

Written Questions answered between 26 May and 2 June 2005

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

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Questions to the First Minister

Nick Bourne: Will the First Minister give details of any meetings he has had in Wales or England with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42376)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): I am pleased to provide you with a composite response containing the information you requested on behalf of myself and other Ministers.

The attached table lists the information you have requested for myself and each Cabinet Minister asked.

I trust this meets your requirements.

The First Minister

Date	Meeting with	Purpose of Meeting	Location
08/11/2001	Foreign Secretary and the Devolved Administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
22/10/2002	Foreign Secretary and the Devolved Administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
30/01/2003	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
26/09/2003	Commissioner Barnier	Discuss european issues/policy	Tredomen Business Park
26/09/2003	Commissioner Barnier	Joint meeting with Ministers	Buffet Lunch at Le Gallois restaurant
06/10/2003	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
01/12/2003	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
18/03/2004	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
23/06/2004	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
20/07/2004	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
14/09/2004	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London
01/11/2004	European Investment Bank representatives	A resume of EIB's work in Wales	Cardiff bay
29/11/2004	Foreign Secretary and the devolved administrations	Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe)	Whitehall, London

Carwyn Jones

24/07/2003	Commissioner Franz Fishler (Austria)	Discussion with young farmers regarding agriculture in Europe	Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells
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21/07/2004	Commissioner Kalniete (Latvia)	Exchange of information and highlight opportunities for sharing of best practice	Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells
27/01/2005	Commissioner Borg (Malta)	Discussion on the Welsh Fisheries Industry	Heronston Hotel, Bridgend

Jane Davidson

23/01/2003	Council of Europe's Committee on the European charter for regional/minority languages	On-the-spot visit to Cardiff as part of the UK's application of the charter in relation to the Welsh language.	National Assembly for Wales
16/08/2004	Jan Royall Head of European Commission Office Cardiff	The inclusion of Europe and European issues in the curriculum	National Assembly for Wales
01/11/2004	European Investment Bank Representatives	A resume of EIB's work in Wales	Cardiff bay

Sue Essex

26/09/2003	Lunch with FM and European Commissioner	Discuss European policy	Le Gallois—Y Cymro Restaurant, Pontcanna
01/11/2004	European Investment Bank representatives	A resume of EIB's work in Wales	Cardiff bay

Andrew Davies

29/09/2003	Meeting European commissioner	Discussions on EU Policy	Tredomen
01/11/2004	European Investment Bank representatives	A resume of EIB's work in Wales	Cardiff bay

Nick Bourne: Will the First Minister detail, since May 1999, his visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42384)

The First Minister: I am pleased to provide you with a composite response containing the information you requested on behalf of myself and other Ministers.

The attached table lists the information you have requested for myself and each Cabinet Minister asked.

I trust this meets your requirements.

Minister	Date	Meeting/Engagement
Christine Gwyther (Minister for Rural Affairs)	2 and 3 March 2000	Agriculture Council
Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning)	9 November 2000	Education and Youth Council (spoke on behalf of the UK on Youth at Education Council)
Carwyn Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs)	20/21 November 2000	Agriculture Council
Jane Hutt (Minister for Health and Social Services)	13 December 2000	Health Council
Carwyn Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs)	26/27 February 2001	Agriculture Council
Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning)	28/29 May 2001	Education and Youth Council
Jenny Randerson (Minister for Culture, Sport and Welsh Language)	21 June 2001	Culture Council in Luxembourg
Carwyn Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs)	23 July 2001	Agriculture Council
Carwyn Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs)	20 Nov 2001	Agriculture Council
Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning)	29 Nov 2001	Education and Youth Council
Carwyn Jones (Minister for Rural Affairs)	19 Dec 2001	Agriculture Council
Rhodri Morgan (First Minister)	27 Feb 2002	St David's Day Events and Wales in Europe Week

Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning)	29/30 May 2002	Education and Youth Council (spoke on behalf of the UK at Youth Council)
Michael German (Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad)	15 July 2002	Agriculture Council
Michael German (Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad)	28 to 29 November 2002	Agriculture Council
Michael German (Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad)	27 to 28 January 2003	Agriculture Council
Michael German (Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad)	20 to 21 February 2003	Agriculture Council
Michael German (Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad)	17 March 2003	Agriculture Council
Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning)	18 March 2003	Meeting with Xavier Pratis Monne—Presentation of the document on Regional Structural Funds to the European Commission
Michael German (Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad)	08 to 09 April 2003	Agriculture Council (Lux.)
Rhodri Morgan (First Minister)	16 May 2003	Represent UK at Informal Ministerial Meeting on Regional Policy in Chalkidiki, Greece
Carwyn Jones (Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside)	12 to 13 June 2003	Agriculture Council (Lux.)
Carwyn Jones (Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside)	25 to 16 June 2003	Agriculture Council (Lux.)
Rhodri Morgan (First Minister)	16 October 2003	Represent UK at Informal Ministerial Meeting on Role of the Regions in Rome, Italy
Rhodri Morgan (First Minister)	13 November 2003	European and External Affairs Committee meeting in Brussels

Alun Pugh (Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport)	24 November 2003	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Spoke on behalf of the UK on Culture)
Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Life Long Learning)	5 December 2003	Meeting with Commission official on Education and Youth Policy
Carwyn Jones, Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside	1 March 2004	St David's Day Lunch with British Ambassador to Belgium and Hydrogen-Realising the European Vision Seminar
Sue Essex (Minister for Local Government and Finance)	5 to 6 April 2004	<p>Meeting with Commission on Spatial Planning and UKRep officials on Future Financing</p> <p>Monday 5 April:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1st Secretary UK Rep on future Financial Perspective ● DG Trade re WTO Business ● 1st Secretary UKRep re Cohesion policy and the structural funds post 2006 <p>Tuesday 6 April 2004:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deputy Head of Unit, DG Regional Policy re EU spatial development perspective ● Head of Unit for UK Programmes, DG Regional Policy re current and future sf programmes and spatial planning
First Minister and Andrew Davies, Minister for Economic Development and Transport	10 to 11 May 2004	Cohesion Forum (Commission Approach on Structural Funding post 2006) FM also attended inaugural meeting of Commission's systematic dialogue process with Regional and Local Government
Jane Hutt (Minister for Health and Social Services)	26 October 2004	Key note speaker at EuroChild Conference – 'Combating Child Poverty in Europe'
Carwyn Jones, Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside	22 November 2004	Agriculture and Fisheries Council, Brussels Also attended sustainable European Regions Network Event
Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Life Long Learning)	6 April 2005	Meeting Jan Figel European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism

Carwyn Jones, Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside	7 April 2005	Meeting to discuss Florence GM Charter
Rhodri Morgan (First Minister)	28 May 2005	St David's Day events and a meeting with Danuta Hubner, Regional Affairs Commissioner

Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of any meetings he has had in Wales or England, with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42383) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): I refer you to the answer to WAQ42376.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister detail, since May 1999, his visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42391) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 1 May.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42384.

Questions to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister provide an update on the Safer Routes to Schools initiative? (WAQ42909)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 18 May.

The Minister for Economic Development and Transport (Andrew Davies): The Assembly Government's Safe Routes to School initiative has been enthusiastically welcomed in Wales. Since it was introduced in 1999 over £18 million has been made available to local authorities to implement projects in their own areas. To date approximately 300 schools have benefited from capital infrastructure works in and around the school area.

Nick Bourne: What proportion of the public sector contracts published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* are awarded to small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales? (WAQ42913)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 18 May.

Andrew Davies: The specific data requested is not readily available. Although the European journal publishes individual contract award notices, it does not publish summary reports. Within individual award notices the location is for the awarding authority rather than for the successful supplier, and Wales is shown as part of the UK. The information on the suppliers contained in the award notice does not give data on whether suppliers are SMEs.

Nick Bourne: What is the Minister doing to increase the number of public sector contracts awarded to SMEs in Wales? (WAQ42914)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 18 May.

Andrew Davies: Over the past few years Welsh Assembly Government has taken a number of steps to encourage greater links between public procurement and the local supply base in Wales, through collaboration between the Economic Policy Division and the Welsh Procurement Initiative team, together with the Welsh Development Agency.

Welsh SMEs make up 99 per cent of our business sector by volume, provide 60 per cent of our employment and 40 per cent of our gross domestic product. Where SMEs can successfully bid for public sector contracts this provides them with a financially secure customer base from which to grow.

In September 2004 the business procurement taskforce was established, chaired by myself, to provide strategic leadership and break down barriers between public procurement and the business sector. The taskforce members include the Assembly Government's Economic Policy Division, the Welsh Procurement Initiative, the Welsh Development Agency, the Cardiff Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Confederation of British Industry in Wales. It has established an action plan, the delivery of which will address many of the barriers faced by smaller suppliers in Wales. The action plan includes the issue of an SME friendly charter 'Opening Doors' and the establishment of an SME focus group.

The Business procurement taskforce will further promote the already successful national procurement website 'sell2wales.co.uk'. To date 9,000 suppliers are registered on this site and receive automatic notice of advertised tenders. At the end of April 2005 £384 million of contract opportunities have been advertised by 40 different public sector organisations across Wales.

The work of the taskforce will also build on the Welsh procurement initiative's SME food development project which has developed closer links between public procurement and local suppliers of food across Wales. In July 2004 the WPI produced the 'Food for Thought' guidance which provided examples of how to overcome the barriers to local purchasing and remain compliant with European Union procurement rules. A web link to this guidance is provided: <http://assembly/finance/publications/publications.htm>

The WPI supported a number of pilots and was able to publish the successful results in a set of case studies which were featured at the 'Supply and Buy Wales 2005' conference in April 2005. A hard copy is being sent to all Assembly Members and it will be published on the above website. The pilots involved changes that included breaking contracts into lots, training for SMEs, and working with the whole supply chain.

The WPI is also working on a standard documentation project that aims to simplify the documentation involved in

public procurement activity and strive for a greater consistency in approach across Wales.

Training for public procurement staff has been provided through the WPI Training and Development project. To date this project has provided over 1,800 delegate days of skills training, which has included a two day course on sustainable procurement. This course was attended by over 45 people, and included how to consider SMEs within the procurement process.

The WDA has obtained European funding for a local supplier development programme and has established supplier champions across Wales. The WPI is involved in this programme which, among its aims, includes helping SMEs to better address the needs of the public sector in Wales.

Nick Bourne: What is being done to promote safe cycling among school children? (WAQ42928)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 18 May.

Andrew Davies: We promote safe cycling amongst school children by allocating funding to local authorities through the Safe Routes to School initiative. This funding allows them to provide improved infrastructure for child cyclists on their journeys to and from school. In addition we encourage local authorities to provide cycle training for school children and we are currently working with the Cyclists Touring Club to see how this training can be rolled out over a wider area.

Nick Bourne: What is being done to promote road awareness among school children? (WAQ42929)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 18 May.

Andrew Davies: Since 2002 we have been funding a child pedestrian training co-ordinator in every local authority in Wales. These co-ordinators are responsible for running child pedestrian training schemes which teach children road safety awareness by means of practical training at the roadside.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of any meetings he has had in Wales or England, with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42380) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42376.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister detail, since May 1999, his visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42388) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42384.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of any meetings she has had in Wales or England, with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42381) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42376.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister detail, since May 1999, her visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42389) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42384.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of any meetings he has had in Wales or England, with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42382) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42376.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister detail, since May 1999, his visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42390) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42384.

Questions to the Finance Minister

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of any meetings she has had in Wales or England with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42377) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42376.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister detail, since May 1999, her visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42385) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42384.

Nick Bourne: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Confederation of British Industry in Wales regarding business rates? (WAQ42656) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I can confirm that I have had no specific dialogue with the CBI on this subject. However, business rates issues including transitional relief have been discussed at previous business partnership council meetings and there has also been a continuing dialogue between the Minister for Economic Development and Transport with representatives of the CBI on business rates matters.

Nick Bourne: What discussions has the Minister had with UK Government Ministers about the process of publicising council tax benefit in Wales? (WAQ42658)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 10 May.

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): In January this year the Department of Work and Pensions, Welsh Local Government Association and Assembly Government issued a joint press release and joint letter to council leaders in Wales to encourage take-up of council tax benefit.

I have also had discussions with the Minister for Local Government in England on the need to encourage more take up of the benefit and I have made it clear that I believe reforms to the council tax benefit system are required. This, along with other forms of possible changes to the local government finance system in Wales were considered last year as part of the 'Balance of Local Authority Funding in Wales' consultation. As a result of this, the Welsh Assembly

Government made a submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister-led balance of funding review steering group which sets out our views on this matter. This submission is available on the website at

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subilocalgov/content/consultation/responses/odpm-response-e.pdf>

In November 2004 the Pension Service included information about how to claim council tax benefit in with the winter fuel payment notifications sent to 12 million pensioners (8 million pensioner households). The awareness campaign this year continues with the 'cut your council tax' theme while the text encourages people to apply immediately. A series of adverts appeared in the national press in January and in the regional press in January and March. Posters and flyers have been made available to all local authorities, as well as being distributed to 30,000 adviser organisations and displayed in Doctors' surgeries. The leaflet 'Help with your Council Tax (GL17) is available in factsheet format in eight ethnic languages.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of any meetings he has had in Wales or England, with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42379) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): I refer you to the answer to WAQ42376.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister detail, since May 1999, his visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42387) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42384.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of any meetings she has had in Wales or England, with European officials, to discuss Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with and where the meeting was held? (WAQ42378) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): I refer you to the answer to WAQ42376.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister detail, since May 1999, her visits to Brussels to provide Welsh input into European policy, giving details of who the meeting was with? (WAQ42386) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister.*

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 1 May.

The First Minister: I refer you to the answer to WAQ42384.