



Notes of evidence

Name of meeting

POLICY COMMISSION FOR BUSINESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Date and time

WEDNESDAY, 1 AUGUST 2007 AT 6.00 PM

Venue

COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT

Commission

Cllrs Jonathan Fitzgerald-Bond (Commissioner), William Burt, Charles Hancock, John Hobart, Brian Mosdell, Lora Peacey-Wilcox

Cabinet

Cllr David Pugh

Cabinet Secretary

Other Councillors

Cllr Arthur Taylor

Officers Present

Mr Stuart Love, Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
Miss Andrea Lisseter, Overview and Scrutiny Team
Mr Rob Owen, Head of Consumer Protection

Stakeholders

Mr James Attrill, Farmer and Land Agent
Mr Stuart Pierce, Local Livestock Producer, Moore Farm, Godshell

Apologies

Cllr Henry Adams

1. **Notes of Evidence**

1.1 The notes of evidence arising at the meeting held on [6 June 2007](#) were agreed.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

2.1 Cllr Mosdell and Cllr Peacey-Wilcox declared personal interests as they knew people in the farming industry.

3. **Viability of an Abattoir on the Isle of Wight**

3.1 The Commission received evidence from Mr James Attrill, a local farmer and land agent. Mr Attrill had commissioned work from the Meat and Livestock Commission on behalf of the Isle of Wight Farmers' Co-operative in 2002 on the feasibility of constructing and operating a low throughput red meat abattoir and retail outlet on the Isle of Wight. The report was made available to the Commission. The Council had contributed to the cost of the report.

3.2 The report indicated that an abattoir on the Island could cost in the region of £300,000 – £500,000 to build.

- 3.3 A realistic market for meat was needed for an abattoir to be sustained on the Island.
- 3.4 The Farmers' Co-operative supported the idea of a farm shop adjacent to an abattoir.
- 3.5 An alternative proposal was to engage with a mobile abattoir which could visit the Island once a month. This was found to be unsatisfactory as the ability to handle livestock was limited.
- 3.6 The report concluded that a market for the meat could be developed and that a low throughput facility was feasible.
- 3.7 There were examples of low throughput abattoirs elsewhere but a commercial operation needs to be able to construct and run an abattoir and source the market.
- 3.8 The Island still needed an abattoir but it would be unlikely to work as a co-operative venture, it probably needed to be run as a commercial enterprise.
- 3.9 Approximately 70% of meat was supplied by the five big supermarkets which usually specify at which abattoir the animals are to be slaughtered.
- 3.10 Livestock numbers in the UK, the South East and the Isle of Wight have dropped over the last 5 years.
- 3.11 There was a limited throughput of meat on the Island and it was unlikely to be financially viable for mainland farmers to bring their livestock to the Island to be slaughtered.
- 3.12 The Council could
- regulations and legislation associated with building and running an abattoir
 - food hygiene guidance
 - health and safety
 - waste disposal
 - planning for an incinerator and the possibility of a site being used for other forms of waste disposal on the Island.
 - selling the meat to schools, hospitals and prisons
 - marketing the meat
- 3.13 The Council should not build or run an abattoir.
- 3.14 It was difficult to identify experienced operators to run and manage an abattoir.
- 3.15 The South East Economic Development Agency (SEEDA) or the Department for Economy, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) may

have been able to assist with part funding for an abattoir.

- 3.16 There were examples of farmers who have built abattoirs on their farms that the Commission could investigate.
- 3.17 Using an Island abattoir needed to cost no more to the farmer than it does currently in taking animals across on ferries for slaughter and then returning for consumption.
- 3.18 Farmers would probably use a low throughput facility.
- 3.19 It costs about £500 to take 100 pigs off the Island for slaughter, and about £280 to take 14 bovines.
- 3.20 Farmers sometimes sell to supermarkets at a loss.
- 3.21 Marketing of meat is key. Livestock numbers nationally have reduced by $\frac{3}{4}$ since the foot and mouth crisis in 2001.
- 3.22 Animal welfare was as important as the cost of transporting livestock on the ferries.
- 3.23 An incinerator or other waste disposal facility needed to be in close proximity to an abattoir.
- 3.24 About 200-300 jobs were thought to be directly dependent on the livestock farming on the Island.