementing Objective One and plans to hold a further discussion in July on the relationship between regional and local implementation plans.

The Committee also had informative discussions on the infrastructure that is needed to support the developing economy of the region. This included both the "hard" infrastructure of roads and energy supply, as well as the "soft" infrastructure of electronic information and communication technology.

In March the committee received presentations from tourism organisations emphasising the

importance of the tourism to the region.

## Education and Training

In October the Committee met representatives of training organisations to talk about the impact of the Education and Training Plan for Wales on the region. The Committee's findings were referred to the Post-16 Education and Training Committee.

## Environment

The roadshow on sustainable development in February attracted significant public interest. It was part of the Assembly's consultation process on drafting the statutory scheme required under s121 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. 23 organisations presented their views and there were also contributions from the public gallery. The views expressed are being taken into account in developing the statutory scheme.

## Health

Members were disappointed that not all the health authorities and trusts in the region were able to accept the invitation to take part in the December discussion on the provision of health services in the region. Those that did were able to advise the Committee of their priorities, problems and concerns.

At the same meeting the Committee received presentations on the expansion of undergraduate medical education in Wales and the potential for a second Welsh medical school campus to be sited in Swansea. As a result of the meeting the Health and Social Services Committee and the Post-16 Education and Training Committee were asked to look further at the issue.

## Voluntary Sector

In March the Committee received a presentation from the four county voluntary councils in the region on their role and the contribution of voluntary work in the community. The presentation emphasised the need for improved support structures for the sector, better public promotion and strong links with the National Assembly. The sector was often able to address issues the public sector could not, improving the quality of life for people.

## **Conclusion**

The Committee has made a good start in its work and has succeeded in engaging the public

who attend the meetings. In the first year it has addressed a variety of interests. It has been most successful where it has focussed on the regional aspects of Wales-wide developments, Objective One and Sustainable Development. It now needs to build on these achievements and ensure that its work feeds back in a structured way into the decision processes of the Assembly.

For the future I hope that public interest and participation in the committees will snowball. This will need well-planned agendas, good publicity and the continuing commitment of members.

Peter Black

Chair

ANNEX

## **SOUTH WEST WALES REGIONAL COMMITTEE**

### **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

**July 1999 to June 2000**

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Venue</b>            | <b>Agenda</b>   |
|-------------|-------------------------|---|
| 2 July 1999 | County Hall, Carmarthen | Election of Chair;<br><br>Forward Work Programme<br><br>Practical Issues Relating to Meetings |

|               |   |  |
|---------------|---|--|
| 13 Sept 1999  | Guildhall, Swansea  | Roadshow on ObjectiveOne Funding<br><br><i>(joint meeting with Economic Development Committee)</i>   |
| 8 Oct 1999    | County Hall,<br>Haverfordwest                                       | Open Microphone;<br><br>Education and Training Action Plan for Wales;<br><br>The Infrastructure of South West Wales;   |
| 10 Dec 1999   | Our Lady Queen of<br>Peace Catholic Church<br>Hall,<br><br>Llanelli | Open microphone;<br><br>Health Issues:<br><br>Undergraduate Medical Education in<br>Swansea;<br><br>Provision of Health Services in SW<br>Wales;<br><br>Implementation of Objective One. |
| 11 Feb 2000   | Aquadome, Port Talbot   | Roadshow on Sustainable Development  |
| 17 Mar 2000   | De Valence Pavilion,<br>Tenby                                       | Open Microphone;<br><br>Tourism and the SW Wales Economy;<br><br>Contribution to the Community of the Voluntary<br>Sector in SW Wales.   |
| 14 April 2000 | Leisure Centre,<br>Newcastle Emlyn                                  | Meeting Cancelled  |
| 16 June 2000  | Penlan Social Club,<br>Penlan, Swansea                              | Open Microphone;<br><br>Public Transport.  |