

**N. Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party.
Regional Technical Statement Political Sub-Group [see* 3. below].
Inaugural Meeting; 9 November 2005. 10.30.
Conference Room 3, Flintshire Offices, Mold.**

MINUTES

1. Introductions and Welcome.

Gareth Jones, Principal Officer, Minerals, Waste and Enforcement, Gwynedd Council, explained he was standing in for Iwan Evans, Chair of the N. Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party, who was on long-term sick leave. The Group wished Iwan a speedy and successful recovery.

Round table introductions followed.

Present;

Gareth Jones - Initial Chair

Jeremy Gibbins - Secretary N. Wales RAWP.

Cllrs.;

Goronwy Edwards - Conwy

Gwilym Williams - Gwynedd

Dyfed Edwards - Gwynedd

Jim Jones - Flintshire

John Williams - Anglesey

and Mr. Peter Weston - [non-elected representative] SNP.

2. Election of Chair / Vice Chair.

GJ invited nominations for Chair

Cllr. Dyfed Edwards, Gwynedd was proposed and seconded.

Cllr Edwards took the chair and invited nominations for Deputy Chair.

Cllr Williams, Gwynedd was nominated and seconded.

3. Apologies.

Chris Morgan, Welsh Assembly Government

Cllr. Aaron Shotton, Flintshire.

Cllr. Eryl Wyn Williams – Denbighshire [received by e-mail 16/11]

The Chairman expressed disappointment that more representatives had not been able to attend and that in particular that no representatives were present from Denbighshire or Wrexham.

He emphasised that the officers and members of the N. Wales mineral planning authorities had the joint responsibility of overseeing the production of an important piece of regional planning work.

Peter Weston queried the use of the title 'Political Sub-Group'. His concerns were first that the term 'sub-group' indicated some subsidiary level of responsibility and second that he and his nominated colleague Martin Warren were not in fact elected representatives but were nominated non-elected members of the SNP.

The Secretary explained that the name Political Sub-Group had simply been one used by him for administrative expedience and there was no problem with changing it. The South Wales Group used the term 'Forum'.

After a brief discussion it was agreed that the term '*RTS Members' Forum' would be adopted.

4. The Secretary gave a brief introduction to the background and work of the 10 RAWPs in England & Wales. A written note was available to members.

The Assembly's Minerals Technical Advice Note MTAN (Wales) 1, February 2004 sets out the Assembly's view as to the future of mineral planning in Wales. The TAN envisages the adoption of Regional Technical Statements for north and south Wales by September 2006. This deadline was now looking difficult to achieve.

The Secretary referred to the Memorandum of Understanding which members had received with their agenda. It set out the terms under which the Members' Forum would operate. It had been drafted with the intention of providing a broad framework for administration purposes and as far as he was aware did not contain anything which would be problematical to the members.

There was one matter requiring a members decision relating to their wish, or otherwise, to be accompanied in the Members' Forum by a planning officer from their authority.

A round table discussion followed.

The Secretary advised that he considered that the officer concerned would normally be the minerals officer or the officer who attended the RAWP.

It was unanimously decided that members should be able to be accompanied in the Members' Forum by the appropriate officer should they so wish. This would be particularly important where technical decisions were to be made.

The Secretary undertook to advise each authority's RAWP technical member of the Members' Forum decision, with the advice that officers maintain contact with their members.

5. The Secretary introduced the Regional Technical Statement, advising that due to difficult circumstances, South Wales was significantly further ahead with the preparation of their Regional Technical Statement than the North.

He was indebted to the S. Wales RAWP Secretary for copies of the S. Wales Draft Issues Paper on which the paper for N. Wales had been based.

The paper was issued in August 2005 and six responses had been received. They were being considered and amendments put in place where appropriate.

The function of the Technical Sub-Group [TSG] was explained. The last TSG meeting had been 7 November.

At that meeting the industry had expressed its concern that the S. Wales RAWP had proceeded directly from the Issues Paper to an Options Paper.

The industry considered this too large a move and proposed that the industry be permitted time to prepare a Position Statement, giving its point of view with regard to the supply, demand and economic framework of production in Wales as a baseline contribution to the RTS.

TSG members were concerned at the potential delay this might cause to the RTS. However, it was considered that the interests of the RTS would be best served by allowing the industry essential time to prepare its position statement. This would be based on;

- a Scoping Report by the end of November 05
- an interim report by end of January 06
- a Final Report by end of March 06.

6. The secretary reported that a significant part of the RTS would be an assessment of 'environmental capacity', that is the capacity of a given area to absorb further mineral working without undue detriment.

For this purpose the Assembly had appointed consultants to develop a methodology to enable environmental capacity to be assessed and displayed in geographic form on a GIS [Geographic Information System] database.

The 'IMAECA' Study ['Implementing the Methodology for Assessing the Environmental Capacity for Primary Aggregates'] had been completed by the ENVIROS Consultancy.

Paul Hatherley and Matt Faulkener of ENVIROS gave a presentation of the IMAECA system, followed by a questions and answer session. Principal points raised were;

The role of slate as a primary aggregate. [GJ]

The limited availability of the IMAECA data directly to mineral planning authorities. [JW Môn]

The line of communication was - IMAECA as a tool for the RTS; the RTS was a plan of the RAWP; each mineral planning authority was represented on the RAWP; the RTS would apportion supply to individual authorities; authorities would draft UDP/LDP planning policies on the basis of the RTS.

The Secretary would circulate an information sheet from ENVIROS with the minutes.

7. Regional Technical Statement - the next stages.

GJ reported on the stages in the preparation of the RTS.

The next stage would be the publication of the final Issues Paper.

The Secretary would demonstrate the IMAECA system directly with officers of each N. Wales mineral planning authority to establish how the authority envisaged their role in the RTS and to explain the apportionment process which would bind each

authority to contributing a measured output of aggregate minerals over the period of the RTS.

Each mineral planning authority would be responsible for providing a current Position Statement in respect of their contribution to aggregates provision having regard to environmental capacity for the 5 yr period of the RTS.

The Position Statements together with the report from the industry would provide the detailed profile for the Region and assist in developing options for the RTS.

The importance of the consultation process was emphasised and a strategy was being developed to include a website for which funding options were being investigated.

8. AOB.

Members were acquainted briefly of the administration of the N. Wales RAWP.

A current 4-year contract with the lead authority, Gwynedd, terminated at the end of March 2006 when Gwynedd would be resigning from the role of lead authority.

A former full-time Secretary had resigned last year, and no suitable replacement had been found.

Having retired from his post as minerals and waste planning officer for Gwynedd in April 2005, JHG had volunteered to take over the Secretaryship on a part-time basis until the end of the contract or the appointment of a new full-time secretary, whichever was the earlier.

The Chair expressed the appreciation of members to JHG for taking on the task of Secretary in this difficult period. Concerns were expressed about the lack of a N. Wales replacement lead authority, particularly when there was a 30-year history of lead authorities in Wales [Clwyd, Flintshire and Gwynedd].

If the task had to be taken on by the Welsh Assembly Government there would be a loss of influence by the N. Wales authorities.

9. Next meeting.

Members were offered the option of holding meetings for regular updates and information or restricting meetings to political decision-making. The feeling round the table was that given the constraints on everyone's time, the latter was preferable.

No specific date was therefore set but it was anticipated that there may be a call for a meeting next March / April.06. The Secretary undertook to offer at least 6 weeks notice. The venue was satisfactory.