

Written Questions answered from 15 to 21 March 2002

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

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

Contents

2	Questions to the First Minister
3	Questions to the Minister for Economic Development
3	Questions to the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language
4	Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning
8	Questions to the Minister for Environment
11	Questions to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities
11	Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services
15	Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs and Assembly Business

Questions to the First Minister

Responsibilities Regarding North Wales

Janet Ryder: Will the First Minister clarify his responsibilities with regard to north Wales and state whether these responsibilities go further than those published on the Assembly intranet? (WAQ16645)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): When I announced the establishment of the current Welsh Assembly coalition Government, I took personal responsibility for the co-ordination of government policy in north Wales, and policy development and co-ordination of cross-cutting issues. The recent ministerial changes have not affected this position.

I visit north Wales regularly, both to attend the North Wales Regional Committee and the north Wales economic forum, when invited to respond to questions about the delivery of Welsh Assembly Government policy and to undertake a wide range of other official engagements. I endeavour to ensure that no part or regions of Wales miss out when decisions of the Welsh Assembly Government are being made.

Cyflogi Gweithwyr Dros Dro mewn Swyddfeydd Canolog a Rhanbarthol y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol

Dafydd Wigley: Pa drafodaethau mae Prif Weinidog Cymru wedi'u cael gyda'r Ysgrifennydd Parhaol ynghylch y mater o gyflogi gweithwyr dros dro mewn swyddfeydd canolog a rhanbarthol y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol, i ymgymryd â gwaith o natur parhaol? (WAQ16656) [W]

Prif Weinidog Cymru: Ni chafwyd trafodaethau rhwng Prif Weinidog Cymru a'r Ysgrifennydd Parhaol ynghylch y mater o gyflogi gweithwyr dros dro yn swyddfeydd canolog a rhanbarthol y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol, i ymgymryd â gwaith o natur parhaol. Polisi'r Cynulliad yw llenwi pob swydd barhaol gyda gweithwyr parhaol. Caiff gweithwyr dros dro eu defnyddio i lenwi swyddi gwag tymor byr neu pan fydd cynnydd dros dro yn y pwysau gwaith.

Employment of Temporary Workers in Central and Regional Assembly Offices

Dafydd Wigley: What discussions has the First Minister had with the Permanent Secretary about the employment of temporary workers in central and regional Assembly offices to undertake work of a permanent nature? (WAQ16656) [W]

The First Minister: There have been no discussions between the First Minister and the Permanent Secretary about the employment of temporary workers in central and regional Assembly offices to undertake work of a permanent nature. The Assembly's policy is to fill all permanent posts with substantive employees. Temporary workers are used to cover short-term vacancies or temporary increases in work pressures.

'Wales International' Centres

Michael German: As well as those in New York, Tokyo, San Francisco and Hong Kong, can you tell me where you hope to locate other 'Wales International' centres, and who will be working in each of them? (WAQ16665)

The First Minister: Our intention is to use the platform provided by the co-location of Wales Trade International and Welsh Development Agency staff in certain business-determined locations overseas to establish a strong Welsh Assembly Government-led presence on the ground. Detailed arrangements are yet to be finalised. No final decisions have been made on other locations.

Questions to the Minister for Economic Development

Funding Improvements to the Water Supply to South Ceredigion

Glyn Davies: Is the Minister having any discussions concerning the funding of improvements to the water supply to south Ceredigion? (WAQ16464)

The Minister for Economic Development (Andrew Davies): I will write to you shortly and place a copy of the letter in the libraries at Cathays Park and Cardiff bay.

Improving the Water Supply to South Ceredigion

Glyn Davies: What plans does the Minister have for improving the water supply to south Ceredigion? (WAQ16465)

Andrew Davies: I will write to you shortly and place a copy of the letter in the libraries at Cathays Park and Cardiff bay.

Neath Canal

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister make a statement on any Objective 1 scheme aimed at dredging the Neath canal? (WAQ16673)

Andrew Davies: I understand that an application to restore sections of the Neath canal is under preparation. However, no application has been received by the Welsh European Funding Office for such a scheme, and therefore I have no comment.

Questions to the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language

Chamber Orchestra of Wales (Monitoring)

Jonathan Morgan: How will the 'new' Chamber Orchestra of Wales be monitored? (WAQ16674)

The Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language (Jenny Randerson): The Chamber Orchestra of Wales will be asked to provide annual reports. These reports will be considered against the strategic and specific targets that I gave in response to WAQ16675. The Arts Council of Wales will be fully involved in reviewing the annual reports.

Chamber Orchestra of Wales (Targets)

Jonathan Morgan: What targets have been set for the 'new' Chamber Orchestra of Wales? (WAQ16675)

Jenny Randerson: The orchestra will be measured against the strategic objectives set by the Assembly to develop chamber music in Wales: to increase the number of performances throughout Wales; to contribute to the musical development of young people in Wales; and to target geographical areas that do not currently have much access to classical music events.

Specifically, the orchestra will play at least 10 more performances in Wales, delivering as a priority performances in areas of Wales that are not effectively served by the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales and the Welsh National Opera. It will contribute to the musical development of young people in Wales through master classes, the teaching of practical music in schools and colleges, and provide the

expertise of its musicians and principal conductor to the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. It will also raise the profile of Wales abroad by performing on the international stage.

Chamber Orchestra of Wales (Funding)

Jonathan Morgan: When was Cabinet approval sought for the direct funding of a ‘new’ Chamber Orchestra for Wales? (WAQ16676)

Jenny Randerson: The funding for the development of chamber music formed part of the spending plans of the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities, which were agreed by the Cabinet, and approved in Plenary on 22 November 2001.

Chamber Orchestra of Wales (Culture Strategy)

Jonathan Morgan: How does the decision to fund a ‘new’ Chamber Orchestra of Wales fit in with the Minister’s culture strategy and the document, ‘A Culture in Common’? (WAQ16677)

Jenny Randerson: The development of chamber music in Wales is entirely consistent with my culture strategy, ‘Creative Future: Cymru Greadigol’. The strategy makes specific references to this on pages 32 and 33, and in action plan 3.6 on page 40, which states the need

‘To provide sustainable funding for new initiatives in music performance, e.g. chamber, jazz, popular and other forms of music’.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Welsh-Medium Services Provided by Public Bodies

David Melding: In relation to public appointments made within the education and lifelong learning portfolio, what is the policy regarding: i) monitoring the number of Welsh speakers appointed to public bodies; and ii) designating a board member to be responsible for ensuring that the relevant public body provides services via the medium of Welsh? (WAQ16611)

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): Applicants for all appointments to public bodies complete an application form that requests a statement of ability in the Welsh language. Appointments to public bodies are made on merit, in line with the principles of the Nolan Committee’s report on standards in public life, and with due regard to the needs and duties of the public body in question. Assembly sponsored public bodies are required to comply with management statements, which include a requirement to give effect to the principle that the English and Welsh languages be treated equally, as far as is reasonably practicable and appropriate given the circumstances.

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on the recruitment and retention of teachers? (WAQ16616)

Jane Davidson: Last year’s teacher recruitment survey by the General Teaching Council for Wales showed some recruitment difficulties for Welsh schools in particular subjects. However, the latest published figures showed that teaching vacancies in Wales remain low—just 99 vacancies in maintained schools across the whole of Wales—and the number of full-time equivalent qualified teachers showed an increase of over 250, or 1 per cent, on the previous year.

We continue to keep this issue under review. In the meantime, the Welsh Assembly Government is continuing to support efforts to make teaching more attractive as a career option on a wide range of fronts,

including offering financial incentives for teacher training, producing positive proposals to reduce the burdens on teachers and tackling pupil disaffection.

Vocational Education

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on the matching of vocational education with the needs of Welsh companies? (WAQ16618) [R]

Jane Davidson: I will write to you shortly and place a copy of the letter in the libraries at Cathays Park and Cardiff bay.

Health Education Initiatives within Schools

William Graham: Will the Minister outline health education initiatives within schools in Wales to remedy the claims that ‘Wales has a higher proportion of sick people’? (WAQ16619) [R]

Jane Davidson: I refer you to the answer that I gave to WAQ15758 on 7 February 2002.

Schools Specialising in Educating Autistic Children

Owen John Thomas: How many schools specialising in the education of children suffering from autism and related conditions are there in Wales? (WAQ16622)

Jane Davidson: While this information is not held centrally, there are many special schools, and special units attached to mainstream schools, which cater for children with autistic spectrum disorders alongside other needs. However, there are no maintained special schools in Wales that are registered exclusively for autism spectrum disorders.

As you may be aware, an all-Wales steering group will be established for a three-year period from April 2002 to consider provision across Wales for children with special educational needs, including autism. This group will supersede the regional SEN pilot planning projects, and will ensure an inclusive, national approach to provision and services. I expect the all-Wales steering group to provide me with strategic reports concerning regional developments, which the Welsh Assembly Government would wish to encourage.

Also, the Welsh Assembly Government has made available up to £2 million for the redevelopment of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn as a regional provision for autistic children in north Wales. Final proposals for this redevelopment should be formally submitted to me shortly.

The Education Bill currently being considered by Parliament includes provision to give the Assembly powers to help facilitate, if necessary, comprehensive regional provision across Wales.

Activities for Children during School Breaks

Janice Gregory: Has the Minister had any discussions with local education authorities regarding the provision of activities for children during school breaks? (WAQ16623)

Jane Davidson: Out-of-school hours learning should be an integral part of young people’s education. ‘The Learning Country’ sets out my vision of how this can be developed further to ensure that every child receives the benefit of a full prospectus of out-of-school activities combining volunteering, enterprise, cultural, sporting and outdoor activities by 2010.

We continue to support the development of out-of-hours learning on many fronts. We have provided grant support to Education Extra—the foundation for out-of-school hours learning—to undertake 15 pilot projects that highlight and develop expertise in OSHL. The final summary report of these projects is due

very shortly and will include case studies and cross-references to the personal and social education frameworks and the work-related education frameworks published by the Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales.

We have also been working with Education Extra to prepare a code of practice on out-of-school hours learning together with associated training materials, in consultation with ACCAC, Estyn and other partners. The code of practice, which we will publish and distribute to local education authorities and schools during the coming year, is intended to promote good developmental practice and will include examples of good practice drawing from the outcomes of the 15 demonstration projects being piloted this year. OSHL training materials and linked accredited training programmes will also be developed as part of the project.

Complementary strategies for childcare during school holidays are dealt with by my colleague Jane Hutt, the Minister for Health and Social Services through the Cabinet sub-committee for children and young people.

Addysg Cyfrwng Cymraeg

Gareth Jones: Pa asesiad sydd wedi bod o'r costau ychwanegol i ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg o addysgu disgyblion heb gymhwysedd yn yr iaith Gymraeg? (WAQ16667) [W]

Gareth Jones: Pa gymorth ariannol sydd ar gael i ysgolion i gynnig hyfforddiant ieithyddol i ddisgyblion i'w galluogi i dderbyn addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg? (WAQ16668) [W]

Jane Davidson: Yn ôl y Rheoliadau Ariannu Ysgolion a Gynhelir (Diwygio) (Cymru) 2002, mae'n ofynnol bod o leiaf 75 y cant o gyllid ysgolion wedi'i gyfeirio at ddisgyblion, gan mai nifer disgyblion yw'r prif ffactor sy'n pennu anghenion cyllido ysgolion. O ran y 25 y cant sy'n weddill, mae gan awdurdodau ystod o ffactorau i ddewis ohonynt ar gyfer ystyried anghenion penodol, os dymunant hynny. Mae un ohonynt yn caniatáu i awdurdod ddyrannu hyd at 1 y cant o'i gyllideb ysgolion flynyddol drwy gyfeirio at ffactorau a bennwyd yn lleol. Gall hyn gynnwys anghenion yr iaith Gymraeg.

Mae cymorth ar gael hefyd o fewn y rhaglen grantiau cynnal addysg a hyfforddiant ar gyfer mesurau i gefnogi dysgu Cymraeg a chynorthwyo athrawon i drosglwyddo i addysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg.

Mae Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg ar hyn o bryd yn cynnal 58 o swyddi athrawon bro ledled Cymru. Mae'r athrawon peripatetig hyn yn helpu gyda'r gwaith o gyflwyno'r Gymraeg fel rhan o'r cwricwlwm cenedlaethol.

Welsh Medium Education

Gareth Jones: What assessment has been made of the additional costs faced by Welsh-medium schools in providing education to pupils with no Welsh language competence? (WAQ16667) [W]

Gareth Jones: What financial assistance is available to schools so that they can offer pupils language training to enable them to receive Welsh-medium education? (WAQ16668) [W]

Jane Davidson: The Financing of Maintained Schools (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002 require that at least 75 per cent of funding for schools must be pupil-led, as pupil numbers are the major determinant of a school's funding needs. Authorities have a menu of factors from which to choose regarding the remaining 25 per cent, should they wish to take account of specific needs. One of these allows an authority to allocate up to 1 per cent of its annual schools budget by reference to locally determined factors, which could include Welsh-language needs.

Support is also available within the grants for education support and training programme for measures to support the teaching of Welsh and assist teachers to transfer to Welsh-medium teaching.

The Welsh Language Board currently supports 58 *athrawon bro* posts throughout Wales. These peripatetic teachers assist in the delivery of Welsh as part of the national curriculum.

Cod Ymarfer ar Dderbyniadau i Ysgolion Cymraeg

Gareth Jones: A oes bwriad gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad i addasu'r cod ymarfer ar dderbyniadau i ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg fel nad oes modd dethol ar sail cymhwysedd yn yr iaith Gymraeg? (WAQ16666) [W]

Gareth Jones: Beth yw'r canllawiau presennol ar y cymhwysedd angenrheidiol yn yr iaith Gymraeg er mwyn ennill mynediad i ysgol uwchradd cyfrwng Cymraeg? (WAQ16669) [W]

Gareth Jones: A oes ymgynghoriad wedi cymryd lle ar newidiadau arfaethedig i'r cod ymarfer ar dderbyniadau i ysgolion a beth yw canlyniadau'r broses ymgynghori honno? (WAQ16670) [W]

Gareth Jones: Pa gynlluniau sydd gan Lywodraeth Cymru i newid y canllawiau ar dderbyniadau i ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg? (WAQ16671) [W]

Jane Davidson: Nid oes canllawiau ar dderbyniadau i ysgolion yn ymwneud yn benodol â gofynion cymhwysedd yn yr iaith Gymraeg. Nid yw Deddf Safonau a Fframwaith Ysgolion 1998 yn caniatáu dethol yn ôl gallu, gan gynnwys cymhwysedd yn yr iaith Gymraeg.

Mae Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru yn bwriadu diwygio cod ymarfer 1999 ar dderbyniadau i'w wneud yn fwy eglur bod yn rhaid i dderbyniadau i ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg fod ar yr un sail â derbyniadau i ysgolion eraill, ac na fydd modd dethol ar sail gallu, gan gynnwys yn yr iaith Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ymgynghori ar hyn a'r newidiadau arfaethedig eraill i'r cod ymarfer ar dderbyniadau. Yn y cyfamser, mae fy swyddogion yn cynghori awdurdodau addysg lleol a chyrrff llywodraethu ysgolion sy'n awdurdodau derbyniadau na ddylent dethol disgyblion ar sail gallu ac na ddylid gwrthod derbyn plentyn i ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg ar sail cymhwysedd yn yr iaith.

Admissions Code of Practice for Welsh-Medium Schools

Gareth Jones: Does the Assembly Government intend to modify the admissions code of practice for Welsh-medium schools so that selection will not be based on Welsh language competence? (WAQ16666) [W]

Gareth Jones: What are the current guidelines on Welsh language competence requirements for gaining admission to Welsh-medium secondary schools? (WAQ16669) [W]

Gareth Jones: Has there been a consultation on the proposed changes to the school admissions code of practice and what were the results of that consultation process? (WAQ16670) [W]

Gareth Jones: What plans does the Welsh Government have to change the admission guidelines for Welsh-medium schools? (WAQ16671) [W]

Jane Davidson: There are no school admission guidelines specifically relating to Welsh language competence requirements. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 does not generally permit selection by ability, including competence in the Welsh language.

The Welsh Assembly Government intends to amend the 1999 admissions code of practice to make it clearer that admission to Welsh-medium schools must be on the same basis as admission to other schools, with no selection on the basis of ability, including ability in Welsh. We will consult on this and other proposed changes to the code of practice on admissions. In the meantime, my officials are advising local education authorities and school governing bodies, which are their own admissions authorities, that they

should not be selecting pupils on the basis of ability and that admission to Welsh-medium schools should not be refused on the grounds of language competence.

Basic Skills Agency

David Davies: What is the total cost of the current advertising campaign being run by the Basic Skills Agency to encourage people to take up courses to improve literacy and numeracy? (WAQ16697)

Jane Davidson: The current campaign promoting the importance of good basic skills is an essential part of the national basic skills strategy for Wales. The promotion campaign includes film development and production, TV and radio transmissions, poster and press publicity and supply and distribution of promotional materials. The total cost of the promotion campaign to date is £3.284 million, including £1.778 million on advertising.

Science Teaching in Primary Schools

Geraint Davies: Will the Minister make a brief statement on the teaching of science in primary schools? (WAQ16707)

Jane Davidson: Science is one of the core curriculum subjects in key stages 1 and 2. It is compulsory for all children to follow the national curriculum programme of study in science in primary schools. Estyn's annual report for 2000-01 shows that for key stage 2, schools surpassed the 2002 target range of 70 to 80 per cent of pupils attaining at least level 4 in science. Science in Wales has the largest amount of good work in any subject at key stages 1 and 2.

The Estyn report also says that the improvement in science in primary schools suggests that pupils' higher levels of skill in reading, writing and numeracy are helping their work in other subjects. Pupils can only achieve good standards in science if they have good language skills to help them understand scientific ideas and good numeracy skills to analyse and interpret the measurements that they take.

Although Wales science year is mainly targeted at secondary school-age pupils, primary schools are also being actively encouraged to participate in projects and activities to help celebrate this special initiative. A large number of the secondary schools that received funding from the Wales science year small grants scheme are carrying out science events and activities designed at fostering links with their associated primaries to help in the transition between schools.

Advertising Budget for the Reading, Writing and Arithmetic Campaign

David Davies: What is the total cost of the advertising budget for the reading, writing and arithmetic campaign? (WAQ16708)

Jane Davidson: I refer to the answer I gave on 20 March to WAQ16697, which provided the total cost for the current promotion campaign. The budget for the promotion campaign is £3.284 million, which includes £1.778 million for advertising.

Questions to the Minister for Environment

Water Quality in the Conwy Estuary

Janet Ryder: What investigations have been carried out into the water quality in the Conwy estuary and what were the results? (WAQ16641)

The Minister for Environment (Sue Essex): The primary responsibility for undertaking monitoring and investigations of water quality lies with the Environment Agency. I am advised by the agency that, at

present, it is undertaking no specific investigations in the Conwy estuary, though it carries out regular monitoring.

Such monitoring includes monthly assessments of the compliance of waters in the estuary designated under EC directive 79/923/EEC on the quality required of shellfish waters. The monitoring has confirmed that the waters complied with the directive's mandatory standards in 2000 and 2001.

The agency also undertakes weekly monitoring from May to September to assess compliance of identified bathing waters under EC directive 76/160/EEC concerning the quality of bathing water. Within the Conwy estuary, that includes monitoring the West Shore in Llandudno, which failed to meet the directive's mandatory standard in 2001. The failure has been investigated by the agency and at its request Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water has carried out a review of an adjacent sewage treatment works to assess that it is operating as designed. A report of this review is under consideration. As with other estuarine bathing waters, factors such as general run-off from urban and agricultural areas upstream also affect quality standards.

Aid for Llangollen Railway

Janet Ryder: What help has been given by the Assembly to the Llangollen railway to aid it in its plans to establish a main line connection at Ruabon? (WAQ16644)

Sue Essex: None. The trackbed has not been safeguarded in the past and there have been some developments along the line. It would therefore be difficult and expensive to fully restore the rail line and an economic case would have to be made.

I understand that support has been provided to Llangollen railway by the Heritage Commission, the Wales Tourist Board and through the European regional development fund. However, that has been used to develop the route and facilities between Llangollen and Carrog and not to establish a link to the main rail network at Ruabon.

No financial support can be offered by the Strategic Rail Authority or Railtrack (in administration) to support this scheme. Llangollen railway is privately owned and is classified as a steam heritage railway. It does not form an integral part of the UK rail network.

Britannia Bridge

Ieuan Wyn Jones: Will the Minister consider providing three lanes across the Britannia Bridge between Anglesey and Gwynedd on the A55 to ease the flow of traffic at peak times? (WAQ16654)

Sue Essex: At this time, it is not appropriate to further explore a third lane for Britannia Bridge. I can confirm that the Transport Directorate has issued instructions for a traffic study to be carried out to fully investigate the traffic conditions at Britannia Bridge. It is anticipated that this will be completed by spring next year.

Second and Holiday Homes and the Land Use Planning System

Glyn Davies: When will the results of the second and holiday homes and the land use planning system research project be made available to Assembly Members? (WAQ16683)

Sue Essex: This research project is expected to be published by May 2002. Dates for a seminar to disseminate the research findings are being discussed, and all Assembly Members will be invited to attend.

Urban Light Transport System (Number of Passengers)

David Davies: How many passengers are expected to use the proposed Cardiff ULTra transport system in the first year? (WAQ16698)

Sue Essex: The patronage level for the first stage, which is 20 per cent of the total core system, is anticipated at 2,900 passengers per day, with an annual estimate of 1,058,400 passengers. Further information is available in Cardiff County Council's transport grant bid for 2002-03, which is available in the Assembly library.

Urban Light Transport System (Destinations)

David Davies: From where, and to where, will the proposed Cardiff ULTra transport system run? (WAQ16699)

Sue Essex: The first phase will link Cardiff Bay rail station to the waterfront developments, the National Assembly and County Hall, and will have 8 off-line stations. The proposed second phase would complete the link to the city centre, including both Central and Queen Street stations, with a further 8 stations.

Urban Light Transport System (Benefits and Disadvantages)

David Davies: Will the Environment Minister make a statement on the benefits and disadvantages of the proposed Cardiff ULTra transport system? (WAQ16700)

Sue Essex: The ULTra system will provide a 24-hour public-service network, operating through smartcard technology. It will link progressively to established public transport hubs. Operating on a separate network it will offer the possibility of reducing the city's traffic congestion and pollution. ULTra uses 75 per cent less energy than a car, and will provide a non-stop personal transit system that will allow a constantly uninterrupted flow of vehicles, as the stations will be off-line. The ULTra vehicle will increase personal mobility in the city, with built-in design to accommodate wheelchairs, bikes, pushchairs and luggage. The system is designed for personal journeys, not mass transit, and its effectiveness will be constrained by the penetration of the network. However, it is an innovative project which has attracted considerable attention and is being monitored by the European Commission as an example of a progressive response to public transport needs.

Urban Light Transport System (Commencement of Work)

David Davies: When is work projected to start on the proposed Cardiff ULTra transport system? (WAQ16702)

Sue Essex: The test track for ULTra, funded by Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, under its innovative transport scheme was launched on 17 January in Cardiff bay. It provides a circuit of just under 1km to test 3 vehicles at ground and elevated levels, enabling the testing of passenger comfort, automation issues and mobility access. Detailed design work for the public service network will commence in April, building on an earlier feasibility study. Cardiff County Council and ULTra (Cardiff) Ltd hope to have vehicles operating on the first phase in Cardiff bay by 2004-05.

Urban Light Transport System (Discussions with Cabinet Colleagues)

David Davies: What discussions has the Environment Minister had with her Cabinet colleagues about the proposed Cardiff ULTra transport system? (WAQ16703)

Sue Essex: Authority to determine transport grant support for local authorities is delegated by the National Assembly to the First Minister and by the First Minister to me under the Transfer of Functions Order.

Urban Light Transport System (Travelling Time)

David Davies: With regards to the proposed Cardiff ULTra system, how long will it take to get from the first pick-up point to the last dropping-off point? (WAQ16725)

Sue Essex: Until the testing phase is completed, it will not be possible to determine the journey time for the proposed first phase around the bay area of Cardiff.

Questions to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities

South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister contacted any member of the south Wales sea fisheries committee in relation to the funding of the committee or litigation against the National Assembly? (WAQ16713)

The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities (Edwina Hart): I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to WAQs 16649, 16650, 16651 and 16652.

Future of Local Government in Wales

David Davies: What are the Minister's plans for the future of local government in Wales? (WAQ16719)

Edwina Hart: I refer you to the Welsh Assembly Government policy statement 'Freedom and Responsibility in Local Government' published on 1 March.

Advertising using North Wales Newspapers Ltd

Rod Richards: Has the Minister considered using North Wales Newspapers Ltd for advertising jobs at the National Assembly for Wales? (WAQ16720)

Edwina Hart: Officials of the National Assembly for Wales met with representatives of North Wales Newspapers Ltd in November 2001 and invited it to provide proposals on rates and packages for recruitment advertising. Once this information is received officials will be able to consider whether North Wales Newspapers Ltd can provide the right platform at a competitive price compared with the media mix that is currently used.

Advertising in the Regional North Wales Press

Rod Richards: What efforts have been made by the Minister to advertise jobs at the National Assembly for Wales in the regional north Wales press? (WAQ16721)

Edwina Hart: The National Assembly for Wales seeks advice from Riley's on the placement of job advertisements based on the target audience and the area needed to be covered. Riley's is an advertising agency which is contracted to the Assembly. This is supported with circulation and penetration data on the publications that are recommended. The National Assembly's advertising policy is constantly under review to ensure that it is cost-effective.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Darparu Cynorthwy-wyr Hyfforddedig i Drin Plant Claf

Dafydd Wigley: A ydyw'r Gweinidog yn fodlon bod darpariaeth digonol o gynorthwy-wyr hyfforddedig i drin plant claf, ar gael i ysbytai yng Nghymru? (WAQ16468) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol (Jane Hutt): Yr ydym yn ymwybodol bod bwloch yn anghenion hyfforddi'r grŵp staff hwn, ac mae sawl cynllun yn cael ei ystyried ar gyfer ariannu'r maes.

Gwnaeth adroddiadau Kennedy a Carlile nodi nifer o faterion ynghylch gofalu am blant claf. Yr ydym yn edrych yn ofalus ar yr holl argymhellion ac yn paratoi cynllun i'w weithredu yng Nghymru.

Provision of Assistants Trained to Deal with Sick Children

Dafydd Wigley: Is the Minister content that there is an adequate provision of assistants trained to deal with sick children, available in Welsh hospitals? (WAQ16468) [W]

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): We are aware that there is a gap in the training needs of this staff group and several initiatives are being considered for funding in this field.

Many issues concerning the care of sick children have been raised by the Kennedy and Carlile reports. We are closely examining all the recommendations and are preparing an action plan to take these forward in Wales.

Waiting Lists

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on waiting lists in Wales? (WAQ16624)

Jane Hutt: In July 2001 I announced a waiting times strategy that shifted the emphasis from lists to times. This specified maximum waits for cardiac and orthopaedic treatment as 12 months by March 2002 and 18 months by July 2002 respectively. The NHS reports that it is on course to meet these. Trusts are also working to reduce the maximum wait for cataract treatment to four months and the numbers waiting are falling.

The innovations in care team has undertaken good work in supporting schemes to cut in-patient waiting times more generally. A new programme is now in place focusing on out-patient appointments.

Brian Gibbons is heading up a waiting times task group to look into improving the management of services with the aim of driving waiting times down further.

Childcare during School Breaks

Janice Gregory: Has the Minister had any discussions with local government on the provision by social services departments for childcare during school breaks? (WAQ16632)

Jane Hutt: Childcare during school holidays is a central component of the Assembly Government's childcare strategy.

In February 2001, I set up a taskforce to take forward the national childcare strategy. The taskforce included representatives of the Welsh Local Government Association and early years development and childcare partnerships, which include local authorities.

The taskforce's report published in November 2001, made a range of recommendations for the short and longer term. I will publish my action plan in response to the report shortly. The plan will contain 24 action points for the Welsh Assembly Government and partners to take forward the childcare strategy.

Complementary strategies for out of school hours learning opportunities during school holidays are dealt with by my colleague Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and jointly through the Cabinet sub-committee for children and young people.

NHS (Wales) Bill

Alun Pugh: Following reports in *The Western Mail*, can you confirm that a draft of the NHS (Wales) Bill will be published in the next few weeks? (WAQ16658)

Jane Hutt: It was announced in the Queen's Speech that legislation relating to the NHS in Wales would be prepared during this parliamentary session, and my officials are working with their counterparts in the Wales Office to ensure that the Bill is published as soon as possible.

Proposed Health Service Reforms

Alun Cairns: What timescale can be expected in defining the key responsibilities of the senior regional office posts under the proposed health service reforms mentioned in WAQ16156? (WAQ16672)

Jane Hutt: Officials are currently working on the final details of the functions of the three senior regional officer posts.

The programme board will then discuss a paper on this issue when it meets on 28 March and I will have more information following that meeting.

Repayments to Pharmacists

Glyn Davies: Has consideration been given to transferring the function of processing repayments to pharmacists in respect of prescriptions arising from the south-east quarter of Wales? (WAQ16678)

Jane Hutt: I have no plans to do so.

Process Applications by Pharmacists (Targets Regarding Time)

Glyn Davies: What is the target for the time taken to process applications by pharmacists for repayment of the cost of prescribed drugs? (WAQ16679)

Jane Hutt: Health Solutions Wales should ensure that all prescriptions despatched to them in accordance with drug tariff requirements and received by them between the first and fifteenth of the month following dispensing are processed and the appropriate payment schedule despatched to health authorities by the fifteenth of the second month following dispensing.

Processing Applications by Pharmacists (Delays)

Glyn Davies: What delays exist in processing applications by pharmacists for repayment of the cost of prescribed drugs? (WAQ16680)

Jane Hutt: Health Solutions Wales is processing November 2001 prescriptions now. Under normal circumstances it would be processing February 2002. It is on track to get back to its normal processing cycle by the end of the summer. Prescriptions dispensed between October 1999 and March 2000 were priced on the basis of a 10 per cent sample and most contractors have accepted full and final settlement on this basis. For those contractors who have chosen not to do this, full pricing of these prescriptions is due to start in the autumn be completed by November this year.

Changes to Financial Allowance given to Pharmacists

Glyn Davies: Are there any plans to change the financial allowance which is given to pharmacists with each prescription dispensed? (WAQ16681)

Jane Hutt: The basic dispensing fee has been increased to 91.6p per prescription with effect from February 2002.

Financial Allowance given to Pharmacists (Change over last Five Years)

Glyn Davies: Has the financial allowance given to pharmacists for each prescription dispensed changed over the last 5 years. (WAQ16682)

Jane Hutt: Yes, it changes most years. The fee per prescription is one element of a package of professional fees and other items of remuneration paid to pharmacists for providing services under the NHS contract. Details are set out in the drug tariff, which is in the library. Pharmacists' income from dispensing fees in Wales has risen from £45.3 million in 1995-6 to £54.0 million in 2000-01.

Incontinence Aids for Elderly Mental Ill Residents

Peter Rogers: Will the Minister raise the limit on the permitted number of incontinence aids for EMI (elderly mental ill) residents in care homes? (WAQ16692)

Jane Hutt: Welsh Office guidance (1993) on funding incontinence products states that continence products can be supplied free to certain people after individual assessment but this should be within available resources. The guidance does not state the permitted number of incontinence aids for residents living in care homes or any other care setting.

NHS health authorities and trusts have discretion to supply incontinence aids to people living in their own homes, sheltered accommodation or residential care homes. However they do not have a statutory duty to do so. It would depend on the availability of resources and the priority they are prepared to give to this particular service.

We have no plans to introduce limits on the permitted number of incontinence aids for elderly mental ill residents in care homes.

Availability of Trastuzumab on the NHS

Alun Cairns: What target timescale is the Minister setting in place for the availability of Trastuzumab (breast cancer pill) on the NHS in Wales? (WAQ16722)

Jane Hutt: The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) issued guidance to the NHS in England and Wales on 15 March, recommending that trastuzumab be available for women with HER2 positive advanced breast cancer in specified clinical circumstances.

I have directed health authorities and NHS Trusts to provide the necessary funding to ensure that a health care intervention that is recommended by NICE in a technology appraisal guidance is available not later than three months from the date of that technology appraisal guidance. To this end, I have included an additional recurrent £10.5 million in health authorities' allocations for 2002-3 towards developmental and cost pressures including implementation of NICE recommendations.

Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs and Assembly Business

Incwm a Dderbynir Gan y Comisiwn Coedwigaeth am Osod Hawliau Chwaraeon

Elin Jones: Faint o incwm mae'r Comisiwn Coedwigaeth yn ei dderbyn yn flynyddol am osod hawliau chwaraeon ar ei tir a sawl hectar maent yn gosod ar rent am yr un cyfnod? (WAQ16653) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros Faterion Gwledig a Threfnydd y Cynulliad (Carwyn Jones): Mae'r Comisiwn Coedwigaeth yn derbyn tua £5,300 y flwyddyn oddi wrth pedair ar ddeg o lesau chwaraeon, ar gyfanswm o 2,519 hectar o ystadau coetir y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol.

Income from Sporting Rights Received by the Forestry Commission

Elin Jones: How much income does the Forestry Commission receive annually from granting sporting rights on its land and how many hectares does it rent out for the same period? (WAQ16653) [W]

The Minister for Rural Affairs and Assembly Business (Carwyn Jones): The Forestry Commission receives approximately £5,300 per annum from fourteen individual sporting leases, which cover 2,519 hectares of the National Assembly's woodland estate.

Press Releases

Peter Rogers: Further to his reply to WAQ16446 that the request for my press releases was 'made openly' to my office, will he confirm that his officials made a request for the information to another Assembly Member prior to any subsequent contact with my office? (WAQ16662)

Carwyn Jones: My private office did contact a member of Glyn Davies' office and I am satisfied that that approach was open and honest.

Newspaper Articles

Peter Rogers: Further to his reply to WAQ16446, will he list those newspaper articles to which he refers? (WAQ16663)

Carwyn Jones: *The Welsh Mirror* on 1 March 2002

Entry to Holdings

Peter Rogers: Did any Assembly official(s) acting under the agency agreement with the former Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food during the foot and mouth disease crisis ever state or imply to any farmers that they had the right to enter a holding with a view to slaughtering animals? (WAQ16664)

Carwyn Jones: I cannot guarantee what was said by officials in the course of the outbreak. I understand no instructions were issued to Assembly officials working under the s41 agreement of the Government of Wales Act 1998 to allow them to say that they had authority to enter a holding with a view to slaughtering animals. Veterinary inspectors had right of access to farms to assess the situation and agreement was then reached with the farmer to deal with the situation as found by the veterinary inspector.

Preventative Cull on Anglesey

Peter Rogers: Further to his reply to WAQ16596, will the Minister confirm that no Assembly officials acting under the s41 agency agreement were involved in the design of the preventative cull on Anglesey? (WAQ16693) [R]

Carwyn Jones: DEFRA officials designed the cull and Assembly officials operating under the s41 agreement managed the operational aspects. It is inevitable that when designing a scheme to deal with an issue, the designers would need to consult those responsible for operational matters to ensure that it would work.

Tir Mynydd Payments

Alun Pugh: The Tir Mynydd payments are usually paid on 9 March. There is no sign so far of the payments this year. Will the Minister explain this delay? (WAQ16717)

Carwyn Jones: There is no delay. Tir Mynydd payments commenced in March last year, which was the first year of the scheme. Our target is to pay claims by the end of April.

Processing of Tir Mynydd 2002 payments commenced on 18 March and we have already processed claims to the value of £26.1 million. This year payments started a few days later than last year so that we could include the Element 1 and Element 2 moneys in a single payment.

The payment of the equivalent compensatory allowances in England and Scotland also started in the same week.