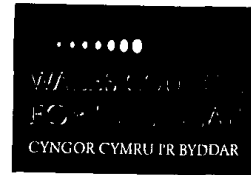


- 8 JAN 2004



Our Ref: NAG/NBM/CLD

7 January 2003

Mr P Davies
Economic Development & Transport Committee
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Dear Mr Davies

Economic Inactivity

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Economic Inactivity in Wales as stated in your letter of 11th December 2003.

I believe that, at least, two contributory factors stem from the Assembly Policy as I will outline below.

The first of these involves Transport. The first four years of Assembly Government linked Transport with Environment. This gave the wrong signals as informed people regard Transport to be linked with Economic Development and, perhaps, thus those first four years were wasted. However, the new Assembly has obviously agreed in principle with this view and linked the two naturally supporting factors.

History shows that increased economic activity takes place along transport routes. Here in Wales we have had ample proof of that over the centuries. Firstly the coming of the canals at the beginning of the Industrial revolution, followed by the railways and then lately by road transport. The development along the M4 corridor is an excellent example.

Businesses need a good integrated transport system to get raw materials and workers in and finished goods out. Currently public transport is a shambles and thus everyone relies on the roads.

The public also need good transport to get them to work, to home, to shops, training establishments and leisure facilities. Economic activity does include leisure facilities, shops and training establishments as people both earn their living and spend their money within these facilities.

You must not forget the needs of people with disabilities. They do not have reliable, accessible transport in Wales. If you talk to Peter Black AM you will find that one of the barriers to this is in fact the Strategic Rail Authority which will not enforce regulations which are currently in force.

Just recently part of the A470 has been upgraded, probably at great expense. This road is the main North/South link road. As you leave Cardiff it is in excellent condition, then, once past Merthyr Tydfil it all but disappears. Further, it is only now that the powers that be have decided to dual the A465 Heads of the Valleys road. This is the main link between South West Wales and the English Industrial heartland and until this project is finished we have a bottle neck until Abergavenny is reached when a sensible road network is available.

Cont.

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It is pleasant to note that the Government has given authority for the expansion of the terminal at Cardiff Airport. However, one wonders how the increased passenger numbers that this will allow will reach the airport. Travelling along a narrow country road is not the best way to reach an International Airport. We need a dual carriageway connecting the M4 to the Airport. A regular express bus/train service to Cardiff/Swansea/Bridgend would also help.

Encouragement needs to be given to regular scheduled services from the airport to the capitals of our trading partners in Europe particularly Paris, Berlin, Bonn, Brussels, Dublin, Madrid, Rome, Basle and Strasbourg. As a trading nation we should look to move away from the airport relying on package holiday makers for its existence.

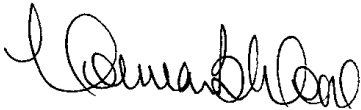
From the foregoing, perhaps it will be recognised we need to form links with other trading nations and encourage new businesses to set up here supported by excellent communication/transport routes. Transport is the life blood of economic activity.

The second apparent barrier is the policy affecting ELWA. The organisation is saddled with the need to spend about 80% of its funding on the 16-19 year old age group. The majority of working people are outside this group. Business constantly needs new skills, new businesses need to access training and training funds. We may well be able to offer sites through the Welsh Development Agency but unless employees with the necessary skills are available employers will not be attracted. Being able to provide training packages to would be employers is an added incentive.

I seem to recall that the Training and Enterprise Council and Further Education Funding Council were much more flexible where provision of training funds were concerned. As an employer I am frustrated at the lack of interest shown by ELWA in the post 19 age group. The Individual Learning Account is much too small a sum and the conditions are too restrictive. The system is a disincentive to develop a skilled workforce and need a huge overhaul.

I recognise the above is overtly critical but this is a welcome opportunity to air some concerns we may have about the development of our country in the modern world.

Yours sincerely



Norman B Moore
DIRECTOR