

John Griffiths AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Dafydd Ellis-Thomas AM
Chair, Environment and
Sustainability Committee

15 February 2012

Anrwyd Dafydd,

Thank you for your letter of 7 February following my appearance before the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 1 February.

As requested, please find attached my response to the questions which the Committee were unable to reach during the evidence session.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on the inquiry into the business case for the single environment body.

*Yn gywir,
John*

John Griffiths AC / AM
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development

Questions from the Environment and Sustainability Committee to the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development that were not reached on 1 February 2012

When is a draft Order to establish a new body likely to be laid before the Assembly?

In order to meet our proposed vesting date of April 2013, we would need to lay the draft Orders before the end of 2012.

What consideration did you give to the Welsh Government's sustainable development aims in reaching your decision?

I believe the business case fully reflects our sustainable development aims. Both the consultation on the 'Sustaining a Living Wales' Green Paper and the consultation on the proposals for the single body, reinforce that view.

Will the single environment body need additional HR expertise from the Welsh Government and will this generate costs not included in the Business Case?

There are a number of options for the body to source HR expertise including Welsh Government and external sources. The HR workstream has taken account of the cost of providing this expertise.

However, it is important to recognise that CCW already provides a full HR service to its staff, including expert advice.

Are you confident that a single environment body and Welsh forestry business will still have access to these services at no cost?

Defra hold the budget on a GB-wide basis and we would either continue to receive services as now, or be provided with our share of the budget to commission our share of the work.

Annex 16 of the Business Case estimates a loss of productivity due to the creation of a single environment body of £1.9m. Are you confident that the figures provided in the Business Case are a true reflection of the potential risks?

The £1.9m figure relates to the time required for events, recruitment and additional training. There is a substantial budget allocation for risk elsewhere in the business case.

What consideration did you give to the impacts that the transition period will have on the existing bodies' ability to deliver services to key stakeholders such as local authorities and businesses?

The impact on the bodies during the transition period is around 3% of their total staffing. I would not expect an impact on this scale to have a major impact on service delivery and I would expect the bodies to prioritise delivery of key external services. I have asked them to identify any significant problems.

What consideration did the Business Case give to the relationship between local authorities, National Parks and a new environment body?

The business case has recognised that the creation of the new body will provide a single focus for planning advice and regulatory decisions which we believe will simplify relationships with local authorities and national parks, and will benefit all parties.

What discussions were held on the possibility of functions moving between a new body and local authorities and how did this effect your decision?

In the course of developing the business case, we looked at local authority functions. This included discussions with WLGA and a meeting with the Environmental Directors of local authorities. Specific areas of work we considered included air quality monitoring and contaminated land. However, we do not anticipate making changes in these functions as part of the creation of the body. These are matters which can be considered at a future date.

What consideration was given as to how a new body will engage with local communities?

We will set out in our consultation a requirement for the new body to bring forward its own proposals for engagement with local communities, on which it would need to consult. We think it is essential that the body engages effectively with local communities and that it has ownership of the mechanism through which it does that.

What consideration has been given to where a new body would be situated within Wales?

We have not attempted to undertake organisational design as all of the lessons learned from past reorganisations demonstrate that this is a matter left for the incoming shadow organisation. However, we have set out some broad principles including an expectation that the body would be operationally located at a local level throughout Wales.