

Notes of evidence

Name of meeting	POLICY COMMISSION FOR BUSINESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Date and time	WEDNESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2008 AT 6.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT IOW
Commission	Cllrs Jonathan Fitzgerald-Bond (Chairman), Henry Adams, Charles Hancock, Peter Humber, Roger Mazillius
Officers Present	Jon Baker (Democratic Services), Rob Owen (Head of Consumer Protection) April Ross (Democratic Services) Paul Thistlewood (Democratic Services)
Stakeholders	Kevin Smith (IOW Chamber of Commerce), Zoë Stroud (IOW Chamber of Commerce), Mathew Legge (National Farmers Union)
Apologies	Cllrs John Hobart, Ian Ward

1. **Notes of Evidence**

The Notes of evidence arising at the meeting held on [24 September 2008](#) were agreed

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest Received.

3. **Public Question Time**

There were no Questions received.

4. **Island Abattoir – Feasibility Study**

4.1 The Commission considered the Blue Paper arising from its enquiry into the feasibility of establishing an abattoir on the Island.

4.2 The Head of Consumer Protection outlined the background to the enquiry. He referred to the national and local context relating to abattoirs. The enquiry also looked into the construction and operating costs of a new facility. Reference was also made to a feasibility study that had been undertaken in 2002 on the same topic.

4.3 Evidence had been taken from a wide range of stakeholders, both formally and informally, together with appropriate site visits. This enabled key financial, strategic,

operational and legal issues to be identified leading to three options within the Blue Paper.

4.4 The options were :-

- Option 1 – Develop a fully costed business case to construct an island abattoir and lease to a commercial operator.
- Option 2 – Make a public policy statement to signify support for an abattoir to be run by a private sector company.
- Option 3 – Make a public policy statement to the effect that the Council views the Island as an inappropriate location for an abattoir.

4.5 Members indicated that whilst there was a strong desire to see an abattoir on the Island, there was a lack of commitment from the private sector to actually provide the investment. Whilst the Isle of Wight Council would be very supportive, it could not provide any financial assistance.

4.6 The Chairman thanked all those that contributed to the enquiry. The Commission agreed that Option 2 should be adopted.

RESOLVED

THAT the Commission adopts Option 2 and the Council agrees, and makes public, a policy statement to the effect that it aspires to a private sector organisation/individual constructing and operating an island abattoir and that the Council will do all that it reasonably can to assist with site location, grant applications to third parties and the provision of guidance on enforcement where the Council is the enforcing authority.

5. Cross Solent Travel Costs

5.1 The Chairman welcomed Mr Kevin Smith, Chief Executive, and Ms Zoe Stroud, Marketing Director, from the Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce.

5.2 Mr Smith advised that the cost of cross Solent travel has been an item of local interest to since the 1920's.

5.3 It was stated that in early 2008 a petition was taken to central Government, signed by various members of the local business community, voicing concerns over the Governments lack of recognition for the Island as being a "unique economy" compared to the rest of the South East. Such recognition would include the Island receiving a subsidy for the cost of ferry travel as enjoyed by other Islands within the European Union.

5.4 A recent Chamber of Commerce survey on the Island concluded that 81% of small businesses felt that the cost of cross Solent travel did have an adverse effect on their business. However it was noted that out of the 800 asked to complete the questionnaire, only 81 had done so.

5.5 It was also stated that the majority of the 81% was from the Tourism sector.

5.6 Whilst it was generally recognised that vehicle crossing was in line with the RPI rate, foot passengers were paying considerably more. However, many businesses did negotiate their own rates of fares with the ferry companies.

- 5.7 Members were also advised that many local companies did recognise that the quality and frequency of service to and from the Island was of a good standard and that there was a general acceptance that even during low volume times such as throughout the night and into the early hours of the morning, both car ferry companies did continue to support the Island.
- 5.8 Mr Smith stated that many businesses negotiated separate deals with the ferry companies and were therefore reluctant to divulge details.
- 5.9 Given the evidence as well as the response to the survey, most members of the Chamber of Commerce appeared relatively happy with the current level of fares, however, the more infrequent traveller as well as many residents did feel that they were not getting such a good deal.
- 5.10 The local representative from the National Farmers Union added that the Island's local agricultural sector did find cross Solent costs inhibitive with dairy farmers risking going out of business due to the additional cost of milk transportation. There was also a high cost in moving small numbers of livestock to and from the Island for such purposes as agricultural shows.
- 5.11 Mr Smith advised Members that the recent partnering with the Isle of Wight Council had been seen by its members as a positive step and such ventures as the joint Accommodation Guide as well as various other marketing ventures were good for the Island's Tourism trade.

6. **Members Question Time**

There were no questions submitted

CHAIRMAN