

Written Questions answered from 8 to 15 February 2001

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

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

Contents

[Questions to the First Minister](#)

[Questions to the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Economic Development](#)

[Questions to the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language](#)

[Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning](#)

[Questions to the Minister for Environment](#)

[Questions to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities](#)

[Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services](#)

[Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs](#)

Questions to the First Minister

Llanwern Steelworks

Dafydd Wigley: During the last month what discussions has the First Minister had with the director of Corus regarding the future of Llanwern steelworks? (WAQ9456)

Dafydd Wigley: During the last month what discussions has the First Minister had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the future of Llanwern steelworks? (WAQ9457)

Dafydd Wigley: During the last month what discussions has the First Minister had with the Secretary for Trade and Industry regarding the future of Llanwern steelworks? (WAQ9458)

Dafydd Wigley: During the last month what discussions has the First Minister had with the Prime Minister regarding the future of Llanwern steelworks? (WAQ9459)

Dafydd Wigley: During the last month what discussions has the First Minister had with the trade union leaders regarding the future of Llanwern steelworks? (WAQ9460)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): I refer you to the comments made in Plenary by Mrs Hart on Tuesday 6 February and the meeting that she and I have had on this recently.

Communications between the Treasury, DTI and Assembly on Corus

Alun Cairns: Would the First Minister please list and give details of all communications between the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Assembly in relation to any support or potential support discussed in the light of Corus redundancies? (WAQ9733)

The First Minister: The Assembly has been involved at both official and ministerial level in numerous discussions with a number of Whitehall departments, including the Treasury and DTI, about a potential response to the jobs losses announced by Corus. This dialogue and communication is continuing to take place on a contingent basis.

Liberal Democrat Special Advisers

Alun Cairns: When was the First Minister consulted on the advertisement for a special adviser to support the Liberal Democrats and Cabinet Members, which was published in *The Guardian* and *The Western Mail*? (WAQ9740)

The First Minister: The open advertisement for two special advisers to support the Liberal Democrat Cabinet Members was agreed between the First and Deputy First Ministers and closely mirrors that used for the recruitment of special advisers last year.

Availability of Consultation Documents to Assembly Members

David Melding: Will the First Minister make a statement on the current practice not to make responses to Assembly consultation documents available to Assembly Members, in particular those made in response to the all-Wales mental health strategy? (WAQ9782)

The First Minister: We would wish to be as open as possible in all our operations and processes but there are some particular difficulties around releasing the responses to consultation exercises. When we undertake a consultation, we want to receive a wide spectrum of views and we want those views to be as frank and open as possible. We do not want people to be inhibited by the fear that their views will be passed on to others. For instance, we may receive personal views from an individual within an organisation whose opinions differ from his or her employer's. It would be unfortunate if that individual's views were denied to us because of a desire on our part to be open with Members. The insertion in consultation documents of a warning that views might be passed on could have the same inhibiting effect.

In the absence of such a warning, our legal advice is that responses can be passed on only if all replies are made anonymous. In the case of the adult mental health strategy, officials are in the course of preparing a summary of

replies. If that would meet the need for more information, I would be pleased to place a copy in the Library.

Questions to the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Economic Development

Osgoi Cau Gwaith Dur Llanwern

Dafydd Wigley: Pa gamau penodol a gymerwyd gan Ddirprwy Brif Weinidog Cymru a Gweinidog dros Ddatblygu Economaidd i geisio osgoi cau gwaith dur Llanwern, ac a wnaiff ddatganiad ar y mater? (WAQ9362) [W]

Dirprwy Brif Weinidog Cymru a Gweinidog dros Ddatblygu Economaidd (Michael German): Cyhoeddodd Corus ganlyniadau ei ymarfer ad-drefnu ar 1 Chwefror. Cyhoeddodd y byddai oddeutu 2,700 o swyddi yn cael eu colli yn syth yng Nghymru, a hynny ar draws nifer o'u gweithfeydd, gan gynnwys Llanwern. Mae Corus wedi cytuno na fydd yn cymryd camau pellach tan y bydd yn cyfarfod â'r undebau ar 14 Chwefror a gobeithio y gellir perswadio'r cwmni i ailfeddwl mewn ffordd dymor hir strategol. Os bydd Corus yn mynnu bwrw ymlaen â'i gynlluniau, mae'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol, gan weithio gydag asiantaethau a'r awdurdodau lleol perthnasol, yn paratoi cyfres o fesurau, wrth gefn, a fydd yn helpu'r rheini a fydd yn cael eu diswyddo a'u cymunedau.

Avoiding the Closure of Llanwern Steelworks

Dafydd Wigley: What specific steps has the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Economic Development taken to try to avoid the closure of Llanwern steelworks, and will he make a statement on the matter? (WAQ9362) [W]

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Economic Development (Michael German): Corus announced the results of its restructuring exercise on 1 February. It announced approximately 2,700 direct job losses in Wales across a number of its plants, including Llanwern. Corus has agreed to 'stop the clock' until a meeting with the unions on 14 February and it is hoped it can be persuaded to think again in a proper, strategic, long-term way. If Corus insists on proceeding, the National Assembly, working with appropriate agencies and the local authorities concerned, is preparing a series of measures, on a contingency basis, which will assist those made redundant and their communities.

Regional Selective Assistance Applications

Alun Cairns: What promotional schemes are in place to support regional selective assistance applications? (WAQ9604)

Michael German: Since it came into being, the National Assembly has intensified efforts to promote regional selective assistance to businesses in Wales. Officials gave presentations to promote the scheme at 30 events throughout Wales in 1999-2000 and will complete about the same number by the end of March this year. The majority of these events were in the priority tier 1 assisted areas.

An article and an advertisement were published recently in a Welsh business magazine while arrangements are

being made to publicise the scheme further in Welsh newspapers and *Who's Who in Welsh Business 2001*.

Information on RSA has recently been added to the National Assembly's website under 'grant support for business' and its existence will be publicised to Welsh businesses.

Objective 1 Priority Partnerships

Alun Cairns: What are the terms of reference of the Objective 1 priority partnerships? (WAQ9605)

Michael German: The Objective 1 Programme Monitoring Committee has agreed to the setting up of four new strategy partnerships as recommended by the task and finish group. The role of these partnerships, which was drafted by the implementation sub-group, were agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 5 February. This paper is available on the Welsh European Funding Office website.

Attracting Businesses to Wales

Alun Cairns: What specific activities are undertaken by the National Assembly or any of its agencies to attract business to Wales? (WAQ9606)

Michael German: The Welsh Development Agency has developed an integrated marketing strategy to promote Wales as an effective place to achieve business success. Twenty-seven staff are currently deployed overseas in Europe, the United States, Japan and Asia Pacific, marketing Wales to prospective inward investors.

The Welsh Development Agency's activities run alongside the Assembly's programme of trade missions, which maximise opportunities to promote Wales overseas wherever possible. WalesTrade International's business opportunities programme actively pursues opportunities for Wales-based businesses such as joint ventures and strategic alliances. Opportunities are also available via the UK Government's offset programme.

The Cardiff Bay Redevelopment

Alun Cairns: Will Michael German make a statement on the latest developments on the Cardiff Bay redevelopment programme, with particular reference to water taxis? (WAQ9607)

Alun Cairns: Will Michael German make a statement on the latest developments in Cardiff Bay by listing project by project, together with financial support, since the wind-up of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation? (WAQ9608)

Michael German: With the dissolution of Cardiff Bay Development Corporation the responsibilities for taking forward the regeneration of its former area returned to the relevant local authorities, supported by the Welsh Development Agency, on 1 April 2000.

Assembly Members will need to write direct to the chief executives of the local authorities for information on their activities in Cardiff Bay. I understand that the Cardiff City and County Council's Harbour Authority business plan is expected to be finalised and published later this month. The plan is expected to include proposals for regulating water borne transport systems in the context of an effective water use strategy within the

bay. It will also include information on projects supported, being undertaken or planned by the Harbour Authority.

Officials have written to the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency, as an Assembly sponsored public body, asking him to reply to you directly, and will arrange for a copy of his reply to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Increase in GDP per capita for West Wales and the Valleys

Glyn Davies: What is the anticipated increase in the gross domestic product of west Wales and the Valleys at 31 December 2000, the end of the first year of the Objective 1 programme? (WAQ9694)

Michael German: No such forecast has been produced. It is anticipated that the GDP figure for 2000 will be available towards the end of 2003. The single programming document sets an objective of an increase in GDP per capita for west Wales and the Valleys from 73 per cent of the UK average to 78 per cent of the UK average by the end of the programme in 2006.

Inward Investment since 1980

Alun Cairns: Would Michael German please list the number of projects attracted by inward investment in Wales, since 1980? (WAQ9734)

Alun Cairns: Would Michael German please list the number of jobs created (project by project) by inward investment in Wales, since 1980? (WAQ9735)

Alun Cairns: Would Michael German please list the amount of support offered (project by project) to inward investment in Wales, since 1980? (WAQ9736)

Michael German: I will answer these three questions together. Since records began in 1983, the Welsh Development Agency, which has lead responsibility for attracting inward investment to Wales, has recorded over 2,000 projects with a total capital investment of some £13.3 billion, creating around 137,000 new jobs and safeguarding almost 75,000 jobs. Details of specific projects involved are not readily accessible. I will write to the Assembly Member shortly providing the details that are available. A copy of my response will be placed in the Library.

Manufacturing Job Losses since May 1999

Alun Cairns: Would Michael German please list, company by company where possible, the total number of manufacturing job losses since May 1999? (WAQ9737)

Michael German: Since May 1999, officials have recorded 168 separate announcements of job losses in the manufacturing sector in Wales: a total of 16,670 jobs. It should, however, be noted that these are only the job losses of which officials are aware, and it is not exhaustive. A company by company list is under preparation, and will be made available as soon as possible.

Job Losses at Dairy Crest

Nick Bourne: Will Michael German make a statement on the job losses at Dairy Crest in Carmarthen and Cardiff? (WAQ9748)

Michael German: I refer to the two statements made by Carwyn Jones, the Minister for Rural Affairs, in Plenary on 1 February and 8 February.

Recent Job Losses in West Wales

Nick Bourne: What measures will Michael German be actioning to offset the recent series of job losses in west Wales? (WAQ9749)

Michael German: Despite the recent job losses in west Wales, the National Assembly and its partners in Team Wales continue to promote Wales as a country with a robust industrial infrastructure, excellent communication links, a flexible workforce and a positive business climate. We endeavour to attract new investment, but with emphasis on those projects requiring higher skill levels and paying higher wages. Alongside this, we are also committed to developing indigenous existing Welsh businesses, ensuring that we secure a balance of both inward and indigenous investment, with a mixture of projects throughout Wales, ensuring we do not rely too heavily on any one particular sector.

Regarding the Dairy Crest situation, Carwyn Jones met with senior executives at Dairy Crest the day after its announcement on 31 January to close its processing facilities at Carmarthen and Marshfield. At the meeting, Dairy Crest emphasised its positive agenda for its Welsh dairy operations, and was considering expanding its cheese processing operation at Haverfordwest.

The Minister also raised at the meeting the Whitland Creamery site, which has been mothballed since closure in 1994. The release of the Whitland Creamery site for regeneration is a particularly important issue, and the National Assembly will ensure that the company comes back to the table with realistic and constructive plans for its disposal. The National Assembly and WDA are also in discussions with a number of companies about potential additional investment in dairy processing in west Wales.

In relation to the job losses at Valeo, Team Wales is in contact with the company to offer full support to staff affected by the announcement. The WDA is marketing the site and staff as a going concern via its extensive property database. This could, if successful, mean little or no redundancies.

However, if this does not come to fruition—and this applies equally to Dairy Crest—then the training and enterprise councils, through their training budgets, will provide support for people who have lost their jobs in a significant redundancy situation. The Employment Service can also provide rapid response measures. These measures will be tailored to the particular circumstances and location of the redundancy situation and could include careers advice and guidance, immediate help with gaining new skills and new employment (with assistance to cover additional travel costs if employment is found outside the home area), childcare provision, and help with starting up in business. Those affected by such job losses may have access to the measures prior to a redundancy taking place.

Job Creation in Mid and West Wales

Nick Bourne: What discussions has Michael German had with the Welsh Development Agency to encourage job creation in mid and west Wales? (WAQ9750)

Michael German: Since taking up my position as Minister for Economic Development, I have had regular discussions with the Welsh Development Agency's chairman concerning all aspects of economic development in Wales. I have also been a regular visitor to mid and west Wales, meeting with both private businesses and key partners in the business support network and hearing about the problems and opportunities facing mid and west Wales.

The Welsh Development Agency, working in partnership with the public and private sectors, undertakes a wide range of activities to encourage job creation in mid and west Wales. These include:

- the provision of sites and premises for new businesses
- a range of business development services designed to improve competitiveness
- services to stimulate and support new business creation through the Business Connect network

and through work with the higher education sector

- loan and equity finance through Finance Wales
- overseas and marketing activities to attract mobile, expanding businesses.

The Steel Industry's Percentage of Welsh GDP

Glyn Davies: What percentage of Welsh GDP is represented by the steel industry, subject to restructuring announcements by Corus last week? (WAQ9758)

Michael German: Based on 1997 data for gross value added—that is, the added value of the production process—the steel industry in Wales accounts for 3 per cent of Welsh GDP. The recent announcement by Corus could mean that the amount of GDP accounted for by the steel industry may fall by between 0.5 and 1 per cent if carried out in full.

Membership of the Objective 1 Task and Finish Group

Alun Cairns: Were the members of the Objective 1 task and finish group selected as individuals or were they selected to represent organisations? (WAQ9776)

Alun Cairns: On what basis were the members of the task and finish group selected? (WAQ9777)

Alun Cairns: How were members of the Objective 1 task and finish group selected? (WAQ9778)

Michael German: The members of the task and finish group were selected as individuals for their strategic appreciation of the economic and social challenges facing west Wales and the Valleys and their knowledge of European structural funds and deployment. They were selected by myself and Christine Chapman, the Chair of

the Objective 1 Programme Monitoring Committee, in consultation with senior executives of the Welsh European Funding Office.

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

Cyngor Chwaraeon Cymru (Arian wrth Gefn)

Dafydd Wigley: A wnaiff y Gweinidog dros Ddiwylliant, Chwaraeon a'r Gymraeg gyhoeddi tabl yn dangos, ar gyfer Cyngor Chwaraeon Cymru, faint o arian wrth gefn a oedd ganddo yn ei gyfrifon ar 31 Rhagfyr 1997, 1998, 1999 a 2000; a faint o'r symiau hyn oedd wedi eu clustnodi ar gyfer ymrwymadau gwario penodol a oedd yn gyfreithiol orfodadwy? (WAQ9579) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros Ddiwylliant, Chwaraeon a'r Gymraeg (Jenny Randerson): Dyma fanylion ffigurau'r gronfa gyffredinol ym mantolen Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru ar gyfer ei weithgareddau cyffredinol:

	£
31 Mawrth 1997	44,488
31 Mawrth 1998	171,948
31 Mawrth 1999	106,684
31 Mawrth 2000	383,471

Y gronfa gyffredinol yw cyfanswm yr arian a fuddsoddwyd yn y cyngor a chaiff ei gynrychioli gan yr asedion cyfredol net. Mae'r cyngor yn cyfrifo yn ôl y cysyniad o gyfrifeg gronadol ac felly nid yw'n cynnwys yn ei gyfrifon ond grantiau a rhwymedigaethau eraill sydd i'w derbyn ac sydd yn daladwy erbyn 31 Mawrth. Caiff unrhyw rwymedigaethau a roddir o ran grantiau sydd yn daladwy, neu rwymedigaethau eraill, yn y flwyddyn ariannol nesaf eu hariannu gan grant mewn cymorth a'i dalu i'r Cynulliad y flwyddyn honno.

Sports Council for Wales (Reserves)

Dafydd Wigley: Will the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language publish a table showing the reserves that the Sports Council for Wales had in its accounts on 31 December 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000; and how much of these sums were reserved for specific spending commitments which were legally enforceable? (WAQ9579) [W]

The Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language (Jenny Randerson): The Sports Council for Wales's balance sheet for its general activities showed a general fund balance as follows:

	£
31 March 1997	44,488
31 March 1998	171,948
31 March 1999	106,684
31 March 2000	383,471

The general fund is the total monies invested in the council and is represented by net current assets. The council accounts under the accruals concept and therefore only includes in its accounts for grants and other commitments that are due and payable at 31 March. Any commitments given in respect of grants payable, or other commitments, in the next financial year are funded from grant in aid and paid to the council by the Assembly in that year.

Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru (Arian wrth Gefn)

Dafydd Wigley: A wnaiff Jenny Randerson gyhoeddi tabl yn dangos, ar gyfer Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru, faint o arian wrth gefn a oedd ganddo yn ei gyfrifon ar 31 Rhagfyr 1997, 1998, 1999 a 2000; a faint o'r symiau hyn oedd wedi eu clustnodi ar gyfer ymrwymiadau gwario penodol a oedd yn gyfreithiol orfodadwy? (WAQ9580) [W]

Jenny Randerson: Dyma fanylion ffigurau'r gronfa gyffredinol ym mantolen Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru ar gyfer ei weithgareddau cyffredinol:

	£
31 Mawrth 1997	3,255,000
31 Mawrth 1998	3,517,000
31 Mawrth 1999	3,624,000
31 Mawrth 2000	3,000,000

Y gronfa gyffredinol yw cyfanswm yr arian a fuddsoddiwyd yn y cyngor a chaiff ei gynrychioli gan asedion sefydlog ac asedion cyfredol net. Mae'r cyngor yn cyfrifo yn ôl y cysyniad o gyfrifeg gronadol ac felly nid yw'n cynnwys yn ei gyfrifon ond grantiau a rhwymedigaethau eraill sydd i'w derbyn ac sy'n daladwy erbyn 31 Mawrth. Caiff unrhyw rwymedigaethau a roddir o ran grantiau sy'n daladwy, neu rwymedigaethau eraill, yn y flwyddyn ariannol nesaf eu hariannu gan grant mewn cymorth a'i dalu i'r Cynulliad y flwyddyn honno.

Arts Council of Wales (Reserves)

Dafydd Wigley: Will Jenny Randerson publish a table showing the reserves that the Arts Council of Wales had in its accounts on 31 December 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000; and how much of these sums were reserved for specific spending commitments which were legally enforceable? (WAQ9580) [W]

Jenny Randerson: The Arts Council of Wales's balance sheet for its general activities showed a general fund balance as follows:

	£
31 March 1997	£3,255,000
31 March 1998	£3,517,000
31 March 1999	£3,624,000
31 March 2000	£3,000,000

The general fund is the total monies invested in the council and is represented by fixed assets and net current assets. The council accounts under the accruals concept and therefore only includes in its accounts for grants and other commitments that are due and payable at 31 March. Any commitments given in respect of grants payable, or other commitments, in the next financial year are funded from grant in aid and paid to the council by the Assembly in that year.

Trafodaethau â Chyngor Celfyddydau Cymru

Dafydd Wigley: Pa drafodaethau a fu rhwng Jenny Randerson a Chyngor Celfyddydau Cymru ynghylch yr arian wrth gefn y mae wedi'i gronni yn ei gyfrifon; ac a wnaiff ddatganiad ar y mater hwn? (WAQ9581) [W]

Jenny Randerson: Nid wyf wedi cael unrhyw drafodaethau â Chyngor Celfyddydau Cymru am yr arian wrth gefn yn ei gyfrifon.

Ceir rheolau penodol iawn yn y memorandwm ariannol rhwng Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru a Chynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru ar uchafswm y balans ariannol y gall y cyngor ei ddal ar ddiwedd pob mis. Mae'r rheolau hyn i bob diben yn gwahardd y cyngor rhag cronni unrhyw arian sylweddol wrth gefn y gellid ei ddsbarthu'n ddiweddarach.

Discussions with the Arts Council of Wales

Dafydd Wigley: What discussions has Jenny Randerson had with the Arts Council of Wales regarding the reserves it has in its accounts; and will she make a statement on this matter? (WAQ9581) [W]

Jenny Randerson: I have not had any discussions with the Arts Council of Wales about reserves in its accounts.

There are very specific rules contained in the financial memorandum between the Arts Council of Wales and the National Assembly for Wales on the maximum cash balances that can be held by the council at the end of each month. These rules effectively prohibit the council from building up any sizeable cash reserves that could be distributed at a later date.

Trafodaethau â Chyngor Chwaraeon Cymru

Dafydd Wigley: Pa drafodaethau a fu rhwng Jenny Randerson a Chyngor Chwaraeon Cymru ynghylch yr arian wrth gefn y mae wedi'i gronni yn ei gyfrifon; ac a wnaiff ddatganiad ar y mater hwn? (WAQ9582) [W]

Jenny Randerson: Nid wyf wedi cael unrhyw drafodaethau â Chyngor Chwaraeon Cymru am yr arian wrth gefn yn ei gyfrifon.

Ceir rheolau penodol iawn yn y memorandwm ariannol rhwng Cyngor Chwaraeon Cymru a Chynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru ar uchafswm y balans ariannol y gall y cyngor ei ddal ar ddiwedd pob mis. Mae'r rheolau hyn i bob diben yn gwahardd y cyngor rhag cronni unrhyw arian sylweddol wrth gefn y gellid ei ddsbarthu'n ddiweddarach.

Discussions with the Sports Council for Wales

Dafydd Wigley: What discussions has Jenny Randerson had with the Sports Council for Wales regarding the reserves it has in its accounts; and will she make a statement on this matter? (WAQ9582) [W]

Jenny Randerson: I have not been involved in any discussions with the Sports Council for Wales regarding the reserves in its accounts.

There are very specific rules contained in the financial memorandum between the Sports Council for Wales and the National Assembly for Wales on the maximum cash balances that can be held by the council at the end of each month. These rules effectively prohibit the council from building up any sizeable cash reserves that could be distributed at a later date.

The Concordat with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Nick Bourne: Will Jenny Randerson outline how the concordat with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has assisted the National Assembly for Wales with regard to culture and sport policy? (WAQ9586)

Jenny Randerson: The concordat has provided a sound framework for co-operation between the Cabinet and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on matters of mutual interest. The department has kept us fully informed of its policy development (for instance on museum charges, public library standards, and its Culture and Recreation Bill). I have good relations with Ministers at DCMS, and I sit on the UK Sports Cabinet, as set down in the concordat. In the area of public appointments, we have co-operated with DCMS on the appointment of a Welsh member of Resource and we are currently co-operating on appointing a Welsh member for the Radio Authority, and two members for the Board of S4C.

Alun Cairns: Will Jenny Randerson detail all communications between the National Assembly (and before then the Welsh Office) and the Wales Millennium Centre? (WAQ9779)

Alun Cairns: Will Jenny Randerson make a statement detailing the original timescales agreed in the establishment of the Wales Millennium Centre and how progress has developed between each stage, stating reasons for delay? (WAQ9780)

Alun Cairns: Will Jenny Randerson make a statement on the delays in the development of the Wales Millennium Centre? (WAQ9781)

Jenny Randerson: No firm start and completion dates have been given by the Wales Millennium Centre. The information has been that these should be set once all aspects of the project's cost plan, design and business planning—together with its funding arrangements—were demonstrably robust. There has been a great deal of correspondence with the Wales Millennium Centre. To detail all of it would entail disproportionate cost.

However, the WMC approached the Millennium Commission to bid for its financial support in November 1997. The indicative completion date was then June 2001. Discussions were also held with Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board about public sector support. A potential shortfall in funding against proposed cost emerged by the autumn of the following year. Consideration was then given to the possible case for a direct contribution from the Welsh Office amounting to £8 million. In January 1999, the Secretary of State for Wales confirmed public sector funding in principle at £15.9 million, including £8 million from the Welsh Office and the balance from sponsored bodies.

Following advice on due diligence commissioned from BDO Stoy Hayward, the Secretary of State affirmed a willingness to support the project at the same level in June 1999. Funding agreements with the Millennium Commission and the Arts Council of Wales signed in August 1999 suggested a completion date of December 2002. The WMC then began the process of identifying a contractor and making the appointment. Contracts with AMEC were signed in December 1999 and work commenced on developing the design and costing the building.

However, in June 2000, the contract to build the centre at a fixed price was determined by the WMC board and the relationship with AMEC ended. The determination was in response to the higher than expected price AMEC submitted. The WMC then reassessed its position and decided to adopt a smaller scale 'cultural village' approach in September 2000. In the following month the First Minister made a statement to the Assembly indicating that very much more technical and other work would be needed to develop the existing design and to scope more robust assessments of the cost of construction and operation. The results will be reported to the Assembly itself. It is anticipated that this will be approximately six months after the First Minister's statement.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Colli Swyddi yn y Diwydiant Dur (Ailhyfforddi Gweithwyr)

Dafydd Wigley: Beth yw'r gyllideb sydd gan y Gweinidog dros Addysg a Dysgu Gydol Oes yn ei hadran ar gyfer ailhyfforddi gweithwyr sydd yn colli eu swyddi yn y diwydiant dur yng Nghymru; ac a wnaiff ddatganiad

ar y mater? (WAQ9361) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros Addysg a Dysgu Gydol Oes (Jane Davidson): Mae'r cynghorau hyfforddi a menter, drwy eu cyllidebau hyfforddiant, yn darparu cymorth ar gyfer pobl sydd wedi colli eu swyddi mewn sefyllfa o ddiswyddiadau sylweddol. Mewn sefyllfaoedd eithriadol iawn, lle byddai diswyddiadau'n arwain at argyfwng economaidd a chymdeithasol enbyd, fel yn achos y swyddi sydd yn cael eu colli yn Corus, gall cynghorau hyfforddi a menter, ar y cyd â'r Gwasanaeth Cyflogi, ddarparu mesurau ymateb cyflym. Bydd y mesurau hyn yn cael eu haddasu yn ôl amgylchiadau a lleoliad arbennig y diswyddiadau a gallai gynnwys cyngor ac arweiniad ynghylch gyrfaeodd, cymorth di-oed i ddatblygu sgiliau newydd a gwaith newydd (a chymorth i dalu'r costau pe bai rhywun yn dod o hyd i swydd y tu allan i'r ardal lle mae'n byw), darpariaethau gofal plant, a chymorth ar gyfer dechrau busnes. Gall pobl yr effeithir arnynt gan ddiswyddiadau fel hyn fanteisio ar y mesurau cyn cael eu diswyddo.

O 1 Ebrill eleni bydd cyfrifoldebau'r cynghorau hyfforddi a menter dros ddarparu hyfforddiant ac unrhyw becynnau ymateb cyflym yn cael eu trosglwyddo i Gyngor Cenedlaethol Cymru dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant newydd a Gyrfaeodd Cymru.

Job Losses in the Steel Industry (Retraining Workers)

Dafydd Wigley: What budget does the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning have in her department for retraining workers who lose their jobs in the steel industry in Wales; and will she make a statement on the matter? (WAQ9361) [W]

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): The training and enterprise councils, through their training budgets, provide support for people who have lost their jobs in a significant redundancy situation. In very exceptional circumstances, where a redundancy situation would result in severe economic and social upheaval, such as that occasioned by the job losses at Corus, TECs, in conjunction with the Employment Service, can provide rapid response measures. These measures will be tailored to the particular circumstances and location of the redundancy situation and could include careers advice and guidance, immediate help with gaining new skills and new employment (with assistance to cover additional travel costs if employment is found outside the home area), childcare provision, and with starting up in business. Those affected by such job losses may have access to the measures prior to a redundancy taking place.

From 1 April this year the TEC responsibilities for providing training and any rapid response packages will lie with the new National Council for Education and Training for Wales and Careers Wales.

Questions to the Minister for Environment

Ailagor Ffyrdd Sirol (Cyllid Ychwanegol)

Dafydd Wigley: Pa gyllid ychwanegol a fydd yn cael ei ddarparu (a) yn y flwyddyn ariannol 2000-01, a (b) yn y flwyddyn 2001-02 i awdurdodau lleol yng Nghymru i'w galluogi i ailagor ffyrdd sirol sydd wedi eu cau, neu sydd o dan fygythiad, oherwydd tirlithriadau? (WAQ9564) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd (Sue Essex): Cyhoeddodd Edwina Hart ar 13 Tachwedd 2000 bod cynllun Bellwin i'w roi ar waith i roi cymorth ariannol i awdurdodau lleol i gynorthwyo i fodloni'r costau byr dymor o ymdrin ag effeithiau'r tywydd eithriadol o ddifrifol a gafwyd rhwng diwedd mis Hydref a'r Nadolig. Bydd y cynllun hwn yn rychwantu rhai o'r costau o glirio ffyrdd a gafodd eu cau gan dirithriadau. Gan fod y tywydd gwael mor ddifrifol, ymestynnwyd y cynllun tan ddiwedd y flwyddyn ariannol i alluogi'r awdurdodau i gwblhau'r gwaith.

Hefyd, gofynnwyd i'r awdurdodau lleol gyflwyno manylion gwaith cyfalaf sydd i'w wneud dros gyfnod hirach na all ddod o dan gynllun Bellwin. Gofynnwyd iddynt ddarparu rhestr erbyn diwedd mis Chwefror o waith sydd yn destun blaenoriaeth, ac unwaith y bydd y manylion hyn ar gael, bydd y Gweinidog dros Gyllid, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau a minnau'n ystyried pa gymorth y gellid o bosibl ei roi dros gyfnod o dair neu fwy o flynyddoedd.

Reopening County Roads (Additional Funding)

Dafydd Wigley: What additional funding will be provided (a) in the 2000-01 financial year; and (b) in the year 2001-02, for local authorities in Wales to enable them to reopen county roads which have been closed, or which are under threat, due to landslides? (WAQ9564) [W]

The Minister for Environment (Sue Essex): Edwina Hart announced on 13 November 2000 that a Bellwin scheme was to be activated to provide financial assistance to local authorities to help meet the immediate costs of dealing with the effects of the exceptionally severe weather experienced between the end of October and Christmas. Some of the costs of clearing roads blocked by landslides will be covered by this scheme. Due to the severity of the bad weather, the scheme has been extended to allow authorities until the end of the financial year to complete the works.

Local authorities have also been asked to submit details of longer-term capital works, which cannot be covered by Bellwin. They have been asked to provide a schedule of prioritised works by the end of February, and once these details are available, the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities and I will consider what assistance it might be possible to provide over a period of three or more years.

The Concordat with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

Nick Bourne: Will Sue Essex outline how the concordat with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions has assisted the National Assembly for Wales with regard to environment, planning and transport policy areas? (WAQ9588)

Sue Essex: The concordat has provided a framework for co-operation between the Cabinet and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions on matters of mutual interest. For instance, we have worked closely together on the home buying and selling aspects of the Homes Bill, a non-devolved matter, which resulted in a duty being placed on the Secretary of State for Wales to consult the National Assembly before making secondary legislation affecting Wales.

Another example is the DETR led financial management and policy review of the Environment Agency where the Assembly secured recognition in the terms of reference for a Welsh dimension and an examination of

whether a single England and Wales agency was still appropriate post devolution.

Officials in both organisations have forged useful working relationships within the framework of the concordat and have dealt with such matters as the Bristol Channel study, regional aggregate working parties, the UK climate change programme and the air quality strategy.

Residents in Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Nick Bourne: What grants are available to residents in environmentally sensitive areas? (WAQ9590)

Sue Essex: Farmers within environmentally sensitive areas were able to apply for environmentally sensitive area grants designed to protect the countryside and its wildlife habitats by encouraging traditional methods of farming. Although the environmentally sensitive areas scheme closed in May 1999, farmers within these areas are now eligible to join Tir Gofal.

A Ban on Lead Shot in Wales

Glyn Davies: What is the latest position on the imposition of a ban on lead shot in Wales? (WAQ9692)

Sue Essex: I intend to introduce regulations to restrict the use of lead shot in time for the next shooting season in September 2001. We will consult on a draft statutory instrument and conduct a regulatory appraisal later this month.

The Countryside Council for Wales (Advice on Lead Shot)

Glyn Davies: What is the latest advice from the Countryside Council for Wales regarding lead shot in Wales? (WAQ9693)

Sue Essex: Lead is universally recognised as a poison, and the Countryside Council for Wales would like to see a move towards a general reduction in man-made sources of lead entering the environment. The council aspires to the elimination of lead in gunshot, but accepts that the targeted approach I propose to adopt will make a significant contribution to reducing the problem of lead poisoning in birds. It has advised on the list of sites in Wales where lead shot should be prohibited.

The Need for a Llandrindod Wells Relief Road

Nick Bourne: Has Sue Essex received any representations about the need for a Llandrindod Wells relief road (Waterloo link road)? (WAQ9751)

Sue Essex: I have received one representation concerning this matter from Llandrindod Wells Town Council. However, this proposal is entirely a matter for Powys County Council as a highway authority.

Completion of the Llandrindod Wells Relief Road

Nick Bourne: Can Sue Essex give a timescale for the completion of the Llandrindod Wells relief road (Waterloo

link road)? (WAQ9752)

Sue Essex: The Llandrindod Wells relief road is a local authority road and the timescale for completion is entirely a matter for Powys County Council as local highway authority.

Planning Guidance for Mobile Phone Masts

David Davies: When will planning guidance in relation to mobile phone masts be released? (WAQ9753)

Sue Essex: Our telecommunications proposals cover not only draft guidance and advice but also legislative measures with associated draft regulatory impact assessment. The consultation period expired on 5 January 2001 and all responses received are being fully and carefully considered. The guidance must reflect the amendments to secondary legislation, which the Assembly decides to introduce. The legislation should be in place to enable the guidance to be issued in the autumn.

Reviewing the Provision of Speed Restrictions

David Davies: What plans are there to review the provision of road markings, speed limits, sleeping policemen and other speed restrictions within the immediate proximity of schools to ensure the safety of pupils? (WAQ9755)

Sue Essex: Highway authorities already have powers to impose speed limits and install complementary traffic management measures outside any schools where they feel this is necessary to ensure the safety of pupils.

I have set up a road safety strategy board to take forward the development of an implementation programme for road safety in Wales. Safety measures outside schools are one of the areas being addressed by the board. I hope to present the strategy to the Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in the late spring before holding a full public consultation exercise.

Planning Applications Called in By the Assembly

David Davies: Will Sue Essex list the planning applications called in by the Assembly since its establishment? (WAQ9756)

Sue Essex: The information is as follows:

1999-2000

15/07/99	Single dwelling, Enfield, Portfield Gate, Haverfordwest	(C.I) Pembrokeshire County Council
20/07/99	Single dwelling, Talgarreg	(D) Ceredigion County Council
10/12/99	Housing development, Aberbechan, Newtown	(C.I) Powys (Montgomeryshire District Council)

10/12/99	Housing development, Llandysul	(C.I) Powys (Montgomeryshire District Council)
18/01/00	Single dwelling, Ffynnon Las, Goginan	(D) Ceredigion County Council
14/02/00	Cement kiln, Padeswood, Mold	(C.I) Flintshire County Council
2/03/00	Marina development, Gallows Point, Beaumaris	(D) Isle of Anglesey County Council
15/03/00	Proposed bungalow, Coed y Cae, Abertillery	(D) Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

2000-01

4/07/00	New highway and car parking, Struet to Ship Street, Brecon	(C.I) Brecon Beacons National Park
14/07/00	Change of use of farmhouse to holiday units, Trewyn, Maenaddwym, Llanerchymedd	(C.I) Isle of Anglesey County Council
20/07/00	Centre of excellence, Caerleon	(C.I) Newport County Council
4/08/00	Reconstruction of former dwelling and barn, Cae Marchog Llanigon	(C.I) Brecon Beacons National Park
20/07/00	Windfarm, Pentrefoelas, Denbigh Moors	(C.I) Conwy County Council
26/09/00	Integrated wood processing plant, Newbridge on Wye	(C.I) Powys County Council
1/11/00	Windfarm, Foel Goch, Nantyglyn	(C.I) Denbighshire County Council
24/01/01	Proposed dwelling at Enfield, Portfield Gate, Haverfordwest	(C.I & D) Pembrokeshire County Council
7/02/01	Proposed dwelling, Thornhill, Llandyfan, Ammanford	(C.I) Brecon Beacons National Park

(C.I) Call in requests

(D) Notified by the local planning authority as a departure from the development plan.

Spatial Planning Guidance

Alun Cairns: What role has the private sector played in spatial planning guidance? (WAQ9770)

Alun Cairns: What private sector organisations have been invited to input into the drafting of any spatial

planning policy or guidance? (WAQ9771)

Alun Cairns: What consultation meetings have been held in relation to spatial planning guidance? (WAQ9772)

Sue Essex: Spatial planning guidance currently in various parts of Planning Guidance (Wales) Planning Policy has been gathered together, and updated to reflect the Assembly's aims, in a spatial planning section of draft 'Planning Policy Wales' which is to be issued for public consultation later this month. A number of private sector interests, including the Confederation of British Industry and the House Builders Federation, were represented on the planning forum which reviewed the current guidance and made recommendations on the draft 'Planning Policy Wales'.

Work has commenced on preparing the national spatial planning framework for Wales to ensure it is completed by the target date of 2003 as set out in 'Betterwales.com'. The framework will provide a spatial expression of the Assembly's aims, will support other Assembly strategies such as the sustainable development scheme, national economic development strategy and the transport framework, will assist future decisions on allocating resources and provide a context for the work of local planning authorities.

On 7 December last year an event was held at the National Assembly to discuss the key challenges a national spatial planning framework should address. All Assembly Members were invited to the event together with representatives of local government and of business, environmental and community bodies, and the four regional economic forums. The business sector was represented by the CBI and the Construction Industry Council.

As preparation of the national spatial planning framework is taken forward it is intended that business interests, including utility suppliers who have already expressed a wish to participate, will be given opportunities to become involved. I will be taking that process forward at the next Business Partnership meeting on 15 February.

Introducing a Spatial Planning Policy

Alun Cairns: What plans does Sue Essex have to introduce a spatial planning policy to support the private sector? (WAQ9773)

Sue Essex: The spatial elements of existing planning policy, and the updated spatial section of draft 'Planning Policy Wales', which will soon be issued for consultation, support development in locations which accord with the aims of the National Assembly. We are developing national planning policy in order to set out clearly the issues which need to be taken into account in assessing proposals for development from everyone, including the private sector.

The national spatial planning framework for Wales will also benefit the private sector through supporting other Assembly strategies, including the national economic development strategy, assisting decisions on allocating resources, and providing a context for the work of local planning authorities.

The Mock-up of the New Assembly Debating Chamber

Glyn Davies: What will happen to the mock-up of the new Assembly debating Chamber when the public exhibition is over? (WAQ9527)

The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities (Edwina Hart): The mock-up has been established to assist the architect in the development of the detailed design and to allow users to play a part in that process. The objective is to ensure that the core elements of the finished building will provide an efficient environment, which meets the needs of those who work in it and visit it. It is too early to determine what will happen to the mock-up when that design process is complete.

Collaboration between the Assembly and Victim Support Schemes

David Melding: Will Edwina Hart make a statement on collaboration between the Assembly and Victim Support schemes in Wales? (WAQ9742)

Edwina Hart: The National Assembly is aware of the very important contribution which Victim Support schemes make to the wellbeing of victims of crime in Wales. The Crime Reduction Director for Wales attended the first Wales wide Victim Support annual general meeting and has since met with individual officials. I am keen for this collaboration to continue and would also encourage Victim Support to engage with the criminal justice representative on the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council.

Grant Aid Victim Support Schemes

David Melding: Has Edwina Hart considered the need for grant aid Victim Support schemes in Wales? (WAQ9743)

Edwina Hart: Victim Support groups in England and Wales are supported by a substantial Home Office grant, £18.3 million in 2000-01, which recognises that their paid staff and volunteers help over 1 million victims of crime each year. In view of this, I have not considered a separate funding mechanism for Wales. In the past, Victim Support groups in Wales have received support from certain specific Welsh Office and National Assembly funding schemes and it is open to them to apply to the volunteering in Wales fund which administers grants originating in National Assembly money. (It is possible that further funding streams linked to the National Assembly's Crime Reduction Unit may in the future be able to support the development of the movement in Wales).

The Public Interest Report into Flintshire County Council

Peter Rogers: Does Edwina Hart have any plans to take action to ensure that Flintshire County Council fully complies with the recent public interest report into the authority's affairs? (WAQ9745)

Edwina Hart: It will be for Flintshire County Council to respond publicly to the recommendations contained in the district auditor's public interest report, and to publish an action plan setting out the action it will take.

Access to Council Documents

Peter Rogers: Will Edwina Hart make a statement on access to council documents following the public interest report into Flintshire County Council? (WAQ9746)

Edwina Hart: I expect all local authorities in Wales to operate in an open and accountable way, and to comply with their statutory commitments on access to documentation and papers.

The Content of the Public Interest Report

David Davies: Will Edwina Hart make a statement on the content of the public interest report into Flintshire County Council? (WAQ9757)

Edwina Hart: No. Action lies with the authority.

The Rental Contract

Glyn Davies: Further to the answer to my written question (WAQ9528), how long is the rental contract? (WAQ9764)

Edwina Hart: The lease commenced on 11 September 2000 and expires on 10 September 2001.

The Total Costs of the New Assembly Building

Glyn Davies: What are the total costs relating to the new Assembly building that have already been paid/committed to being paid? (WAQ9802)

Edwina Hart: The total contractual commitments currently entered into on the Assembly building project amounts to nearly £5.5 million (excluding value added tax). The actual amount spent to date is almost £2 million (excluding VAT).

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

The Concordat with the Department of Health

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister for Health and Social Services outline how the concordat with the Department of Health has assisted the National Assembly for Wales with regard to health policy? (WAQ9593)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): The concordat with the Department of Health has provided the Cabinet with a sound framework for co-operation in areas of mutual interest. It has also helped to increase awareness of the need to take account of specific Welsh health issues when considering wider UK health policy. A recent good example of the concordat in action is co-operation between officials and information sharing on the development of health improvement programmes.

Reducing Waiting Lists

Nick Bourne: What progress has been made to reduce waiting lists in each separate health authority area in Wales? (WAQ9594)

Jane Hutt: Targets were agreed with individual health authorities in May 2000, following the allocation of an additional £40 million to tackle waiting times and winter pressures. Health authorities accepted responsibility for making the investment necessary to meet these targets and for managing the programmes in partnership with other participants.

Each health authority has identified its own priorities and developed local initiatives with trusts and other partners. The full effect of these programmes depends upon the success and speed in recruiting staff, putting in place new facilities required and acquiring additional capacity. Increases in emergency pressures also impact on levels of elective activity.

The National Assembly for Wales is maintaining close contact with authorities and trusts. The current position is shown in the tables below.

Welsh residents waiting for in-patient or day case treatment, by health authority:

	Gwent	Bro Taf	Dyfed Powys	North Wales	Morgannwg
May 2000	15,844	18,964	16,679	16,653	13,111
Dec 2000	15,502	18,972	15,373	15,288	12,435

Welsh residents waiting for an out-patient appointment, by health authority:

	Gwent	Bro Taf	Dyfed Powys	North Wales	Morgannwg
Sept 2000	35,910	51,466	27,457	36,619	31,161
Dec 2000	35,021	52,576	26,479	35,893	31,727

The total all-Wales waiting list for in-patient or day case treatment fell every month since its peak in May until November, and increased in December. The total all-Wales list for out-patients fell from its high point in September until November but increased again in December.

Implementing the Findings of the Royal Commission on the Long-term Care of the Elderly

Kirsty Williams: What steps is Jane Hutt taking to implement the findings of the Royal Commission on the

long-term care of the elderly in Wales? (WAQ9738)

Jane Hutt: The Royal Commission made wide-ranging recommendations on the funding and quality of long-term care and related matters. We are already acting on most of the recommendations, which relate to devolved matters. Specifically:

- We have announced that nursing care will become the responsibility of the NHS and, therefore, free in all settings.
- The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales will be established as part of the Assembly from April 2002 providing comprehensive registration and inspection of social care and non-NHS health care in Wales.
- Section 8 of the Care Standards Act 2000 gives the Assembly the duty to encourage the improvement of quality in the social care sector and to publish information to the public.
- We will shortly issue draft statutory guidance on local authorities' charging policies for domiciliary care services so as to ensure fairer and more consistent practice.
- In April, we will seek approval for regulations which will ease the pressures on those entering care to sell their homes to pay for care costs including: a three-month disregard of the value of the home, raising capital limits and allowing councils to take legal charges with the owner's consent.
- From April 2002, we will start to phase out the residential allowance and wind up preserved rights to higher rate income support and transfer the resources to local authorities.
- The direct payments scheme has been extended to those over 65 and we will bring forward regulations to extend it to 16 and 17-year-olds.
- A carers' strategy and implementation plan for Wales was published last year and will be updated annually. We have increased the resources for respite care.
- We have put regulations and guidance in place to allow the NHS and local authorities to enter into new forms of partnership including pooled budgets.
- I announced on 2 February a new scheme to fund the first six weeks of charges, where an individual is assessed as needing support at home following discharge from hospital.
- A comprehensive and integrated strategy for older people will be developed in full collaboration with all our partners over the next 12 months.

Some of these changes require primary legislation and are included in the Health and Social Care Bill.

A Comprehensive Programme of Support for Survivors of Abuse

Kirsty Williams: What plans does Jane Hutt have to introduce a comprehensive programme of support for survivors of abuse in Wales? (WAQ9739)

Jane Hutt: I have no plans at present to introduce a comprehensive programme of support for survivors of abuse in Wales. Any service provision offered by the NHS is a matter for individual health authorities having regard to their local priorities based on the needs of their populations.

Answering 999 Calls

David Davies: What was the average time taken to answer a 999 call in each ambulance control room, in each of the last three years? (WAQ9741)

Jane Hutt: This data is not held centrally. Ambulance response times are reported to the National Assembly on the basis of health authority area and unitary authority area, but not by control centre. The ambulance response times reported to the National Assembly are published on a quarterly basis and are available from the Library.

Improving Hygiene Levels in Hospitals

David Davies: What discussions has Jane Hutt had with the Welsh NHS trusts on improving hygiene levels in hospitals? (WAQ9754)

Jane Hutt: I share your concerns about improving hygiene levels in Welsh hospitals. This area has been given a high priority in the NHS plan, 'Improving Health in Wales' where I envisage this topic becoming a core item of the management agenda and in the accountabilities of managers at all levels.

By December 2001, each trust will have conducted an infection control internal audit and produced an action plan to address deficiencies. Initially concentrating on patient areas, this will develop into a rolling programme of audit covering all wards and departments.

This, combined with a number of other strategies directing the adoption of effective infection control procedures, and extensive guidance, which has been issued, go some way to ensuring that cases of hospital acquired infections are kept to a minimum.

In addition to this, guidance published in 1998 in the *Journal of Hospital Infection* (Vol 39, pp 253 to 290) has been adopted across the UK as the model for best practice. This guidance by the joint working party of the British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy, the Hospital Infection Society and Infection Control Nurses Association is entitled 'Revised Guidelines for Control of Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus Infection in Hospitals'.

The Welsh infection strategy group is examining the management and control of hospital infections. Examples of initiatives currently being investigated are a three-year programme of improvement to be monitored through the communicable disease strategy group, formal annual reviews by health trusts of their arrangements for infection control and action by health authorities to ensure that robust arrangements are in place which provide for the implementation of clinical governance.

The Welsh Nursing and Midwifery Committee has also been asked to undertake an audit of the handling, storage and laundering of soiled linen/personal clothing on hospital wards to make recommendations on best practice.

The Delivery of Thrombolysis Treatment

David Melding: How will community hospitals in rural Wales be involved in the speedy delivery of thrombolysis treatment? (WAQ9789)

Jane Hutt: Community hospitals can be used to deliver a range of services. The role and purpose of community hospitals must be agreed by all relevant local interests, and staffing levels, skills and equipment should reflect that locally-agreed role.

Some community hospitals currently provide thrombolysis facilities. The national service framework for coronary heart disease will set out national minimum standards with which all hospitals providing such care will have to comply.

Delivery of Acute Services Via Community Hospitals

David Melding: Will Jane Hutt, in the context of improving Wales, make a statement on delivery of certain acute services in Wales via community hospitals in the rural parts of Wales? (WAQ9790)

Jane Hutt: Current policy on the use of community hospitals is set out in the document 'Community Hospitals in Wales: the Future'. We recognise the need for smaller, local hospitals to provide a range of services based on local need. Each community hospital should develop a clear role and purpose, which should be agreed with all relevant local interest groups, with the facilities and skill of the staff reflecting the role and purpose of each hospital.

At present it is for each health authority, working with NHS trusts, to decide each hospital's precise function. Precise details on future arrangements will need to be developed in the context of 'Improving Health in Wales'.

A National Framework for Partnership

David Melding: Will Jane Hutt produce a national framework for partnership between the private and voluntary sector and the NHS? (WAQ9791)

Jane Hutt: We have asked all Welsh health authorities and NHS trusts to develop compacts with the voluntary sector in Wales. The response so far has been encouraging with clear evidence of real and meaningful partnerships being forged.

We have not formulated guidance on the relationship between the NHS in Wales and the private sector but would expect both sectors to engage in close collaboration wherever possible for the benefit of patients. The recent development of Chepstow Community Hospital demonstrates the benefits to be achieved from such a partnership.

Health Visitor, Midwife and Nurse Consultants

David Melding: How many health visitor consultants does Jane Hutt expect to be employed in NHS Cymru by 2004? (WAQ9792)

David Melding: How many midwife consultants does Jane Hutt expect to be employed in NHS Cymru by 2004? (WAQ9793)

David Melding: How many nurse consultants does Jane Hutt expect to be employed in NHS Cymru by 2004? (WAQ9794)

Jane Hutt: The development of health visitors, midwives and nurse consultants is new to the profession. Eleven posts were approved during the first bidding round in October 2000 and recruitment is now in progress.

It is anticipated that the value of these new roles will encourage trusts to develop more of these posts in future, across a whole range of services, in response to need.

Modernising Primary Care Practices

David Melding: Will Jane Hutt set a target for the number of primary care practices to be modernised under the capital programme by 2004? (WAQ9795)

Jane Hutt: Although the NHS all-Wales capital programme is for capital investment in hospitals rather than primary care, in my speech to Plenary on 13 February I restated my commitment to modernising primary and secondary facilities. The Wales practice premises working group (comprising Assembly officials and primary care representatives) will report by the end of February with recommendations to assist the development of general practitioner premises.

Major Health Service Reorganisation

David Melding: Will the Minister establish an independent panel to make recommendations on major health service reorganisation? (WAQ9799)

David Melding: How will the Minister determine recommendations for major health service re-organisation given the projected 'substantial change in the hospital network in Wales', ('Improving Health in Wales', p.16), and in the absence of health authorities? (WAQ9804)

Jane Hutt: I will answer these related questions together. Consultation on proposals for major service changes is currently a matter for health authorities, and proposed major service changes are only referred to the National Assembly for determination where, following public consultation, the local community health council is unable to support the proposals.

My decision to retain community health councils in Wales means that their role in such matters will continue. I see no need for the establishment of an independent panel.

We will shortly consult on the best way of taking forward the proposals for structural change set out in the plan, and we will examine options for replacing the current health authority planning and consultation function. That review will need to consider the future roles of local national health service bodies, the National Assembly and also the new arrangements for partnership working that we outlined in the plan.

There is no intention to close any district general hospitals signalled in the plan 'Improving Health in Wales'. Change does not mean downgrading any hospitals. We need a service that is fit for purpose in twenty-first century circumstances.

Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs

Abattoirs in Wales

Kirsty Williams: What measures is the Minister for Rural Affairs taking to ensure the survival of the network of small abattoirs in Wales? (WAQ9759)

Kirsty Williams: What measures is Carwyn Jones taking to ensure that organic livestock producers in Wales have access to organically registered abattoirs? (WAQ9760)

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Carwyn Jones): We pressed the UK Government to action the recommendations of the Maclean report. The UK Government followed our lead in announcing on 28 November its acceptance of the need to help reduce the burden of hygiene charges on smaller abattoirs. This is positive news for our small and medium-sized abattoirs in Wales.

The Food Standards Agency issued a consultation document on 18 January, on its proposals for the implementation of the recommendations in the Maclean report. The consultation period ends on 14 February. All abattoirs in Wales have been included in this consultation exercise.

I am keen to encourage increased organic production across all sectors and this is a key objective of our Wales agri-food strategy. The National Assembly is happy to consider viable proposals from abattoirs approved for organic production, as well as those from conventional abattoirs. All proposals will be considered on their own merits and against our established grants criteria.

BSE (Precautionary Approach)

Peter Rogers: Will the Minister make a statement on the application of the 'precautionary approach' to the risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in Wales? (WAQ9832)

Carwyn Jones: The precautionary approach holds that the absence of scientific proof should not delay or prevent proportionate measures to remove or reduce threats of serious harm. This underpins the range of BSE control measures in place to protect the consumer, including the over 30 months scheme, the ban on mammalian meat and bone-meal in animal feed and the removal of specified risk material from cattle and sheep meat.

The Food Standards Agency has published the outcome of its comprehensive review of the BSE controls across Great Britain.

Review of Assembly's BSE Risk Management Strategy

Peter Rogers: Will the Minister be reviewing the Assembly's BSE risk management strategy as a consequence of Her Majesty's Government's interim response to the report of the BSE inquiry? (WAQ9833)

Carwyn Jones: This will be considered in light of the report of the Health and Social Services Committee and the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee into their examination of the issues raised by the inquiry report and by responses to consultation on the UK Government's interim response to the report.

