

Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 23 March 2011

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

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

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To ask the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): With regard to the consultation ‘School Organisation – Potential change to the process’, will the Minister advise if the response of the consultees is available to the public to view and, if so, where. (WAQ57300)

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): With regard to the consultation ‘School Organisation – Potential change to the process’, will the Minister advise who the consultees were and who evaluated their response. (WAQ57301)

Answer issued on 23 March 2011

The consultation on “School Organisation – Potential change to the process” closed on 18 February 2011. The consultees included a sample of schools, local authorities and other local government representatives, dioceses, teaching unions, voluntary sector bodies, children and young people, members of the public and other stakeholders. 47 responses were received. My officials are currently evaluating the responses and a summary of them will be published on the Welsh Assembly Government website in the normal manner in due course.

To ask the Minister for the Economy and Transport

Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister outline what efforts, to date, the Welsh Assembly Government has made to attract companies to the Aerospace Business Park site in St Athan. (WAQ57297)

Answer issued on 25 March 2011

We continue to promote the benefits of the St Athan site to potential investors through a number of activities including; production of a specific marketing brochure for the aerospace site; attendance at air shows such as Farnborough; and membership of groups such as the Wales Aerospace Forum and the Royal Aeronautical Society. We also utilise existing networks within the private and public sectors (e.g. Ministry of Defence) to build new leads.

The Advanced Materials and Manufacturing Sector Panel will have a key role in the future direction for the Aerospace Business Park at St Athan.

Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister give details of any meetings between Welsh Assembly Government officials and potential tenants at the Aerospace Business Park in St Athan. (WAQ57298)

Answer issued on 25 March 2011

Discussions with potential investors are commercially confidential so I am prevented from divulging any details of meetings held.

Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister confirm whether his department has a written strategy for the development of the aerospace sector in the Vale of Glamorgan. (WAQ57299)

Answer issued on 25 March 2011

Economic Renewal: a new direction acknowledges the important role of the aerospace sector through the creation of a new Advanced Manufacturing and Materials Sector Panel. In setting out its strategy for the development of this sector, the Panel will determine how best to grow the aerospace sector across Wales.

To ask the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr): Will the Minister detail (a) whether wind turbines must operate within the ETSU-R 97 guidance for noise levels and (b) whether the Welsh Assembly Government has power to introduce alternative, up to date guidance for wind turbine noise levels in Wales. (WAQ57296)

Answer issued on 25 March 2011

The Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU) report, The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms (ETSU-R-97) was published in 1996 by the Department for Trade and Industry. It describes the findings of the Working Group on Wind Turbine Noise, which was made up of a group of experts with a breadth and depth of experience in the assessment and control of the environmental impact of noise from wind farms, including tonal noise. The report represents a consensus view of the entire group.

In the context of our planning functions we are able to issue guidelines on wind turbines. The guidelines within ETSU-R-97 were adopted as the recommended method for the assessment of wind turbines by the UK Government in 2004 in Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy (PPS22). The Welsh Assembly Government's Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy (TAN8) in 2005, refers to the need to ensure that windfarm noise is kept to acceptable limits in relation to existing background noise. The ETSU-R-97 report is the seminal source of information for calculating the impact of noise and affording protection for neighbouring properties and provides local planning authorities with a common methodology for assessing noise impacts. The precise impacts will of course vary depending on local conditions. Local planning authorities are expected to consider the environmental impacts of a proposed windfarm (usually through an EIA) and must be satisfied that adverse impacts including noise can be mitigated through planning conditions if necessary, otherwise there are reasons for refusal.

DECC is currently undertaking a study into matters arising in the consideration of noise impacts in the determination of windfarm planning applications. The project is seeking to establish best practice in assessing and rating wind turbine noise. It is being carried out by specialist acoustics consultants investigating previous planning inspectorate decisions, to ensure that the ETSU-R-97 is applied in a consistent and effective manner.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Carmarthen East): Will the Minister detail (a) what research into the effectiveness of wind power the Welsh Assembly Government uses as a rationale for wind turbine developments (b) how this specific research was funded (c) and will she publish copies of this research. (WAQ57302)

Answer issued on 25 March 2011

The Welsh Assembly Government draws upon Department of Energy and Climate Change sponsored research together with studies and publications which have researched the rationale for wind energy. These included the documents and studies listed in the Technical Annexes of The Welsh Assembly Government Energy Policy Statement: A Low Carbon Revolution available online at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/energy/renewable/policy/lowcarbonrevolution/?lang=en>

Sources of research include:

The European Wind Energy Association (EWEA) - "Wind Energy - The Facts – an analysis of wind energy in the EU-25", available online at: <http://www.wind-energy-the-facts.org/en/home--about-the-project.html>

Selzer, H, 1986 - "Wind Energy: Potential of Wind Energy in the European Community", published by D Reidel, Dordrecht, Holland, cites a technical wind potential onshore in the UK of 1760 TWh, compared a total consumption of 348.2 TWh in 2003 (UK Energy in Brief, July 2004, pp19)

UK Renewables - "A Community Commitment – The Benefits of Onshore Wind" available online at: www.bwea.com/pdf/publications/CommunityBenefits.pdf

UK Energy Research Centre - "An Assessment of the Evidence on the costs and impacts of intermittent generation on the British electricity network" available online at:

<http://www.ukerc.ac.uk/support/tiki-index.php?page=Intermittency>

The Sustainable Development Commission - "A guide to the key issues surrounding onshore wind power development in the UK" available online at:

<http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=234>

In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government is a member of the UK Renewables Advisory Board.