

North Wales Regional Committee

Date: Friday 21 May 2004
Time: 10.00 am to 1:00 pm
Venue: Civic Centre, Connah's Quay, Wepre Drive, Connah's Quay
Title: North Wales Regional Committee: Fifth report: Fair Trade in North Wales

Introduction

1. The North Wales Regional Committee is one of the Assembly's four regional committees. It covers Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Isle of Anglesey, Wrexham and the area of Gwynedd made up of the former districts of Arfon and Dwyfor.
2. The role of the regional committees, as defined by Standing Order 10.2, is to advise the National Assembly on matters affecting their regions, the effect of Assembly policies in those regions and the work of public bodies there.
3. At its meeting on 12 March 2004, to coincide with Fair Trade fortnight, the Committee sought to raise awareness and to hear the opinions of the people of North Wales about Fair Trade. The points raised by the public of North Wales are summarised in this report.

Key messages

4. The key messages to arise from the meeting were as follows:
 - Call for a public declaration of support for Fair Trade by the Welsh Assembly Government and support for Fair Trade through its policies and those of other public bodies;
 - Call for Welsh Assembly Government guidance on public sector procurement, in particular the procurement of Fair Trade and locally produced goods;
 - The need to consider Fair Trade and local procurement together, as closely related issues.

Presentations

5. At the meeting the Committee heard short presentations as follows. Copies are reproduced in the Annexes.
 - Representatives of the Fair Trade movement in North Wales outlining what Fair Trade is about, background to the Fair Trade campaign in North Wales, and what the Assembly can do to help;
 - Michael Cantwell on the experience of Wrexham County Borough Council in being the first Council to obtain Fair Trade status;
 - Mari Jones, Cyfeillion Gwledig Mon, about a project combining promotion of a healthy diet and

support for locally produced food.

Views of the North Wales public

6. Points raised by members of the public were as follows:

- Jean Davies, Conwy Town Council, said that the Council was committed to Fair Trade, but was experiencing difficulties in procuring Fair Trade goods due to rules governing public sector procurement;
- Arwyn Evans, UNA Wales, felt that procurement issues could be misleading and called for the Assembly to show the lead in the procurement of Fair Trade goods;
- Hywel Williams, Member of Parliament for Caernarfon, congratulated the Committee for focusing on this topic and called on the Assembly to put pressure on the UK Government to facilitate Fair Trade;
- A representative of the Co-operative Group emphasised the need for corporate as well as public sector responsibility. The Co-op supplied more Fair Trade products than any other retailer, and others were now following this lead. Retailers sometimes needed to take risks to deliver priorities - such as the Co-op decision to convert all its brand name products to Fair Trade – to deliver Fair Trade for farmers in third world countries;
- Owen Meredith, Chair of Tear Fund Cymru, said the Welsh Assembly Government should take action to promote Fair Trade and locally produced goods;
- A representative of Bangor University Student Union said the University was campaigning to gain Fair Trade status;
- Cllr Gerwyn Jones, Llangefni Town Council, suggested that local consumers could influence foreign policy by creating a market for Fair Trade goods. He called on the Welsh Assembly Government to have its say through the EU Council of Ministers;
- Ann Marie Flynn, Alternative Technology Centre, questioned whether the demand for organic products could be satisfied;
- Cllr Bob Parry, Leader of Isle of Anglesey County Council, stressed the need for fair play for organic farmers, to overcome difficulties associated with marketing low yield products, and for savings to be passed on to consumers. It was noted that the Council would be looking to introduce a Fair Trade policy;
- Tony Graham, Eco Wales Nature Shops, stressed the link between Fair Trade and organic produce, and the need for the Assembly to promote both;
- Tony McNichol raised concerns that a local meat processing plant was said to be employing workers at less than the minimum wage. Committee Members said that concerns should be drawn to the attention of relevant authorities;
- Jayne Bailey, Diocese of Bangor, said the diocese was working towards Fair Trade status by the autumn, and asked local organisations to include them in similar initiatives.

Written comments

7. Written comments were submitted prior to, at or following the meeting, and are reproduced in the Annexes. The main points raised were as follows:

- Ian Miller, Chief Executive of Denbighshire County Council, drew attention to problems faced by the Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust because of an all-Wales approach to contracting. The Committee agreed to invite the Minister for Health and Social Services to respond to this point and related issues raised in this report.
- Rev Jane Bailey indicated that the Church in Wales, was particularly interested in promoting and encouraging sustainability.

Next steps

This report will be submitted to the First Minister, Minister for Environment and Minister for Health and Social Services, calling on them to respond to the points raised. Copies will also be made available to the respective committees.

Janet Ryder AM Committee Chair

A copy of this report is available on the National Assembly website www.wales.gov.uk If you would like a hard copy, please email NWales.regcomm@wales.gsi.gov.uk or contact Silvia Ricondo on 029 2089 8018.

Annexes

Presentations and related documents

Fair Trade movement (Annex 1)

Michael Cantwell (Annex 2)

Mari Jones (Annex 3)

Executive summary of Feasibility Study commissioned by the Farmers Market Network (Annex 4)

Written comments (hard copies only)

Ian Miller (Annex 5)

Rev Jane Bailey (Annex 6)