

Written Questions answered between 18 January and 1 February 2007

[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
2	Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport
10	Questions to the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks
15	Questions to the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
28	Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside
29	Questions to the Finance Minister
33	Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services
44	Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Questions to the First Minister

Carl Sargeant: Will the First Minister make a statement on the delivery of key Welsh Assembly Government policies in Alyn and Deeside? (WAQ49041)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): The Assembly Government's key policies have had a number of positive impacts in Alyn and Deeside. They include:

- in June 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government announced an extra £1.4 million in funding to improve access to NHS dentistry in Flintshire and across the other local health boards in the north Wales regions. The extra investment, part of the extra £30 million extra investment across Wales announced in April 2006, will be targeted at areas where there is a lack of provision to allow LHBs to commission more NHS dental services;
- Flintshire Local Health Board received £900,000 in Welsh Assembly Government funding to help reduce health inequalities. It was part of a £10.1 million package announced in 2002;
- Communities First funding of £3,780,087.25 has been awarded to support the development of the programme in the Flintshire area;
- development of the Deeside integrated transport strategy at a cost of around £5.6 million with just under £5 million from transport grant allocation. The figure for 2006-07 is £0.260 million;
- The A550/A494 Deeside Park to Drome Corner improvement scheme opened in November 2004 and has increased the safety and capacity of the trunk road network near the Deeside development zone. It has also improved the environment for local residents, non-motorised users and access to properties adjacent to the trunk road;
- WAG approval of Deeside College's capital bid of £1.5 million to support its proposed development of its construction skills centre, which will serve to provide modern flexible facilities to meet the identified needs and priorities of learners and employers.

Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

William Graham: What discussions has the Minister had regarding restrictions upon Cardiff City football fans for the Wolverhampton Wanderers match on 20 January 2007? (WAQ48916)

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): I have not held any discussions on this matter.

I did however write to Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club asking that it reconsider its decision to ban all Cardiff City fans from attending the match.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the Welsh Assembly Government's contribution to the 'Roman amphitheatres and spectacula: a twenty-first century perspective' international conference? (WAQ48917)

Alun Pugh: This conference in Chester has been arranged by English Heritage and the Welsh Assembly Government was not approached to make a contribution. I understand that it is intended that conferences of this type will be a fairly regular feature of the historic environment calendar and there is potential for future Welsh involvement if the Assembly Government consider that course to be beneficial. South-east Wales in particular is rich in Roman history and historic sites at Caerleon, where there are impressive remains of fortress baths, an amphitheatre, barracks and fortress walls, and Caerwent, where there are the remains of what was once a busy and bustling Roman town, are in the Assembly Government's care. Through our historic environment service, Cadw, we take great care to promote public access and interest

in the historic environment and last July we arranged a Roman extravaganza at Caerleon to celebrate the history of the area and a weekend of events in November to mark the opening of the Caerwent Roman town.

Mick Bates: Will the Minister make a statement on what representations he has received with regard to digital switchover? (WAQ48918)

Alun Pugh: I regularly receive representations regarding digital switchover from Assembly Members and members of the public through correspondence and Assembly questions.

Mick Bates: Will the Minister describe the current role of local authorities in developing strategies for the provision of different arts in Welsh communities? (WAQ48919)

Alun Pugh: The report of the arts review was presented to me in November last year and debated in Plenary on 6 December. One recommendation in the report is to look at ways of making arts provision statutory across Wales and to establish an arts strategy board, which will help to drive forward the arts in Wales. It proposes further work to examine the notion of cultural entitlement, joint working between the Arts Council of Wales and local authorities through regional partnerships and the concept of national companies with a strategic remit.

ACW and the Welsh Local Government Association signed a memorandum of understanding in 2005. Local authorities meet regularly with chief officers of ACW to develop initiatives on broader strategy issues, for example Liverpool 2008, where ACW has been coordinating the project on behalf of the local authorities. Cabinet and executive members with responsibility for culture in each local authority are members of the relevant ACW regional committee, supported by their chief officer.

Local authorities are major funding partners in a number of venues across Wales, such as Flintshire's support for Clwyd Theatr Cymru. The Arts Council of Wales works closely with local authorities to ensure financial sustainability and programme balance. ACW's regional teams liaise regularly with local authority arts development officers on applications, projects and strategies, for example, Conwy County Borough Council, Gwynedd Council and Pembrokeshire, who work closely with ACW officers to share best practice.

ACW liaises with the National Association of Local Government Arts Officers regionally and nationally and operates the local authority investment programme, providing up to £220,000 of lottery funding per annum for arts development officer posts. ACW and local authorities collaborate to provide theatre in education and young people's theatre, for example, Cwmni'r Fran Wen is supported by Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy councils. Local authorities are also financial partners in the provision of community dance in north Wales, with all six counties in north Wales supporting a dance network with a part-time dance officer in each county.

ACW and Gwynedd, Anglesey, Denbighshire and Wrexham councils have developed arts in schools agencies which work to co-ordinate the use of lottery money to facilitate artists in schools projects. Denbighshire county arts service and ACW have also developed a pioneering arts in health provision in Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust, which is now being developed across the whole of north Wales with other authorities and NHS trusts.

By working closely together, ACW and the local authorities have managed to increase the reach to many more schools in disadvantaged and less motivated areas, increase the spread of art forms and developed more exciting and innovative projects. There is also regular liaison between the ACW night out team and 21 of the 22 local authorities.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the accessibility of arts in Wales? (WAQ48920)

Alun Pugh: The Arts Council of Wales works in partnership with arts organisations, disabled people and disability organisations to ensure that disabled people in Wales have equal access to the arts wherever they live.

ACW published its arts and disability strategy 'Moving Beyond' in 2005, developed in partnership with Disability Arts Cymru. A £2 million programme of capital development has provided real support to venues to address outstanding accessibility issues and help create not just participant opportunities but employment opportunities to more disabled people across Wales. Many Welsh venues are now equipped to address the needs of disabled people as participants and audiences. Adaptations to buildings and services include places for wheelchair users, hearing loops, infrared systems and sign interpreted performances.

ACW supports the development and growth of a disability arts culture in Wales through its strategy, supporting new and emerging disabled artists and disability led arts organisations to create an environment in which disabled people can take ownership of their arts and culture and find platforms to share their knowledge, skills and experience within the wider arts context.

For example, support has been provided to develop the work of Theatr Ffynnon, based in Abergavenny, providing nine grants totalling just under £100,000 over the past seven years to support activity including taster sessions, workshops, covering production costs and capacity building projects.

ACW's capital strategy prioritises projects related to meeting the requirements of Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. A number of awards have been made, including to Wyeside Arts Centre (£26,735), Chapter Arts Centre (£10,000), Torfaen Museum Trust (£45,000), Newport Playgoers Society (£10,000), Swansea Little Theatre (£280,000), and Theatr Twm o'r Nant (£23,900 indevelopment funding).

In summer 2005, following discussions with the Wales cinema exhibitors group, ACW commissioned an audit of projection facilities in arts venues in Wales. The report focused on the following:

- soft-subtitled screenings—optional subtitling for those with a hearing impairment projected by the primary projection system or through a secondary data projector. Subtitles for this purpose often include dialogue and descriptions of other sounds, unlike translation subtitles, which generally include dialogue only;
- audio-described screenings—personal systems for providing an audio description of on-screen action alongside the film's soundtrack; and
- audio-reinforcement—personal systems for providing improved soundtracks for those with hearing impairments.

The introduction of these will improve access to cinema screenings for visually impaired people and/or people who are hard of hearing.

Creative Mwldan were awarded a grant of £153,265 in September 2006 to install the equipment required to deliver the above at the following key venues in Wales: Aberystwyth Arts Centre; Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff; Galeri, Caernarfon; Riverfront, Newport; Taliesin Arts Centre, Swansea; Theatr Clwyd, Mold; Theatr Gwynedd, Bangor; Theatr Colwyn, Colwyn Bay; Theatr Mwldan, Cardigan and Wyeside Arts Centre, Builth Wells.

The installation of the equipment will be augmented by a package of technical training, training for front-of-house staff, disability awareness training and best practice guidance for the marketing and programming of screenings.

ACW has commissioned disability access audits where appropriate, including of Blackwood Little Theatre and Butetown Artists, which have both benefited from this and are using the audits as the basis to develop applications for funding.

In addition to projects funded specifically to undertake DDA-related work, ACW also ensures that all of its major capital schemes meet the requirements of the Act. Recent examples include the Wales Millennium Centre, Riverfront, Newport and Galeri, Caernarfon.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of Wales's regional theatre companies? (WAQ48921)

Alun Pugh: Our Arts Outside Cardiff programme provides an additional £2,000,000 investment every year into the performing arts outside Cardiff, in addition to the Welsh Assembly Government's support for the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff. This funding is allocated to regional performing arts centres, most of which include regional theatre companies.

The funding table below details the awards made to the regional performing arts centres. The venues have used the funding to support the presentation of high-quality performing arts events, more effective audience development and marketing work, joint productions with other venues and with touring companies, as well as widening the scope and scale of work available for other venues. In addition, many of the regional performing arts centres have supported smaller venues in their areas, thus spreading the benefit. The funding is also used to facilitate greater levels of co-ordinated planning and creative collaboration between venues.

In October 2006 I announced an additional £250,000 in revenue funding for English-language theatre, bringing the total funding for English-language theatre to £750,000 from 2007-08. Proposals for the use of this money were outlined to the Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee in October 2006.

Arts Outside Cardiff Funding, Regional Performing Arts Centres	Grant Amount
2004-05	
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	£20,500
Clwyd Theatr Cymru	£100,000
Cwmni Mega	£16,725
Diversions Dance Company Ltd	£35,317
Ensemble Cymru	£3,325
Mid Wales Opera	£3,325
Wales Theatre Company	£50,000
2004-05 Total	£229,192
2005-06	
Aberystwyth Arts Centre	£38,000
Blackwood Miners' Institute	£25,000
Carlson Dance Company	£40,000
Clwyd Theatr Cymru	£100,000
Creu Cymru - The Touring Agency for Wales	£9,775
Earthfall Dance Ltd.	£21,260
Galeri Caernarfon Cyf	£90,642
Grand Theatre Swansea	£60,000
Pavilion Theatre	£55,000
Rhondda Cynon Tâf County Borough Council	£70,000
Taliesin Arts Centre	£17,000
Taliesin Arts Centre	£63,640
The Riverfront	£35,000

Theatr Brycheiniog	£55,000
Theatr Hafren	£8,000
Theatr Mwldan	£55,000
Torch Theatre Company	£22,000
Venue Cymru	£10,000
2005-06 Total	£775,317
2006-07	
Aberystwyth Arts Centre	£125,879
Blackwood Miners' Institute	£50,000
Clwyd Theatr Cymru	£95,000
Creu Cymru – The Touring Agency for Wales	£17,755
Cwmni Mega	£35,000
Earthfall Dance Ltd.	£29,620
Galeri Caernarfon Cyf	£65,642
Galeri Caernarfon Cyf	£87,000
Grand Theatre Swansea	£40,000
Grand Theatre Swansea	£65,000
Mappa Mundi	£33,480
Pavilion Theatre	£124,822
Rhondda Cynon Tâf County Borough Council	£125,000
Spectacle Theatre	£88,486
Taliesin Arts Centre	£125,600
The Riverfront	£60,000
Theatr Brycheiniog	£120,000
Theatr Hafren	£49,852
Theatr Mwldan	£125,000
Torch Theatre Company	£99,520
Vale of Glamorgan Festival	£24,000
Venue Cymru	£34,852
Volcano Theatre Company	£74,392
2006-07 Total	£1,695,900
Grand Total	£2,700,409

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in developing the arts in Wales? (WAQ48922)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Assembly Government has significantly increased its spending on culture since devolution. Spending on supporting the arts, museums, libraries, archives, heritage and the Welsh language has more than doubled since 1998-99, from £50 million to over £103 million in 2006-07.

Spending on the arts has also doubled from £14.8 million in 1998-99 to £28.5 million in 2006-07.

In October 2006 I announced the provision of £250,000 in capital funding towards a feasibility study for a new cultural enterprise centre in Merthyr Tydfil, and an additional £250,000 revenue funding for English-language theatre, bringing the total funding for English-language theatre to £750,000 from 2007-08.

The report of the arts review was presented to me in November last year and debated in Plenary on 6 December. The report proposes the establishment of an arts strategy board, which will help to drive forward the arts in Wales. It proposes further work to examine the notion of cultural entitlement, joint working between ACW and local authorities through regional partnerships and the concept of national companies with a strategic remit.

My intention is to develop the arts review recommendations into an implementation plan that we can begin to action immediately.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in developing athletics in Wales? (WAQ48923)

Alun Pugh: Our Sports Council for Wales is supporting the Athletics Association of Wales in this financial year with £414,000 of funding for the development of athletics in Wales, which represents an increase of almost 20 per cent on last year's funding. SCW is also working with the AAW to review the competition structures for schools athletics and to identify the priorities for the development of athletics in schools by the Welsh Schools Athletics Association.

Schools athletics in Wales is also benefiting from 'Elevating Athletes', the UK teacher training programme and curriculum resource that enables pupils aged between five and 16 to experience the skills of running, jumping and throwing through a new and modern approach to teaching athletics. It is expected that 150 schools and 150 teachers will be delivering the programme by 2007 and 500 schools and 450 teachers will be on board by 2009.

Athletics is also one of the most popular sports included in Dragon Sport, the lottery-funded programme which aims to increase extra-curricular participation and sports club membership among children aged seven to 11. Dragon Sport is an important vehicle in encouraging young people into athletics.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on improving the promotion of the Castles of Wales (WAQ48924)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Assembly Government has in its care 44 castles across Wales, which are managed by our historic environment service, Cadw. These are iconic symbols of our history and heritage that are recognised on a world-wide stage—particularly, of course, those in north Wales built by or on behalf of Edward I, which include the world heritage site of Caernarfon, Conwy, Harlech and Beaumaris, but Denbigh Castle and town walls and Rhuddlan Castle are also key visitor attractions for the Vale of Clwyd. As is the case for all our heritage sites, these castles are promoted energetically through a suite of site-specific and regional marketing brochures. In 2007 Cadw will be introducing two new regional marketing brochures and a new all-Wales brochure with a combined increased print run of over 200,000. Furthermore, the castles and related events programmes are promoted through the internet and the press. Cadw also works closely with Visit Wales on UK and overseas marketing and with tourism-marketing consortia throughout Wales. We recognise, too, the importance of promoting the castles of Wales for the benefit of local communities and I am pleased that Cadw is to engage in an initiative in 2007 that will explore how community engagement with the monuments in our care can be further improved.

Owen John Thomas: Pa gamau y mae'r Llywodraeth yn eu cymryd i hyrwyddo pêl-fas—yr unig gêm gyda'i rheolau wedi'u llunio yng Nghymru? (WAQ48925) [W]

Alun Pugh: Mae'r gêm pêl-fas yng Nghymru yn derbyn cymorth gan Gyngor Chwaraeon Cymru, sy'n darparu cymorth ariannol a logistaidd i'r corff llywodraethu—Undeb Pêl-fas Cymru. Mae rhai ysgolion o fewn canolfannau datblygu, yn enwedig yng Nghaerdydd, wedi helpu i gefnogi/hyrwyddo pêl-fas drwy'r gwaith a wneir yn rhan o'r gweithgareddau sy'n gysylltiedig â gweithredu'r fenter addysg gorfforol a chwaraeon mewn ysgolion.

Owen John Thomas: What steps is the Government taking to promote baseball—the only game where the rules were made in Wales? (WAQ48925) [W]

Alun Pugh: The game of baseball in Wales is supported by our Sports Council for Wales, which provides financial and logistical support to the governing body—the Welsh Baseball Union. Some development centre schools, particularly in Cardiff, have helped to support/promote baseball through work undertaken as part of activities linked to delivery of the physical education and school sport initiative.

Owen John Thomas: Pa gamau y mae'r Llywodraeth yn eu cymryd ar y cyd gyda Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg i roi cefnogaeth ariannol i'r papur dyddiol Cymraeg arfaethedig, *Y Byd*? (WAQ48926) [W]

Alun Pugh: Nid oes unrhyw gynlluniau i ddarparu cyllid o fy mhortffolio i. Fodd bynnag, mae swyddogion o'r Adran Fenter, Arloesi a Rhwydweithiau wedi gwneud cynnig yn ddiweddar i gefnogi noddwyr *Y Byd* o dan y cynllun grant cymorth rhanbarthol dewisol.

Owen John Thomas: What steps is the Government taking jointly with the Welsh Language Board to give financial support to the proposed Welsh-language daily newspaper, *Y Byd*? (WAQ48926) [W]

Alun Pugh: There are no plans to provide funding from within my portfolio. However, officials from the Department for Enterprise, Innovations and Networks have recently made an offer of support to the sponsors of *Y Byd* under the regional selective assistance grant scheme.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on the role of the Sports Council for Wales in the distribution of funding to Welsh sport? (WAQ48927)

Alun Pugh: The Sports Council for Wales distributes funding to Welsh sport on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. It is also a lottery distributor under the terms of the National Lottery Act 1993 as amended.

Karen Sinclair: How is the Minister developing football in north-east Wales? (WAQ48928)

Alun Pugh: Football in north-east Wales is being actively promoted via a range of key partners including our Sports Council for Wales, the Football Association of Wales Trust and local authorities. Three football development officers, covering Denbighshire, Wrexham and Flintshire, are working with young people to encourage participation and improve skill levels. Regional squads have been established to support players progressing to our national squads and schools associations in the area are entering into a Welsh schools national competition.

There is also a dedicated disability football officer based in north Wales who is promoting the game in order that people with disabilities have opportunities to participate. Links have been established via clubs and regional festivals have been arranged involving young people with special educational needs.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on the preservation of historic monuments in north-east Wales? (WAQ48929)

Alun Pugh: North-east Wales contains almost 6,000 listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest and over 500 scheduled monuments in private or public ownership, including a number of monuments in the care of the Assembly Government and a potential world heritage site, the Pontcysyllte aqueduct and associated canal system. These historic assets bear testament to the place of the north-east in the history of Wales and it is vital that they are preserved. The Assembly Government is continuing to invest in conservation and promotion, as well as working with local communities to raise awareness and appreciation of monuments, for their protection from unsympathetic development, neglect or anti-social

behaviour. This will help contribute to the preservation of the historic environment and to the attractiveness of the region as an area in which to invest and live.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on how he is creating more sports coaches in Wales? (WAQ48930)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Assembly Government is investing £3.9 million in the coaching plan for Wales to increase the number and quality of voluntary and professional coaches, leaders and instructors in Wales. Over 16,000 training opportunities are provided each year for coaches at all levels.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister provide an update on progress made towards developing a strategy for hosting the Commonwealth Games? (WAQ48931)

Alun Pugh: My officials have had a number of discussions with the Commonwealth Games Council for Wales about the scope and scale of hosting a Commonwealth Games in Wales. Any strategy to host a mega event such as the Commonwealth Games will require significant investment and a realistic timescale. We also have to be mindful of Glasgow's bid to host the games in 2014 and the impact that this has on any potential bid from Wales, or, indeed, another nation in the United Kingdom.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on library usage in Flintshire? (WAQ48932)

Alun Pugh: Libraries in Flintshire are used for wide variety of purposes—choosing books for home loan, using the personal computers provided to find information from the internet, browsing newspapers and magazines, and finding out what is going on in the local area. Some libraries provide lifelong learning opportunities in partnership with local learning providers, and most arrange a programme of activities for children during school holidays. Several libraries also offer the opportunity for local artists to showcase their work.

Flintshire Library Services has recorded an increase in the level of activity across three key areas in 2005-06 compared to 2004-05. The number of visits rose by 14 per cent, and home loans by 4 per cent, while computer use increased by 55 per cent overall, as more people become aware of the range of facilities on offer.

Flintshire libraries, along with all public library services in Wales, and many academic libraries, will be participating in the Welsh Assembly Government funded @Your Library national marketing campaign. Co-ordinated by Wrexham Library and Information Service working with CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales, this campaign underlines the Welsh Assembly's commitment to promote access and usage of libraries in Wales. I will be launching 'Libraries—something to shout about' at New Tredegar Library on the 29 January.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on what the Assembly Government is doing to promote sport in Wales? (WAQ48933)

Alun Pugh: Our 'Climbing Higher' strategy aims to place sport and physical activity at the heart of Welsh life and Government and is a significant part of the Welsh Assembly Government's own response to Health Challenge Wales. To underpin this commitment, the Welsh Assembly Government will be investing over £24 million next year in sport and physical activity, which represents an increase of 250 per cent on the sport budget since 1999.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on his policies for improving sporting facilities across Wales? (WAQ48934)

Alun Pugh: Wales is well served by public sports facilities with over 725 sports halls, swimming pools, squash courts, artificial turf pitches and other physical activity amenities. These are complemented by a wide range of private facilities that are available for public use.

The Sports council is currently reviewing the stock of local-authority-owned leisure centres and pools in Wales to assist local authorities in identifying and prioritising those in need of refurbishment and/or upgrading. In the meantime, lottery funding continues to improve sporting facilities across Wales through Sportlot and the Big Lottery Fund. The Welsh Assembly Government is also investing in local-authority-owned leisure centres and swimming pools through the free swimming improvement fund to improve the ambiance and experience for customers and visitors with the aim of encouraging return visits and regular and sustained participation in sport and physical activity.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on his policies for promoting the Welsh language? (WAQ48935)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Assembly Government has made an undisputable commitment towards the Welsh language, including a substantial investment, since 2003, of an additional £40 million by the end of this financial year. The Assembly Government's policies for promoting the Welsh language are contained in 'Iaith Pawb'—our national action plan for a bilingual Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government produces an annual report setting out its performance in implementing 'Iaith Pawb'. The report for 2005-06 was published and debated in the Assembly in July 2006 and contains numerous examples of how the Welsh language has been promoted across portfolios. The report for 2006-07 will be published and debated this summer.

The Assembly Government is also committed to a full evaluation of 'Iaith Pawb' during 2007.

Questions to the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks

Leanne Wood: Has the Minister corresponded with a minister in Westminster regarding amended motion NDM3223 carried in the Assembly on Tuesday 3 October and, if so, will the Minister detail the contents of and response to that correspondence? (WAQ48971)

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): No. This is a matter for Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on progress with the Welsh Assembly Government's economic development policies? (WAQ48893)

Andrew Davies: The dynamic Welsh economy now has over 1.3 million people in work, the highest number since records began. This is an increase of over 10 per cent since the Assembly was created in 1999, which is significantly higher than the UK as a whole. We are continuing to secure more and better jobs as evidenced by the recent announcement that the new multi-billion pound Defence Training Academy will be located at St Athan, creating up to 5,500 jobs—the largest single investment Wales has ever received.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister provide a full itemised breakdown of the £34,683.92 spent on the reception at last May's FA Cup final? (WAQ48991)

Andrew Davies: The £34,683.92 comprises £1,771.00 for a helicopter, £146.87 for cars, £240.00 for coaches, £17,390.00 for tickets, £7,390 for accommodation (for two nights), £1,497.30 for dinner, £6,168.75 for an after-dinner speaker, and £80 for flowers. I refer you to the written statement that have made on this matter.

Alun Ffred Jones: Beth oedd cyllidebau adran CADW yn y blynyddoedd: 1999-2000, 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07? (WAQ48996) [W]

Alun Pugh: Yr oedd cyllidebau net Cadw fel a ganlyn:

1999-2000	£10,838,000
2000-01	£11,393,000
2001-02	£12,286,000
2002-03	£12,809,000
2003-04	£12,555,000
2004-05	£12,916,000
2005-06	£14,127,000
2006-07	£14,002,000

Alun Ffred Jones: What were Cadw's budgets for the following years: 1999-2000, 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07? (WAQ48996) [W]

Alun Pugh: Cadw's net budgets were as follows:

1999-2000	£10,838,000
2000-01	£11,393,000
2001-02	£12,286,000
2002-03	£12,809,000
2003-04	£12,555,000
2004-05	£12,916,000
2005-06	£14,127,000
2006-07	£14,002,000

Alun Ffred Jones: Faint o gapeli sydd wedi'u rhestru gan Cadw yn adeiladau o ddiddordeb arbennig? (WAQ48997) [W]

Alun Ffred Jones: Faint o gapeli sydd wedi'u rhestru yn adeiladau rhestredig gradd I, gradd II*, a gradd II? (WAQ48998) [W]

Alun Pugh: Yn sgîl arolwg a wnaed o holl gapeli Cymru, mae 826 wedi'u rhestru'n adeiladau o ddiddordeb arbennig neu bensaernïol. Dyma'r niferoedd yn ôl eu gradd:

Gradd I: 12;
Gradd II*: 74;
Gradd II: 740.

Alun Ffred Jones (Caernarfon): How many chapels have been listed by Cadw as buildings of special interest? (WAQ48997)[W]

Alun Ffred Jones (Caernarfon): How many chapels have been designated as grade i, grade II* and grade II listed buildings? (WAQ48998) [W]

Alun Pugh: Following a survey of all chapels in Wales, 826 have been listed as buildings of special or architectural interest. The numbers by grade are:

Grade I: 12;
Grade II*: 74;
Grade II: 740.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in improving public transport in Wales? (WAQ48939)

Andrew Davies: Improving the transport system is critical to our goal of raising the quality of life for the people of Wales. We are making excellent progress. We have new powers in the Transport Wales Act 2006 and the Railways Act 2005. Also our emerging Wales transport strategy sets out our agenda for integrated transport and provides a coherent and comprehensive framework for taking this forward. Regional transport plans, established by each of the four regional transport consortia in Wales, will then set the priorities that will deliver our strategic outcomes.

Catherine Thomas: Will the Minister list the five financially largest Objective 1 projects in the Llanelli constituency since 2000? (WAQ 48972)

Andrew Davies: Since 2000, the five largest Objective 1 projects in the Llanelli area by grant allocation are:

- Dyfatty Park—£2,270,000;
- Technium for Performance Engineering—£4,606,000;
- Delta Lakes—£1,040,000;
- Eastern Access link road—£ 2,291,000; and
- Llanelli Town Centre Regeneration—£2,364,048.

Catherine Thomas: Will the Minister list the five financially largest projects in receipt of regional selective assistance in the Llanelli constituency since 2000? (WAQ48973)

Andrew Davies: Details are below.

Company Name	Value of Offer (£)	Forecast New Jobs	Forecast Safeguarded Jobs
Spencer Davies Handling Ltd	250,000	30	0
Krupp Camford Pressings Ltd	280,000	0	25
Dura Cables Ltd	3,000,000	307	208
Llanelli Radiators Ltd/Calsonic	8,135,000	0	829
Dawn Meats (UK) Ltd	10,400,000	215	395

Mark Isherwood: What is the current forecast cost of the A494 Drome Corner to Ewloe improvement? (WAQ48976)

Andrew Davies: The current forecast cost of the scheme is some £67 million at present day prices.

Kirsty Williams: What discussions has the Minister had with Cardiff council, and other relevant bodies, regarding traffic management around the Millennium Stadium? (WAQ48985)

Andrew Davies: Transport Wales officials attend regular meetings of the Millennium Stadium events liaison group to discuss and plan for the traffic management that may be necessary on the strategic trunk road network for each individual event that is staged at the Millennium Stadium. Cardiff County Council is also represented at these liaison group meetings in its role as the responsible highway authority for roads within the capital city.

Kirsty Williams: What discussions has the Minister had with Cardiff council, and other relevant bodies, regarding the provision of public transport in Cardiff when there is an event at the Millennium Stadium? (WAQ48986)

Andrew Davies: Transport Wales officials attend regular meetings of the Millennium Stadium events liaison group to discuss and plan for the traffic management and the provision of public transport for each individual event that is staged at the Millennium Stadium. Cardiff County Council and Cardiff Bus are also represented at these liaison group meetings.

Kirsty Williams: What action has the Welsh Assembly Government take to promote the use of public transport to sporting events? (WAQ48987)

Andrew Davies: We encourage the organisers of sporting events, e.g. at the Millennium Stadium, to liaise with local authorities, bus and train operators as well as the police. We promote the use of travel plans through smarter choices. Our regional travel plan co-ordinators are available to assist organisers in this task.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the timetable for the proposed by-pass for Llandeilo? (WAQ49005)

Andrew Davies: A public workshop and consultation exhibition was held in April 2006 to consider options for resolving traffic problems in Llandeilo and Ffairfach. All responses received have been carefully considered and analysed. I intend to announce my preferred option very soon when the findings of the workshop and consultation will also be made public.

The scheme is in phase 2 of the trunk road forward programme, which includes schemes that could be ready to start by 2010 subject to statutory consent procedures and the availability of finance.

Leighton Andrews: What grants or other support have been given by the Welsh Assembly Government or its agencies to Wastechique Ltd? (WAQ49007)

Andrew Davies: Since the inception of the Assembly, Wastechique has accepted three offers of Assembly investment grant and one offer of regional selective assistance totalling just over £230,000.

Leighton Andrews: What grants or other support have been given to Sims Recycling Solutions (Newport) and for what purposes by the Welsh Assembly Government? (WAQ49008)

Andrew Davies: Since the inception of the Assembly, Sims Recycling Solutions has received assistance as follows:

Date	Amount offered	Purpose of offer
January 2002	£250,000	RSA grant to set up of an environmental (fridge) recycling facility at Newport
April 2003	£240,000	RSA grant to expand the fridge recycling facility at Newport
July 2003	1,720,000	Freight facilities grant (offered to Sims and Associated British Ports)
November 2005	£350,000	RSA grant to set up of a waste electrical and electronic equipment facility at Newport

Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister outline his proposals to support innovation? (WAQ49009)

Andrew Davies: Key actions to promote innovation are delivered through the innovation section of our economic development strategy 'WAVE' and the innovation action plan.

A major review of activities was undertaken in 2006, which recommended focusing Welsh Assembly Government innovation support on the following key themes in line with the priorities of the innovation action plan for Wales (currently being updated), science policy and EU and UK Government priorities for science and innovation:

- innovation centres and specialist research and design facilities;
- simplified, flexible innovation and research and design funding;
- business / academia collaboration;
- technology transfer, intellectual property and commercialisation;
- development and adoption of new technologies;
- technology advisory services;
- sectors and networks;
- development, futures and awareness.

These key priorities are delivered by a pan-Wales team of specialists (around 100 strong) who deliver a range of innovation support for businesses, including financial support to invest in research and development (SMARTCymru) and finance for academic Institutions through the knowledge exploitation fund.

We have also been actively contributing to the formulation of the innovation strategic framework under priority 1 of the 2007 to 2013 convergence programme.

An update of the innovation action plan will be published later this year.

Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on resources available to help inventors develop their ideas? (WAQ49010)

Andrew Davies: The Wales innovators network was established in 2002. The network provides unique support to assist Welsh lone inventors in commercially exploiting their ideas. The network, which has over 1,000 members Wales wide, offers free impartial support to assist inventors to development their concept ideas into commercial products. The support provided ranges from confidential one-to-one counselling meetings and networking events, to introductions to partner organisations and other business support services. In addition, inventors are provided with a range of funding to assist the development process, which covers areas such as the protection of intellectual property and the design and prototyping of the idea. The funding is accompanied by bespoke advice via the innovation and technology counsellor network.

Since its launch in 2002, the programme has attained a number of achievements. In 2006, the programme won an international recognition award for its support to lone inventors. Twenty-four products have been taken successfully to market and a number of inventors have won special awards at various events, such as the British Invention Show and the International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva, over the last three years.

Questions to the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh Assembly Government policy to further promote extracurricular activity for school pupils in Wales? (WAQ48938)

The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Davidson): In ‘The Learning Country’ I set a target that every young person should be entitled to a full prospectus of out-of-school-hours learning activities by 2010.

I reinforced this in ‘The Learning Country: Vision into Action’, which commits the Assembly Government to tackling poverty of educational opportunity and raising standards in schools. By promoting out-of-school-hours learning, we will enrich non-formal learning, help to raise standards in basic and key skills, as well as in curriculum areas and personal, social and emotional development.

I have made available £250,000 to ContinYou Cymru over the last three years to enable it to promote, support and develop out-of-school-hours learning across Wales and to provide a strategic development for sustaining out-of-school-hours learning programmes.

I have also made available over £10 million between 2005 and 2008 towards the development of the community-focused schools agenda, which complements out-of-school-hours learning and supports the development of services, activities and facilities for both pupils and the wider community.

Since 1998-99 The Welsh Assembly Government has invested over £80 million in ICT provision for schools, including funding for suites of computers in all secondary schools, which could be used to support out-of-hours learning for school pupils, as well as extending access to ICT in the curriculum. Work is currently in hand on an ICT strategy which will build on this investment, with a strong focus on how ICT can be used to transform learning within and beyond the school.

I am also providing support through the Better Schools Fund for a range of initiatives to achieve the visions and aspirations of ‘Iaith Pawb’ and in particular to expand opportunities for pupils to use and experience Welsh in extracurricular settings.

Through our 14-19 learning pathways agenda we are transforming young people’s options and opportunities. We are extending choice and flexibility, securing individual tailored learning pathways that meet learners’ needs, and providing richer opportunities and experiences that will help learners develop the wider skills that they need for life.

This is backed by a unique blend of support that will ensure that all learners have the advice and guidance that they need to make good choices and to overcome barriers to learning. An integral part of this support is aimed at providing young people with access to learning in a different context through the informal non-traditional learning experiences that meet the learner’s needs and interests, thus providing a balanced learning pathway. This can include a range of options, covering residential experiences, hobbies or sport activities, and membership of clubs or societies.

On 18 October I announced that the Welsh baccalaureate qualification will be rolled out at advanced and intermediate levels in post-16 education. Applications from over 50 providers across Wales are now being considered and an announcement about the providers that will deliver the Welsh baccalaureate from

September 2007 will be made shortly. We are also piloting a foundation-level Welsh baccalaureate, alongside the intermediate level model in 14-19 learning. This extension to the pilot commenced in 18 schools and colleges in September 2006, with roll-out planned from September 2009, subject to evaluation.

The Welsh baccalaureate requires active participation in community issues and in work experience and it offers the opportunity to accredit everything that learners do, both in the formal learning environment and in extracurricular activities.

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that it is vital for children and young people to have early positive experiences in sport and physical activity to ensure that they continue to participate throughout their adulthood, thereby deriving the health benefits of an active lifestyle.

The Sports Council for Wales's lottery-funded Dragon Sport scheme aims to increase extracurricular participation and sports club membership among young people aged between 7 and 11 through the activities of football, netball, rugby, athletics, hockey, tennis, golf and cricket. Based on the success of Dragon Sport, the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport launched in October 2006 a new secondary school sport programme, backed by Welsh Assembly Government funding of £7.6 million, to improve further the provision of extracurricular opportunities for young people aged between 11 and 16. We expect all local authorities in Wales to have at least one school taking part in the programme during this current school year 2006-07. Both programmes are designed to increase the percentage of young people that take part in five 60-minute sessions of sport and physical activity per week.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make statement on Welsh Assembly Government policy on what constitutes the desirable maximum pupil numbers for schools in Wales? (WAQ48941)

Jane Davidson: It is for local education authorities to plan schools in their own locality in the light of population patterns and demand and to decide on their appropriate size. The Welsh Assembly Government does not recommend either maximum or minimum sizes for schools. Of the 1,572 primary schools in Wales at Jan 2006, just 62 had over 400 pupils (five had over 600 pupils). Out of 224 secondary schools, 18 had over 1,500 pupils.

I understand that Newport Local Education Authority has in the past indicated that, in its view, primary schools should ideally be no more than two form entry and that secondary schools should have no more than 1,300 pupils in the 11 to 16 age group.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on the delivery of vocational education in the Welsh language? (WAQ48942)

Jane Davidson: Welsh-medium vocational provision in schools and the further education and work-based learning sectors is still at a low base. The Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills is engaging with providers in a coordinated approach to this challenge.

The area network development plans for 14-19 learning pathways have to include Welsh-medium development.

A total of 17 bilingual development plan partnerships between schools and FE colleges for expanding Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, especially vocational, have been funded for 2006 to 2008, and specifically vocational provision will be supported for 2007-09.

The Sgiliaith/CYDAG partnership provides a central all-Wales support service for the post-16 sector for the development of Welsh-medium and bilingual provision.

A total of 29 Welsh-medium/bilingual secondary schools by 2007-08 will have received state-of-the-art video-conferencing equipment, with technical support and training, to enable access to courses from other partners.

Bilingual champions are being piloted in three FE colleges as a means of creating a supportive infrastructure for Welsh-medium provision.

The shortage of practitioners able to deliver vocational provision in Welsh is being tackled through the Welsh-language sabbaticals scheme.

High-quality Welsh-medium resources for vocational subjects are being commissioned in six priority subject areas.

Through a two-year pilot scheme with awarding bodies, an additional 31 Welsh-medium vocational qualifications are now available.

Ann Jones: What additional measures is the Minister considering to reduce the number of pupils leaving school without a recognised qualification? (WAQ48943)

Jane Davidson: On 21 December 2006 I announced that the numbers of 15-year-olds leaving full-time education without a recognised qualification in Wales have reached an all-time low.

New figures for 2006 show that there has been a drop in the numbers of 15-year-olds leaving full-time education without a recognised qualification from 832 to 806.

These figures demonstrate that the education system is moving in the right direction. Achieving at least one qualification is essential to give young people a chance of a better life, a better-paid job and more security for the future.

We remain determined—as set out in ‘The Learning Country: Vision into Action’—that by 2010 no pupil should leave education without an approved qualification.

By encouraging more young people to achieve their potential they will be better equipped for the world of work and become better informed and more active citizens. We must interest and motivate them to achieve the highest possible level of achievement, which also enhances Wales’s potential.

In many cases it may be more beneficial for the young person to take vocational or work-based options rather than a purely academic route.

Within the 14-19 action plan we have set ourselves clear targets on this—by September 2008 we will ensure opportunities are in place for young people to undertake skill-based and vocational learning

There is also an important interface between work-based learning and the Assembly Government’s 14-19 learning pathways policy, which aims to ensure that young people of all abilities have access to a significantly enhanced range of options including work-focused experience.

In 2006-07 the money available to the 14-19 networks totaled £8.5 million across the whole of Wales, which supported the development of the work in the 14-19 network areas in taking forward learning pathways, which include a range of collaborative activities aimed at reducing the numbers of pupils leaving school without qualifications.

The funding that I have made available for 2007-08 is £32.5 million, which represents considerable investment in 14-19 learning pathways by the Welsh Assembly Government and will be instrumental in

changing the pattern of spending in all partner learning settings and organisations and will help to secure better achievement for all learners.

The learning coach role is also a crucial development in helping retaining young people in learning. The learning coach role is key to supporting the learner in the learning-related aspects of the whole learning pathway, with a focus on maximising the young person's ability to learn and the motivation to remain in learning to achieve qualifications.

Owen John Thomas: Pa gamau y mae'r Llywodraeth yn eu cymryd i ddarbwylllo awdurdodau lleol i gynnal arolwg i bennu'r galw am addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg? (WAQ48944) [W]

Jane Davidson: Yn y canllawiau ar baratoi cynlluniau addysg sengl anogwyd awdurdodau lleol, yn enwedig y rheini mewn ardaloedd lle mae cyfran is na'r cyfartaledd o'r boblogaeth yn siarad Gymraeg, i gynnal arolygon i asesu'r galw am addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg ymhlith rhieni plant ifanc. Mae'r cynlluniau addysg sengl wedi'u harchwilio bellach ac atgoffwyd yr awdurdodau hynny a nododd nad oeddent yn bwriadu cynnal arolwg pa mor ddymunol fyddai gwneud hynny. Mae'r rhan fwyaf o'r awdurdodau bellach naill ai wedi cynnal arolwg neu mae ganddynt gynlluniau ar droed i wneud hynny.

Owen John Thomas: What steps is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to persuade local authorities to undertake a survey to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education? (WAQ48944) [W]

Jane Davidson: Guidance on the preparation of single education plans encouraged local authorities, particularly those in areas where Welsh is spoken by a below-average proportion of the population, to carry out surveys to assess demand for Welsh-medium education among the parents of young children. Single education plans have been examined and those authorities that did not indicate an intention to carry out a survey have been reminded of the desirability of doing so. Most authorities now have either carried out a survey or are making plans to do so.

Michael German: What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that teachers are safe from violence at work? (WAQ48945)

Jane Davidson: It is essential that headteachers in Wales have the powers necessary to run a safe school.

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety with an individual's employer. Education employers have duties to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of teachers and other education staff, pupils in school and on off-site visits, visitors to schools, and volunteers involved in any school activity.

Day-to-day responsibility for health and safety is generally delegated to the headteacher as a part of his or her overall responsibility for the school. However the employer retains the ultimate responsibility, no matter who carries out the tasks. The employer should therefore maintain an audit track, making clear who is doing what and confirming that these tasks are being carried out.

Under section 40 and Schedule 13 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, responsibility for the control of the use of the school premises rests with the governing body. The headteacher has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school, which includes deciding who can enter the school premises. Decisions therefore on who should come into the school rest with the governing body and headteacher. This gives the headteacher the power to ban any person from entering the school premises, especially if an aggressive person poses a threat to a teacher or to a pupil.

Schools and police already have some powers when they suspect a weapon is on school premises:
Schools can:

- search a pupil's desk or locker without the pupil's consent: the desk or locker is school property;
- search a pupil's bag or jacket, with the pupil's consent; and
- ask the police to do a personal search.

Police can

- do a personal search without the pupil's consent;
- enter a school to search, without the head teacher's consent; and
- do an un-announced, general search in a school.

Clause 42 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 provides a new power for headteachers to search a pupil whom they reasonably suspect to be carrying a knife or other weapon on his person or in his belonging. It is for the National Assembly for Wales to decide if and when to commence these powers in Wales and it is our intention to consult on the proposal to introduce these powers in due course.

Michael German: What funding is available for the installation of sprinklers in schools? (WAQ48946)

Jane Davidson: Local authorities have their own annual capital allocations (general capital funding), capital receipts and prudential borrowing as well as the Assembly Government's school buildings improvement grant.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding of major school building projects? (WAQ48947)

Jane Davidson: Local authorities have available their own annual capital allocations (general capital funding), capital receipts and prudential borrowing as well as the Assembly Government's school building improvement grant. Since 2002, 1575 projects have received Assembly Government school buildings improvement grant, including 140 costing over £0.5 million. Ninety-one major projects, costing £191 million, are already in progress or have been approved using authorities' £9 million lump sum shares of school building improvement grant, which are available over the period 2005-06 to 2009-10.

Peter Black: Will then Minister make a statement on the cost of implementing the foundation phase? (WAQ48948)

Jane Davidson: I would draw your attention to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee paper ELLS(2) 01-07(paper 5) and the building the foundation phase action plan. Together these documents set out the actions and investment we shall deliver in the lead up to and beyond September 2008, when the foundation phase will be introduced. My commitment to the foundation phase is illustrated by the increasing investment we have made in the foundation phase since the pilot started in 2004-05. Since then the budget has increased from £0.5 million to £10 million in 2007-08. Funding for future years will be dealt with in each successive budget planning round.

Mick Bates: Will the Minister make a statement on minimum standards for school buildings? (WAQ48949)

Jane Davidson: School buildings and sites have to conform with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999, the Constructional Standards for School Buildings, Welsh Office circular 54/97 and the Constructional Standards for School Buildings in Wales: National Assembly for Wales Circular 03/02. Alterations or new build must meet the building regulations and receive approval by the local authority building control or an approved inspector. Planning permission must also be granted by the relevant planning authority and plans also have to be submitted to the local fire officer.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister outline her policies for supporting higher education in Wales? (WAQ48950)

Jane Davidson: The Government's policies for supporting higher education in Wales have been set out in 'Reaching Higher' and in 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action'. They are to modernise the collaborative efforts of higher education in Wales, to widen access significantly, improve income generation, lift research activity and exploit knowledge transfer to the benefit of the economy in Wales and to support Welsh students and enable them to participate in higher education.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister update us on her priorities for the next six months? (WAQ48951)

Jane Davidson: My priorities continue to be to meet commitments in 'Wales: A Better Country' and 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action', putting learners' interests first, overcoming barriers to learning, promoting equal opportunities, high expectations and standards.

The Education Lifelong Learning and Skills departmental expenditure limit stands at £1.7 billion, an increase of some £165 million or 10.7 per cent over 2006-07 levels. This significant investment is enabling us to continue to deliver high-quality education in Wales.

At the same time we will be working to deliver actions identified in 'Making the Connections' and 'Beyond Boundaries' so that the benefits of education investment are maximised.

In particular we are liaising with public and private sector partners to ensure Wales maximises opportunities for strategic use of new European funding programmes 2007 to 2013, including development of strategic frameworks and projects for both the convergence programme (in west Wales) and the regional competitiveness programme (in east Wales), as well as new opportunities for improving economic linkages with Ireland via the INTERREG III programme.

'Wales: A Better Country'

Top up fees—(Top Ten commitment)

From 2006-07, student support services are devolved to the Assembly. Student Finance Wales provides grants and loans to students in partnership with the Student Loans Company Ltd and local authorities. In line with the manifesto commitment, variable fees have not been introduced in Wales during the current Assembly term but the Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that higher education institutions in Wales do not suffer as a consequence of this. To this end, in the current academic year, a supplementary income stream of £33.5 million is being paid to higher education institutions.

School Breakfasts—(Top Ten commitment)

There are approximately 1,600 eligible primary schools in Wales. The initiative is optional for both schools and pupils attending participating schools. There are many benefits to participating in the initiative such as improving concentration levels and children's attitude to learning and providing children with a good start to the school day.

Based on the most recent information available from LEAs, there were a total of 357 schools confirmed as having started serving breakfast by the end of the summer term 2006. A further 199 schools were scheduled to participate during autumn term 2006. In addition, already a further 114 schools have signed up to participate by the end of autumn term 2007. We continue to work in partnership with schools and LEAs to support and encourage take up for this initiative.

School Buildings—(Top Ten commitment)

We have invested over £100 million per year in school buildings since 2002, and from 2005-06 onwards this has risen to an average of £150 million per year. Overall investment over the lifetime of this

Assembly now stands at £660 million. A further £7 million has been added to the school improvement grant budget to take account of inflationary pressures in the construction costs to ensure that continued progress is made towards making sure that schools are in good physical shape, well maintained and fit for purpose.

We will be discussing and agreeing target dates with individual LEAs as to when they will reach the fitness for purpose targets.

Other 'Wales: A Better Country' priorities include:

Early Years—Foundation Phase

The foundation phase is currently being piloted in 42 schools/settings—the pilot started in September 2004 and will continue until the statutory roll-out starts in September 2008. The pilot covers the full, three to seven, age range of the foundation phase. On 4 December I published the building the foundation phase action plan, which set out the activities and milestones for introducing the foundation phase.

With regard to workforce development and training a major in-service training programme for foundation phase staff—teachers and support staff—will be introduced from April 2007. This programme will be delivered through partnership-working between local authorities and higher education institutions, on the basis of regional consortia. A five-day bilingual training pack is being prepared which will underpin the training programme. We shall also provide funding to each local authority to employ a foundation phase training and support officer from April 2007.

Also in April a high-profile communications strategy to prepare for the roll-out of the foundation phase will be introduced.

Raising Achievement and Individual Standards in Education

As part of our manifesto commitment to getting the worst-performing schools to catch up with the ever-improving performance of the best schools, the £16 million RAISE programme is targeting the link between deprivation and attainment in order to enhance the educational expectations and attainment of deprived pupils of all ages. The programme has three key elements of funding:

1. to target schools to fund focused projects and initiatives aimed at supporting pupils who are disadvantaged or most at risk of low attainment—or leaving full time education with no qualifications;
2. to local authorities to enable them to better support the learning of looked after children; and
3. the balance will fund through regional consortia school improvement professionals to work with LEAs and schools identifying and sharing best practice and building a sound evidence base on which to base future policy direction and external evaluation.

Priorities for the next six months include working with consortia on regional approaches and support, running events to share best practice and early emerging themes, appointing a National LAC coordinator, and allocation of year 2 grants.

Curriculum and Assessment Consultations

The consultation exercise on the revised curriculum for Wales is now underway. The consultation is focused on a revised set of national curriculum orders, the foundation phase's framework for children's learning, a revised personal and social education framework for seven to 19-year-olds, a national exemplar framework for religious education for three to 19-year-olds, a new careers and the world of work framework for 11 to 19-year-olds, and a non-statutory skills framework for three to 19-year-olds. The consultation exercise on the assessment arrangements at key stages 2 and 3 closed on 12 January. These outcomes are being analysed in detail.

Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification

On 18 October 2006, I announced that there would be a staged roll-out of the Welsh baccalaureate qualification to all learning providers from September 2007. The decision was made following an

extensive external evaluation by the Centre for Developing and Evaluating Life-long Learning at the University of Nottingham. We are in the process of selecting centres for the first stage of roll-out to start in September and these will be announced shortly.

The Welsh baccalaureate qualification is presently being piloted at levels 2 (intermediate) and 3 (advanced) of the national qualifications framework in post-16 provision in 31 schools and colleges. From September 2006 a level 1 (foundation) model is also being piloted alongside the intermediate model in 14-19 provision in 18 centres.

Learning Pathways 14-19 and Extending Entitlement

Providing better options and opportunities for young people means greater degree of collaborative work between partners, including schools, colleges and other service providers. Guidance on learning pathways 14-19 and our Extending Entitlement policies is already bearing fruit in terms of the development of partnership and network-based working arrangements to take forward delivery plans and provide real opportunity and choice for young people throughout Wales. There is a significant commitment to learning pathways—£8.5 million in 2006-07 and £32.5 million in 2007-08. Six key elements of learning pathways will ensure that, over time, all learners 14-19 receive the appropriate balance of learning experiences that best meet their needs.

All 22 14-19 networks are responsible for securing a range of programmes and the necessary support to ensure learners have access to all elements of learning pathways 14-19. Each network is delivering on a comprehensive annual network development plan for 2006-07 which will take forward all six elements of learning pathways 14-19.

Welsh-medium education

The Welsh-language sabbaticals scheme demonstrates my commitment to supporting Welsh-medium education and investing in the profession in Wales. The scheme provides intensive Welsh-language immersion and methodology training to encourage practitioners to teach, lecture or train through the medium of Welsh or bilingually.

The purpose of the scheme is to target practitioners in schools, FE colleges and work-based training providers who already speak Welsh to a fairly fluent standard, either as first-language speakers or as fluent learners, but who lack the confidence or specialised terminology in Welsh to use these skills in a professional context. The course therefore offers intensive language training for the education context to enable such practitioners to teach through the medium of Welsh or bilingually on return to their places of employment.

Following feedback from the education profession, a variation to the pilot is being introduced in January 2007 with a distance learning course.

Plans for roll-out of the scheme from September 2007, according to my commitment as stated in 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action', are being drawn up, taking into account the findings from the external evaluation of the pilot.

Basic Skills Strategy

The refreshed basic skills strategy, 'Words Talk—Numbers Count', includes actions across all age groups and in all sectors to better prepare young children for learning when they begin school and reduce the numbers of children, young people and adults with low literacy and numeracy. The second phase of the strategy is rather more focused on those in greatest need, for example by targeting Communities First areas for intensive support.

Shortly, a new campaign will be launched targeting raising literacy levels in primary schools. The campaign for 2006-07 is 'Read a Million Words in Wales' and the aim of this campaign is to encourage positive attitudes towards reading among the target audience of primary school children, especially those attending schools in Communities First areas and other areas of significant disadvantage.

Pathfinders

During the coming six months, priorities for progressing the geographical pathfinders programme include completing development of an overarching guidance framework for progressing the implementation of Pathfinder projects: progressing the implementation of the four pathfinders that have completed their initial consultation (Dyfi Valley, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil), and identifying the four areas that will be investigated in the next round of pathfinders.

In the longer term, all our commitments are reaffirmed in 'The Learning Country: Vision into Action'.

Karen Sinclair: What action is being taken to promote the take-up of vocational learning routes in Wales? (WAQ48952)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government strongly supports vocational learning. Indeed, Megan, the fictional learner whom I feature in the introduction to my recent policy document, 'The Learning Country, Vision Into Action', decides to take a vocational route, a modern apprenticeship in engineering. A further demonstration of my strong support for vocational learning was my appointment of a vocational skills champion to influence and drive-up demand for vocational skills among employers and to work with schools, colleges and other providers to improve the range and quality of vocational provision. A wide range of other initiatives has also been taken.

In November 2005 my Deputy Minister, Christine Chapman, produced a report setting out her recommendations for taking forward the 14-19 learning pathways programme. This programme aims to transform the education and training opportunities available to young people in Wales. It requires all pupils to have access to work-focused education and in so doing it gives greater emphasis to the importance of vocational learning. An action plan was produced in March 2006 and one of the key aims of the action plan is to consider how existing vocational qualifications for 14 to 16 and 16 to 19-year-olds can be developed and supplemented to provide a strong vocational qualifications element within learning pathways.

As part of the 14-19 learning pathways programme, my officials are working with sector skills councils to develop work-focused learning pathways (combined apprenticeships). The sector skills councils are working closely with 14-19 networks, schools, colleges, training providers and employers to develop pilot programmes that will combine study in school with practical hands-on experience in a work setting. Development work is underway in the manufacturing, construction and automotive sectors and work is also ongoing with several other sector skills councils to take forward additional routes. I expect the first pilots to begin in September 2007.

I have also established a 14-19 employer engagement taskforce and, earlier this month, we issued a consultation document on a curriculum framework for careers and the world of work.

As part of the review of the work-based learning programme, one of the key themes is to redesign and make more accessible vocational learning opportunities so that they are a viable option for those people seeking an alternative to purely academic learning. The review of the work-based learning programme is timely in that it may open up greater opportunities when developing the 14-19 learning pathways programme.

Every 14-19 local area network has included vocational education in its annual network development plan for 2006-07. In many cases this has meant new vocational pathways with partnerships formed between schools, FE institutions and/or work-based learning providers. Some local area networks plan to use their capital allocation for the refurbishment or new build of vocational skills centres for this age group. All local area networks are required to include work-related education within their annual network development plans.

The Welsh baccalaureate qualification has been successfully piloted in 31 schools and colleges across Wales at Advanced and Intermediate levels. Building on this, a foundation level model is being piloted. Following the positive evaluation of the Welsh baccalaureate by the University of Nottingham it will be rolled-out in post-16 provision from September 2007. The Welsh baccalaureate programme has been specifically designed to allow vocational qualifications to be included and to give equal recognition to academic and vocational routes, whilst requiring the development by all learners of skills for the workplace.

The Welsh Assembly Government is also funding two pilots and a number of bilingual development plans for collaborative provision between schools and colleges which seek to expand the provision and take-up of vocational and vocationally-related learning routes through the medium of Welsh, or bilingually.

Finally, a number of marketing initiatives have been, or will soon be, launched to encourage increased take-up of vocational provision in Wales:

- **Skills. People. Success**—for the first time, all skills-related products/services offered to businesses in Wales by the department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills are promoted under the banner of the workforce development programme. Human resource development advisors have been contracted to offer this service to businesses;
- ‘An Employer’s, and Individual’s Guide to Apprenticeships’—this guide is being produced and includes six sector-specific case studies which demonstrate the benefits to businesses of work-based learning;
- ‘Your Guide to Training and Support’—a resource that has been developed for referral agencies with up-to-date information on training and funding opportunities. The guide has been disseminated to every Careers Wales regional office, JobCentrePlus and Learn Direct centre;
- **Where Now**—an annual campaign that provides young people with information on the full range of post-16 options and which has been developed in collaboration with Careers Wales;
- **modern apprenticeship awards**—a celebration of the high standards reached by the many employers, awarding bodies and candidates involved in modern apprenticeships;
- **learning choices database**—this is a web-enabled search facility that provides information on all post-16 learning opportunities. The database has been developed in liaison with Careers Wales/Learn Direct and was launched in the autumn.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make statement on the teaching of literacy and numeracy in Welsh schools? (WAQ48953)

Jane Davidson: Numeracy and literacy do not equate directly to national curriculum subjects, and are not statutorily assessed. However the national curriculum orders for English, Welsh and mathematics set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils should acquire and relate closely to development of literacy and numeracy skills. Schools need to provide opportunities for pupils to develop the skills set out in programmes of study for each key stage. We do not seek to direct how schools and teachers meet these requirements but support and guidance is provided through the local education authority strategies for literacy and numeracy and through our basic skills strategy, ‘Words Talk—Numbers Count’. This, for example, provides funding and support for schools to obtain the basic skills quality mark and, through strategic intervention grants, support for programmes such as catch-up classes. We recognise the importance placed by employers on communication and application of number skills and have responded with continuing support and investment in the key skills qualifications. Key skills sit at the heart of the Welsh baccalaureate, in the modern apprenticeship frameworks and within the 14-19 learning core. Schools should evaluate their approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the light of evidence and guidance from Estyn inspection.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the school curriculum in Wales? (WAQ48954)

Jane Davidson: I announced on 8 January the launch of a consultation on proposed revised arrangements for the school curriculum in Wales.

These proposals support the Assembly Government's aims to ensure that the new school curriculum, assessment and qualifications arrangements will promote an approach that is more learner centred, focuses on skills, builds on the foundation phase and links effectively with the 14-19 learning pathways programme.

The development of a single framework for curriculum, assessment and qualification system from 3-19 will help to raise standards and widen opportunities.

Consultation packs containing the proposals for revised national curriculum subject orders have been sent to schools and interested organisations. Parallel consultations have also been launched on personal and social education, careers and the world of work, skills, religious education and the foundation phase.

Copies of the consultation packs are available from the Welsh Assembly Government website www.wales.gov.uk/consultations. The closing date for responses is 30 March 2007.

The consultation packs contain proposals for:

- revised National Curriculum subject orders for English, Welsh (including Welsh as a second language), mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communications technology, history, geography, art and design, music, and physical education;
- a revised framework for personal and social education;
- a framework for careers and the world of work;
- a non-statutory skills framework;
- a national exemplar framework for religious education; and
- the foundation phase framework for children's learning.

The revised subject orders and the frameworks for personal and social education and careers and the world of work will help deliver the Government's wider aims, including the promotion of:

- better transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3;
- education for sustainable development and global citizenship;
- the world of work and entrepreneurship; and
- healthy eating and physical activity.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the number of lessons for schools in Wales which have been lost due to classroom damage since the current academic year? (WAQ48955)

Jane Davidson: This information is not collected centrally.

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning the percentage of secondary school pupils in Wales gaining a qualification in mathematics and English? (WAQ48956)

Jane Davidson:

GCSE A* to C

Results for GCSE in 2006 show that the percentage of 15-year-olds achieving a GCSE at grade C or above in each of English, mathematics or Welsh as a first language was:

- 58 per cent in English;
- 50 per cent in mathematics; and
- 10 per cent in Welsh as a first language.

54 per cent of the cohort achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C in 2006. Eighty-one per cent of these pupils' GCSE passes included English/Welsh first language and mathematics.

This means that 44 per cent of 15-year-olds achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English or Welsh as a first language and mathematics.

This represents a 2 percentage point increase on the proportion achieving the indicator in Wales in 2005. The increase is in line with the overall increase in pupils achieving five A* to C, showing that our progress against this key indicator is not being made at a cost to the core skills of language and number.

GCSE A* to G

The percentage of 15-year-olds achieving a GCSE at grade G or above in each of English, mathematics or Welsh as a first language was:

- 89 per cent in English;
- 89 per cent in mathematics; and
- 13 per cent in Welsh as a first language.

84 per cent of 15-year-olds achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G, including English or Welsh as a first language and mathematics.

Owen John Thomas: A wnaiff y Gweinidog roi manylion costau'r arolwg a gynhaliwyd gan Awdurdod Addysg Lleol Casnewydd i bennu'r galw am addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg—gan gynnwys manylion am y costau i'r awdurdod addysg lleol a'r costau i Fwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg? (WAQ48979) [W]

Jane Davidson: Cyfrannodd Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg £2,500 tuag at gost yr arolwg ar y ddealltwriaeth y gellid defnyddio'r gwaith yng Nghasnewydd fel model addas i'w ddefnyddio'n ehangach, gyda newidiadau fel y bo angen, mewn ardaloedd AALlau eraill. Nid yw manylion am gyfanswm y gost yn wybodaeth gyhoeddus am eu bod yn destun contract masnachol rhwng Awdurdod Addysg Lleol Casnewydd a'r cwmni a wnaeth y gwaith.

Owen John Thomas: Will the Minister detail the cost of the survey undertaken by Newport Local Education Authority to establish the demand for Welsh-medium education—including the details of the cost to the local education authority and to the Welsh Language Board? (WAQ48979) [W]

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Language Board contributed £2,500 towards the cost of the survey on the understanding that the work in Newport could be a model which would be suitable for wider use, with modification as necessary, in other LEA areas. Details of the total cost are not a matter of public record since they were subject to a commercial contract between Newport Local Education Authority and the company which carried out the work.

Leanne Wood: Will the Minister make a statement on the action she is taking to implement the recommendations of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee's policy review of school transport, published in April 2005? (WAQ48984)

Jane Davidson: The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee report contained 30 recommendations, including five for the Welsh Assembly Government. I made a written statement on 14 June 2005, accepting three recommendations made for the Assembly Government. These were:

Recommendation 2.28

The legal position regarding who is responsible for safety and security through all aspects of the school journey is unclear. Apart from relevant statutory regulations, the various responsibilities of schools, LEAs, bus operators, parents and pupils have been determined over the years by case law. But each case is unique and so the legal position is somewhat hazy. We recommend that the Assembly Government should issue guidance to clarify current legal responsibilities and liabilities.

Recommendation 2.35

The Assembly Government, in consultation with LEAs and schools, should issue guidance on preparing codes of conduct for school transport, to include pupil consultation.

Recommendation 2.48

The Assembly Government should review current practice on risk assessment, together with any relevant academic research, and issue guidance to schools and LEAs.

We are consulting on new guidance that discharges recommendation 2.28. The guidance will set out the Assembly Government's interpretation of the law, making it clear that the law is open to interpretation by the courts, but it will make clear our expectations.

For recommendation 2.35, the guidance will encourage LEAs to put in place codes of conduct drawn up in consultation with school and pupils. The draft guidance emphasises the importance of having sanctions and effective means of reporting incidents.

In my statement to committee about recommendation 2.48 I indicated that the sustainable travel unit would sponsor a review. Six LEAs have agreed to take part in an exercise: Flintshire, Denbighshire, Ynys Môn, Neath Port Talbot, Newport and the Vale of Glamorgan. Work is being undertaken by Halcrow consultants.

The Assembly Government has secured a provision in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which will enable the Assembly to make a Measure for learner travel after the May 2007 changes to the Assembly's legislative powers.

Peter Black: What is being done to ensure that pupils in all schools throughout Wales have access to a trained counsellor? (WAQ49042)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government, with input from external partners, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, is finalising a draft national strategy for school-based counselling services that will help deliver some aspects of the national service framework and the Children's Commissioner for Wales's recommendation in the Clywch inquiry report.

The strategy will shortly be issue for consultation. I have undertaken to present it to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee as part of my ministerial report in February. The intention is to publish the final strategy in the autumn. A key aspect will be to ensure that counsellors have appropriate qualifications and training and are working within robust frameworks. Development of the strategy will also be informed by research currently being commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of current services both in Wales and elsewhere.

I will also be announcing the allocation of grant funding of £200,000 per year in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to expand existing counselling services in Wales.

Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on what action the Welsh Assembly Government is taking to support mature students with dependents return to higher education? (WAQ49045)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government currently provides a range of extra help to higher education students who have dependents: this includes the childcare grant, parents' learning allowance and an adult dependents grant.

The Assembly Government also provides discretionary funding in the form of financial contingency funds, which are intended to support students facing financial hardship to meet the cost of books, travel, childcare, accommodation and general living expenses.

Michael German: Has the Minister considered working with the Soil Association and Big Lottery Fund to extend the Food for Life scheme to Welsh schools? (WAQ49053)

Jane Davidson: The Food for Life partnership was funded under the Big Lottery Fund's wellbeing programme. This programme has been developed by the Big Lottery Fund in line with its policy directions in England. These policy directions are different from those that govern the Big Lottery Fund's work in Wales which have been agreed by the Big Lottery Fund, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Welsh Assembly Government. As such, it is not appropriate to extend this programme to Wales.

In line with its Welsh policy directions, the Big Lottery Fund has launched the healthy families initiative, which will make links between children's play, nutrition and physical activity to promote healthy and active lifestyles among children and their families. The initiative consists of two programmes. Child's Play will focus on supporting children's play activities and Way of Life will look at ways of promoting healthy eating and activity by children in a family setting.

The Welsh Assembly Government is already working closely with partners in the Food for Life programme to help implement some of the recommendations in the food and fitness implementation plan: specifically, the Health Education Trust is helping with the development of guidance on food and fitness policies for schools, Design Dimension Educational Trust provides our cooking bus, and the Soil Association is represented on the food in schools working group. Their expertise will continue to be available to us.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Glyn Davies: Further to WAQ48287 what was the final cost of the visit (including air fares and accommodation for the Minister and the two people who accompanied him)? (WAQ48974)

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): The total cost of air fares and accommodation for the visit was £7,385.45.

Glyn Davies: How many puppy farms have received financial support from the National Assembly for Wales and on what dates were the applications for financial support agreed? (WAQ48975)

Carwyn Jones: None.

Peter Black: Would the Minister be prepared to consider ordering post mortem examinations on bird carcasses dumped at Beulah, Powys to determine how they died? (WAQ48980)

Peter Black: What guidance does the Welsh Assembly Government issue on the dumping of gamebird carcasses? (WAQ48981)

Peter Black: Is the Minister aware of the discovery of in excess of a thousand gamebird carcasses dumped in a pit Beulah, Powys, and, if so, what action is he taking? (WAQ48982)

Carwyn Jones: This instance of disposing of game birds carcasses following a shoot is not considered to present a public or animal health risk. The pit in question, which was on private land, is no longer in use and has been covered. However, investigations are ongoing as to whether this practice contravenes the requirements of the animal by-products regulation.

Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister detail what consideration has been given to the inclusion of products with a high welfare standard, such as freedom foods, in the Wales True Taste recipes? (WAQ48992)

Carwyn Jones: Welfare standards in the food industry in Wales and the rest of the UK are of a higher standard than many other parts of the world and True Taste recipes are based around these quality accredited Welsh products.

Elin Jones: Will the Minister detail a timetable for the introduction of electronic ID for sheep and goats in Wales? (WAQ49046)

Carwyn Jones: European council regulation 21/2004 requires the introduction of electronic identification of sheep and goats from 1 January 2008. The European Commission is required to publish a report on the implementation of electronic identification and proposals to confirm or amend the 2008 mandatory date. Their report has been delayed but is expected shortly.

Elin Jones: Will the Minister provide a cost assessment of the introduction of electronic ID for sheep and goats in Wales to (i) farmers, (ii) slaughter houses? (WAQ49047)

Carwyn Jones: (i) The sheep industry in Wales is diverse and costs will vary, for a flock of 1,000 ewes the introduction of electronic identification is estimated to be in the region of 77p per ewe in the first year and 54p per ewe in subsequent years.

This assumes the slaughter derogation under article 4.3 of council regulation 21/2004 is applied and takes into account costs of applicator, readers and tags.

The costs are based on current prices and there is an expectation that they will reduce considerably as technology improves and the economies of scale are exploited.

(ii) Estimates of costs for introducing electronic identification in Welsh slaughterhouses is unavailable as details of how the regulation will be implemented have yet to be decided.

Questions to the Finance Minister

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on discussions held with the UK Government on the revaluing of properties for the calculation of council tax? (WAQ48957)

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I am not having any discussions with UK Government about council tax revaluation.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the guidance to be given to local authorities in Wales for the determining of council tax precepts for 2007-08? (WAQ48958)

Sue Essex: I have provided local authorities with the details of the local government settlement as approved by the Assembly on 17 January. Local authorities are now considering their budgets and

associated council tax requirement. I am confident that unitary and police authorities will be as reasonable in setting their budgets as they have been over the last two years. It is my view that council tax increases should not exceed 5 per cent in 2007-08.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement about supporting community councils in Wales? (WAQ48959)

Sue Essex: Assembly Government policy aims to enhance the role, functions and potential of community and town councils as locally elected statutory bodies. Measures already underway include sponsorship of One Voice Wales, development of a toolkit and model charter to facilitate effective working relationships with unitary authorities and the production of a national training strategy.

We continue to implement the commitments we made in our response to recommendations in the University of Wales, Aberystwyth research study into the role, functions and future potential of community and town councils in Wales. An update on progress is published on the Welsh Assembly Government website.

At a time when the Assembly Government's top priority is improving public services in the coming years, community and town councils have a significant role to play in achieving the citizen focus that is at the heart of our approach.

Owen John Thomas: A oes gan y Llywodraeth gynlluniau i sicrhau'r un rhyddid i bob grwp gwleidyddol o fewn cynghorau sir yr un rhyddid ag sy'n cael ei fwynhau gan bob un grwp gwleidyddol yn y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol? (WAQ48960) [W]

Sue Essex: Mae Rheolau Sefydlog y Cynulliad Cenedlaethol yn rhoi manylion am hawliau a chyfrifoldebau'r grwpiau gwleidyddol sy'n cael eu cynrychioli yn y Cynulliad. Pwysleisiaf fod y rheolau sefydlog, yn briodol felly, yn eiddo i'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol ac nid i Lywodraeth y Cynulliad.

Mae awdurdodau lleol yn ymrwymedig yn statudol i ddyrannu seddau yn gymesur â'r cydbwysedd gwleidyddol wrth benodi ar bwyllgorau'r cyngor neu gynrychiolwyr ar gyrff allanol. Cyfrifoldeb pob awdurdod unigol, drwy eu rheolau sefydlog eu hunain, yw unrhyw ddarpariaethau eraill mewn perthynas â grwpiau gwleidyddol ac nid cyfrifoldeb Llywodraeth y Cynulliad.

Owen John Thomas: Does the Welsh Assembly Government have any plans to ensure that every political group within county councils have the same freedom as political groups in the National Assembly for Wales? (WAQ48960) [W]

Sue Essex: The National Assembly's Standing Orders detail the rights and responsibilities of the political groups represented in the Assembly. I should stress that the Standing Orders are, quite rightly, the property of the National Assembly and not the Assembly Government.

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to allocate seats in proportion to political balance when appointing council committees or representation on outside bodies. Any other provisions in relation to political groups are matters for each authority's Standing Orders and are not the responsibility of the Assembly Government.

Ann Jones: What recent discussions has the Minister had regarding changes to the local government pension scheme in Wales? (WAQ48961)

Sue Essex: The local government pension scheme in England and Wales is not a devolved matter, however I take a keen interest in the changes to the local government pension scheme and I have met with the WLGA and the relevant unions to discuss these changes.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in developing community involvement in local government in Wales? (WAQ48962)

Sue Essex: Our response to the Beecham report, 'Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries' stressed the importance of

'putting citizens first and involving them in the design of public services is central to achieving radical change.'

The response also sets out the actions that we will take to achieve this.

Building on our Beecham response the policy statement, 'A Shared Responsibility', which I intend to publish on 14 March, will set out a raft of commitments that will further enable communities to engage with local government and other public service providers. These commitments are likely to include: more citizen-focused scrutiny, support for citizen engagement pilots, the development of a set of national service standards for key services and the development of a customer services element to the performance management framework.

The University of Wales, Aberystwyth report 'The Role, Functions and Future Potential of Community and Town Councils in Wales' advocated charter agreements between unitary authorities and community and town councils primarily as a means of facilitating the delegation of functions/services. Welsh Assembly Government officials are presently working with the WLGA, One Voice Wales and others to produce a model charter that may be adapted to suit individual circumstances.

Owen John Thomas: How does the Minister ensure that the interests of communities are central to the formulation of local government policies? (WAQ48963)

Sue Essex: Our response to the Beecham report, 'Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries', stressed the importance of

'putting citizens first and involving them in the design of public services is central to achieving radical change.'

The response also sets out the actions that we will take to achieve this.

I will shortly be issuing a consultation paper on the development of local service boards and local service agreements in Wales. The consultation paper is being developed with the support of a wide range of organisations including the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action and One Voice Wales. It is envisaged that local service boards development projects will commence later this year, and that the boards will act as a catalyst to a more citizen-focused approach to scrutiny and improvement at a local level. This scrutiny process should also contribute to policy review and strategy development.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding available to local authorities from the Welsh Assembly Government? (WAQ48964)

Sue Essex: For 2007-08, local authorities across Wales will receive a total of £3.7 billion in unhyphocated funding which is an increase of 4.4 per cent on last year's settlement after adjusting for

transfers. In addition to the £3.7 billion, local authorities will also receive an estimated £580 million in specific grants.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister outline her policies for improving the delivery of public services? (WAQ48965)

Sue Essex: 'Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries' sets out the actions the Welsh Assembly Government intends to take in light of Beecham. These actions will accelerate our goal of transforming the way in which public services are delivered. The key principles of the action plan are putting citizens first, working together to deliver, developing a world-class public workforce, achieving efficiency and major performance improvement.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister outline the achievements within her portfolio for the constituency of Alyn and Deeside? (WAQ48966)

Sue Essex: My officials are currently reviewing Flintshire's 2005-06 policy agreement information and the initial assessment is that Flintshire is performing well in the majority of areas. The council has met its policy agreement targets in 13 out of 16 measures, exceeding both education milestones, and is the second highest performing authority for secondary school attendance, achieving 91.99 per cent. Flintshire should also be commended for achieving 100 per cent of looked-after children having a plan for permanence and for exceeding both energy-efficiency milestones. It is expected that Flintshire will satisfactorily conclude its policy agreement and receive its 2006-07 performance incentive grant.

Work developing the Wales spatial plan for north-east Wales highlights the central role of Deeside in the regional economy, while recognising the need for investment to ensure that growth benefits the less prosperous areas. The draft sub-regional cross-border strategy for north-east Wales and west Cheshire provides a strong framework for joint action.

We have set out our proposals for transforming public services in Wales in 'Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries'. Priorities include giving citizens better customer service and a stronger voice in the way public services are delivered, local bodies working much more closely together to improve and join-up services and eliminate people being shunted from one body to another, improving efficiency, developing the public service workforce and improving service performance. We are supporting a number of regional projects in north Wales to improve various aspects of service delivery. These include collaborations to improve NHS procurement and other support services and a series of joint local authority (including Flintshire) initiatives on school transport, telecare, revenue collection, procurement and adoption.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the small business rate relief scheme? (WAQ48967)

Sue Essex: The National Assembly has introduced legislation to replace the rural rate relief scheme with a small business rate relief scheme from 1 April 2007. The new scheme will be fairer than the old scheme, where entitlement to relief varied according to geographical location, under the new scheme the same criteria will now apply to business across Wales no matter where the business is situated. It will mean that around half of all businesses in Wales will receive some relief on their rates, and most post offices in Wales will receive 50 per cent or 100 per cent relief.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to promote public service improvement in Wales? (WAQ48968)

Sue Essex: 'Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries' contains a number of detailed action points with targets for delivery. One of the key actions is the establishment of local service boards on a local authority area basis to bring main services together to plan and deliver integrated services to citizens.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on any plans she is considering that will improve participation in the democratic process? (WAQ48969)

Sue Essex: The Welsh Assembly Government in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers and the Electoral Commission, launched a campaign to revive and broaden the widening participation campaign undertaken prior to the 2004 local elections. The campaign aims to raise awareness, interest and participation in local democracy, including increasing the number and diversity of candidates at the 2008 local elections.

The Welsh Assembly Government and partner organisations will engage in a programme of activities which will include:

- mentoring—involving those interested in standing for election and those who are subsequently elected to office;
- working with 'Operation Black Vote' over the introduction of a shadowing scheme aimed specifically at black and ethnic minority groups;
- working with political parties on recruitment and diversity;
- production of a candidate's guide;
- working with Electoral Commission in 'awareness campaigns';
- a public media campaign, including a dedicated website for the campaign; and
- production of information packs for new councillors.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding available to local authorities from the Welsh Assembly Government? (WAQ48970)

Sue Essex: For 2007-08, local authorities across Wales will receive a total of £3.7 billion in unhypothecated funding, which is an increase of 4.4 per cent on last year's settlement after adjusting for transfers. In addition to the £3.7 billion, local authorities will also receive an estimated £580 million in specific grants.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Mick Bates: Will the Minister make a statement on funding for adult health services? (WAQ48894)

The Minister Health and Social Services (Brian Gibbons): The Welsh Assembly Government has increased funding for health services by over 7 per cent to £5.3 billion in 2007-08. Total funding for health has more than doubled since the Assembly was established in 1999. This additional funding will benefit services for adults and children, but I am not able to provide details of the specific levels of investment in adult health services.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of chronic pain services? (WAQ48895)

Brian Gibbons: Services for chronic pain are commissioned, in most cases, by local health boards across Wales, by taking account of locally identified healthcare needs. The Welsh Assembly expects commissioners to commission services appropriately in order to meet the objectives of the Assembly's

strategy, 'Designed for Life', which aims to ensure that health services are effectively designed in order to achieve improved access to sustainable, consistent and high quality care across Wales.

We are working closely with the Welsh Pain Society to develop service development and commissioning directives to support commissioning and planning decisions concerning pain management services. This work is part of the Assembly Government's drive to improve the management of chronic conditions to ensure people receive the right care in the right place and at the right time. Officials have recently met with representatives of the Welsh Pain Society to discuss the next steps of taking this work forward and plans are being made to finalise and publish the directives for public consultation in the coming months.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of the regional burns unit? (WAQ48896)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery, based at Swansea's Morriston Hospital, is having a £10 million extension. Work is due to start next month, and will focus on boosting facilities for children and increasing overall patient capacity.

This prestigious project comes just months after the exciting announcement that Morriston Hospital, in partnership with Swansea and Cardiff universities, is to become the UK's first centre for burns research.

The extension plans are in readiness for the hoped-for announcement that Morriston Hospital will shortly be named as the Regional Burns Centre for Wales and the South West of England. The expansion will result in the burns unit having two fully operational burns theatres and an additional fourth plastics theatre. The extra plastics theatre will also afford the trust sufficient capacity to meet 2009 Welsh Assembly Government access targets.

Morriston's first-place ranking, when assessed against other burns services in England, means Swansea NHS Trust is optimistic that it will shortly be designated as the new regional burns centre. The expansion will ensure the unit is of sufficient size and capacity to deal with the extra patients that regional status could bring.

In November 2006 the Healing Foundation announced a 20-year commitment, also worth £10 million, to establish the UK centre for burns research in south Wales. It is a partnership between Morriston Hospital, and Cardiff and Swansea universities, to focus on all aspects of research aimed at improving the treatment and long-term support for burns survivors.

The Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery was opened in Morriston Hospital in September 1994, following the transfer of the service from St Lawrence Hospital in Chepstow.

The burns service has further developed since the transfer and has continually been at the forefront in the use of developmental technologies for the benefit of burns patients, for example Integra (artificial skin). The service treats around 750 patients a year, of which half require in-patient treatment. Approximately half of these patients are children.

The plastic surgery undertaken in Morriston Hospital includes leading-edge reconstructive treatment following accidents and illness.

The Welsh Assembly Government's capital investment board approved a £9.4 million investment for plastic surgery developments on 12 January. The scheme has been authorised to proceed subject to resolution of several issues.

Mick Bates: Will the Minister make a statement on the reorganisation of hospitals in Montgomeryshire? (WAQ48897)

Brian Gibbons: It is the responsibility of local health boards across Wales to commission healthcare services for their resident population. The LHBs undertake local health needs assessments and prioritise service developments accordingly, within the resources provided by the Welsh Assembly Government. These decisions have to be supported by available evidence and be made in a publicly accountable way. I expect that, where there is to be significant service change, this would comply with Assembly guidance set out in Welsh health circular (2004)084, 'Shaping Health Services Locally', which states that the community health councils have a key role to play.

Powys Local Health Board has recently consulted on its proposals for the broad future configuration of services as part of the 'Doing More—Doing Better' strategy consultation process. The LHB has now indicated that it will be bringing forward for consultation more specific proposals to implement its strategy.

It is expected that a community services framework for Wales will be published within the near future and Powys LHB will need to align any future service change proposals within this guidance.

As I indicated in the National Assembly Plenary debate on 15 November 2006, I believe the discussions on the reconfiguration of local services should initially take place at a local level. Consultation procedures are in place to provide the opportunity for local people to comment on the proposals and to help inform local planning decisions.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the steps he is taking to address health inequalities in the Vale of Clwyd? (WAQ48898)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government is tackling health inequalities in Wales in a variety of ways through its overarching strategy for Wales, 'Designed for Life', which will create a focus across all health policies to develop an integrated approach to tackling health inequalities. Under the banner of Health Challenge Wales we have invested in a range of initiatives contributing to the improvement of health in Wales.

Specifically in the Vale of Clwyd, Denbighshire Local Health Board and Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust provide the local healthcare services.

The LHB works with Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust to ensure that the population of Denbighshire, which includes the Vale of Clwyd, have access to in-patient, day-case and out-patient services that are in line with the targets set by Welsh Assembly Government. The LHB also works in partnership with Denbighshire County Council to plan services together and produce a health, social care and wellbeing strategy. This helps to prioritise the needs of the local population to target areas where attention is required.

There are approximately 58 GPs providing primary care access in 16 practices across the county of Denbighshire, of which there are 47 GPs in 13 practices in the Vale of Clwyd. Work is currently underway through the primary care estate strategy on how the fabric and the range of primary care service could be improved.

Secondary care hospital services are mainly provided at the Glan Clwyd site at Bodelwyddan, and HM Stanley at St Asaph, but Health Commission Wales commissions some specialist services from trusts outside the area.

More local services are provided by the Royal Alexandra, Prestatyn and Denbigh local community hospitals. These provide local community beds to support care close to home. The future use and needs for these services are being considered as part of a number of local and national reviews, including the

primary care estate strategy, and the secondary care review. The Prestatyn hospital is currently out to consultation aimed at identifying the best way to deliver local needs.

In addition to providing established healthcare Denbighshire Local Health Board is progressing a variety of schemes designed to improve health in the Vale. These include:

Inequalities in Health Fund

- coronary heart disease—risk screening for mental health patients in Bronyffynnon surgery, Denbigh;
- cardiac rehabilitation—in the community, and providing home and hospital based support.

Prestatyn Town Council

- choices—lifestyle change programme for people at risk of coronary heart disease, including an exercise referral scheme.

Pharmacy

- new pharmacy contract—health promotion campaigns

It is also progressing its oral health action plans and implementing its primary care estate strategy and working closely with statutory and non-statutory partners to implement its local health and social care wellbeing strategy, linked to the community strategy.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the provision of lip-speaking training for the people who lose their hearing in Wales? (WAQ48899)

Brian Gibbons: Local health boards, in partnership with local social service departments, assess the health, social care and wellbeing needs of their local resident populations and plan and commission services to meet that need, within the resources made available by the Welsh Assembly Government. We are currently consulting on draft health, social care and wellbeing strategy regulations and guidance which will direct and advise LHBs and social services across Wales on what their needs assessments should take account of, and what the subsequent strategies should address. The draft regulations and guidance have been amended to include a breakdown of six equality strands, including disability, which will assist in guiding LHBs and social services to gather information on their local areas in relation to disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion/belief and race.

The Assembly Government's older people's national service framework refers to the increased prevalence of sensory impairments in older age, and recognises how this may lead to social isolation, depression, increased dependency, falls, etc. It is also noted that there is a need to take account of the specific communication needs of those with a sensory impairment, including better access to primary care based services and services that promote independence. The provision of lip-reading training, although not specifically endorsed in the national service framework, would be consistent with the aims of the national service framework, along with broader health and social care strategy. The national service framework calls for the development of joint commissioning plans for older people's services and LHBs are currently taking steps towards implementing this where appropriate.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to promoting independent and fulfilled lives for everyone in Wales. Local health boards, working with local government, have a responsibility to identify and meet the health needs of deaf people through the development of local health, social care and wellbeing strategies and in implementing the older people's national service framework.

Owen John Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the benefits of brachytherapy treatment? (WAQ48900)

Brian Gibbons: Brachytherapy is a type of radiotherapy that delivers radiation directly to the site of a cancer. Low-dose brachytherapy is a relatively new form of treatment for prostate cancer but some studies have found that it is comparable to surgery in its ability to treat prostate cancer.

Brachytherapy's most appropriate use is for a minority of prostate cancer cases with early, low-grade prostate cancer.

Although Health Commission Wales is not funding low-dose brachytherapy treatment for localised prostate cancer at present, Welsh patients with prostate cancer continue to have access to the equally effective and locally available alternative treatments of wide-beam radiotherapy and surgery. HCW and local health boards are exploring a coordinated approach to commissioning services for localised prostate cancer.

Owen John Thomas: What steps are in place to ensure that decisions taken by local health board officials and Health Commission Wales relating to patient treatment are conveyed to the patient without unnecessary delay? (WAQ48901)

Brian Gibbons: All organisations are working within a variety of nationally established standards and targets that are aimed at ensuring all patients are treated according to the requirements of their condition, appropriately and in a timely manner. It is good practice to ensure that individual patients are kept informed of decisions that affect them throughout the commissioning process. It is for individual local health boards and Health Commission Wales to ensure that this happens. Patients who are unhappy with the way in which they are dealt with can make a complaint under the NHS complaints procedure or to HCW.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister make a statement on the importance of district nursing in Mid and West Wales? (WAQ48902)

Brian Gibbons: District nurses have expertise in caring for patients with a wide range of conditions. They provide highly skilled nursing care to the population and are valued members of primary healthcare teams across Wales.

Policy drivers, including 'Designed for Life' and the developing community services strategy and chronic conditions framework, emphasise the need for an increasing focus on providing care within primary care and the community. District nurses will play a key role in providing such care and this is an opportune time to examine the role to ensure that the skills of district nurses are fully utilised.

The nursing directors of the local health boards in Mid and West Wales are working together to look at the specification for district nursing services across the region.

No specific issues have been reported within district nursing services in Mid and West Wales region. There are, however, steps being taken to review capacity and specification of district nursing services to be able to address levels of acuity and workload arising from the chronic disease management agenda.

LHB and trust directors across the region are in the process of reviewing services with a view to modernising and bridging the gap between primary and secondary care. There are a number of notable examples of work being undertaken in the region.

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on the need to cancel scheduled orthopaedic operations for patients living in South Wales East? (WAQ48903)

Brian Gibbons: Under normal circumstances, no patient's planned surgery should be cancelled for a reason that has nothing to do with the patient's medical condition. From time to time, however, an individual hospital will face extreme levels of emergency pressures. In these circumstances, hospital managers and clinicians have to make difficult decisions, although they will always prioritise patients on clinical grounds.

Guidance states that, when the cancellation of planned surgery is unavoidable, the patient may expect to have his or her operation within 28 days, or to be advised of the new date of the operation within 28 days. If an operation is postponed or cancelled, it does not necessarily result in the theatre slot being lost. It is more likely that the facilities and staff were instead engaged with treating other patients at that time.

In November 2006, 43.3 per cent of scheduled orthopaedic operations were reported as being cancelled in South Wales East for patient reasons. These include the appointment not being convenient, the patient declaring himself or herself unfit for surgery and the patient not attending.

Cancelled operations are an area that is being monitored by our performance programme, through the Assembly Government's service and financial framework efficiency targets and the regular performance meetings between our regional offices and NHS trusts in Wales. Where cancellation levels are high, we require an explanation and, where necessary, an indication of how the problem will be resolved.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the number of scheduled operations cancelled in hospitals in South Wales East between September and December 2006? (WAQ48904)

Brian Gibbons: The number of scheduled operations that were cancelled in South Wales East between September and November 2006 are as follows:

Cancelled ops	September 2006	October 2006	November 2006
Gwent	755	755	638
North Glamorgan	164	111	119
South Wales East	919	866	757

The number of operations carried out in South Wales East between September and November 2006 are as follows:

Ops Carried Out	September 2006	October 2006	November 2006
Gwent	2,637	2,874	2,859
North Glamorgan	917	897	884
South Wales East	3,554	3,771	3,743

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister please make a statement on the performance of accident and emergency departments over the festive period? (WAQ48905)

Brian Gibbons: Latest published figures show that the all-Wales accident and emergency performance at the end of December 2006 was 90.9 per cent against the 95 per cent target. This equates to nine out of 10 people being seen within the four-hour target despite more than 52,000 people attending a major accident and emergency department in December.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on health and social services for the elderly? (WAQ48906)

Brian Gibbons: Providing first class health and social care for the elderly is one of our key priorities. We want services provided that meet older people's needs, provide for individual choice, and can be adapted to changing needs over time.

Our commitment is underpinned by our strategy, 'Designed for Life', and supported by our groundbreaking strategy for older people in Wales. Following completion of wide-ranging consultation, our strategy for social services in Wales is due to be published next month. Good progress is being made in the implementation of the national service framework for older people, to achieve greater consistency in the availability and quality of health and social care for older people.

Elin Jones: Will the Minister make statement on hospital services in Ceredigion? (WAQ48907)

Brian Gibbons: The provision of NHS services in Ceredigion falls in line with the detail of 'Designed for Life', which requires the NHS to review all of its services. Any change must be measured against the ambitions of delivering sustainable, safe, world-class health and social care for all residents of Wales by 2015.

'Designed for Life'—our vision of creating a world-class health and social care service for Wales in the twenty-first century—signalled capital investment for community services in south Ceredigion to replace services currently provided through community hospitals. Work is ongoing to develop community service models which will be further influenced by the anticipated publication of the community services framework in the near future.

In February 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government approved the full business case for a £2 million refurbishment scheme to provide a dedicated cardiac monitoring unit within Bronglais General Hospital. In March 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government also agreed the proposals in a strategic outline case for £10.7 million capital investment to refurbish the accident and emergency department and build the acute assessment unit at Bronglais General Hospital. This will further integrate services, including developing the role of GPs and implementing a multi-agency crisis centre in partnership with social services. Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust is developing a further strategic outline case to consider capital investment to relocate the main theatre suite in Bronglais General Hospital into the accident and emergency department and to reorient the accident and emergency department entrance so that it may be accessed from a more suited access route for ambulances.

It is worth noting that Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust, through the performance of Bronglais Hospital, is on track to deliver against key targets in the areas of waiting times, cancer services and accident and emergency performance.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on hospital transport for out-patients in Wales? (WAQ48908)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government established a working group to look at non-emergency patient transport services in response to the recommendations of the review of community transport, 'Community Transport in the Welsh Transport Network', published in July 2002. There had been concern that that the definition of medical need (for non-emergency patient transport) contained in previous operational guidance was non-specific and that as a consequence of differing interpretations the service was not provided equitably across Wales.

A group with representation from NHS trusts, the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust, LHBs, medical directors, nursing, the British Medical Association and community health councils considered the revised medical need criteria, and we are soon to issue guidance to NHS Wales.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on diabetic services in Wales? (WAQ48909)

Brian Gibbons: The commissioning of diabetes services in Wales rests with local health boards. The Assembly Government expects people with or at risk from diabetes to have prompt access to high-quality diabetes services. Our strategy for achieving this is through the progressive implementation of the national service framework for diabetes, published in 2002. To direct and guide activity at a national level, we published the delivery strategy in 2003.

The national service framework has raised the profile of diabetes services across Wales, supporting both performance management arrangements and local delivery plans in line with the requirements of 'Designed for Life' and the management of chronic diseases.

To support the implementation of the delivery strategy, all-Wales diabetes consensus guidelines for adults with diabetes mellitus have been developed and are currently out for consultation. Similar ones have been developed for children with diabetes and are also out to consultation. These guidelines provide care pathways for the management of diabetes as required by each of the 12 standards identified within the national service framework.

The Assembly Government has also established a unique all-Wales diabetes patient reference group. This group meets regularly with the aim of sharing best practice and providing a forum for discussion for patient representatives from all across Wales.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on hospice care in Wales? (WAQ48911)

Brian Gibbons: Palliative care services are an important part of the total care for patients with long-term progressive conditions. The responsibility for commissioning these services to meet patient need rests with local health boards, working with their partners. The Assembly Government's overarching policy aim is to develop a more integrated approach to meeting patient need for palliative care between the NHS and the voluntary sector and is set out within 'A Strategic Direction for Palliative Care Services in Wales'. There is no question about the valuable role hospices play in ensuring that patients with progressive conditions have the best quality of supportive care possible. We therefore expect local health boards and hospices to work together, through the regional cancer networks, to agree what services hospices should provide as part of an integrated package of care for patients.

In recognition of the valuable role hospices play the Assembly Government made £10 million available non-recurrently over four years to support and develop palliative care services within the voluntary sector. This funding has had a positive effect and has highlighted the need for continued support to ensure that the voluntary and statutory sectors work in partnership to provide palliative care services based on patient need. The Assembly Government has therefore announced that as part of its budget for 2007-08 there will be £2 million for hospices to provide them with recurrent core revenue funding from central funds for the first time. How this funding will be allocated is yet to be determined, but it will need to be informed by the recommendations of the baseline service review for palliative care, currently under way.

Karen Sinclair: What is the Assembly Government doing to upgrade the ambulance fleet in Wales? (WAQ48912)

Brian Gibbons: In November 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government made available additional capital funding of £16 million for the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust to replace emergency vehicles. The funding will be used to purchase 119 new emergency ambulances and 67 patient care services vehicles in 2006-07.

The £16 million funding is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's capital investment programme that will reach £309 million in 2007-08. This funding will ensure that equipment and buildings in the Welsh NHS are brought up to twenty-first century standards.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on primary healthcare provision in Alyn and Deeside? (WAQ48913)

Brian Gibbons: I refer you to the answer I gave to WAQ48564.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the delivery of 'Designed to Tackle Cancer in Wales'? (WAQ48914)

Brian Gibbons: Tackling cancer is one of the Assembly Government's top health priorities. Cancer is one of the two biggest causes of premature death in Wales. Approximately 15,000 cases are registered each year in Wales. 'Designed to Tackle Cancer in Wales' sets out the Assembly Government's specific policy aims and strategic direction to tackling cancer. The document takes a more holistic and integrated approach to tackling cancer at a national as well as local level and the policy aims are structured around the themes set out in 'Designed for Life' of more prevention, early detection, improved access and better services. The document contains implementation targets which cover the period up to March 2008 and these will be followed by a further two three-year strategic frameworks, covering the periods from 2008 to 2011 and 2011 to 2015.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister update on his policies for improving the NHS in Wales? (WAQ48915)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government aims to improve the health of the people of Wales in a number of ways, including Health Challenge Wales. We are already implementing the Townsend formula and the health inequalities programme to tackle areas of inequality in health and the next stage will be the public health strategy.

We are improving access to safe, sustainable health and social care services and driving down long waiting times for patients across Wales, having made major investments of £80 million each year and continuing until March 2009 to further reduce waiting times.

'Designed for Life' set out an ambitious aim to get the right set of structures in place to make NHS Wales fit for the twenty-first century, to create balanced, safe, effective, integrated services as locally as possible, and to get the key issues of commissioning, planning and strategic direction right. In 2007-08, the last year of the first phase of 'Designed for Life', we are clearing the way for rapid future improvement. The coming year will be an important turning point.

A huge amount of work has been carried out on consulting on acute services reconfiguration proposals and on primary care developments, diagnostic and therapy services, new contracts for all staff groups, and role redesign. Service redesign has included the Project 2009 work on elective care, the delivering emergency care service strategy on emergency services, and development of a new integrated model for managing chronic diseases.

In addition there has been the publication of the new social services strategy, 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities'.

These, together with other work on standards, including the development of national service frameworks, and on critical and palliative care, should, over time, revolutionise service provision.

In 2007-08 the agenda includes a reform of commissioning, an effort to improve quality, and clinical and public engagement, a community services framework, together with a new workforce planning system.

We have recently published revised guidance on health, social care and wellbeing strategies, which is currently being consulted on. The first round of strategies were successful for creating effective local partnership working, and this role is being strengthened in readiness for the next strategies in 2008. In addition, the new children and young people's plans will come into force in each local area from April 2008. These will be the basis for local implementation of all these changes.

All this is essential to get the NHS and its partner organisations in shape for the next three-year period, 2008 to 2011 which will see both the launch of the second phase of 'Designed for Life', and the implementation of the second round of health, social care and wellbeing strategies in every local area.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the availability of palliative care for patients who wish to die at home? (WAQ48978)

Brian Gibbons: An important part of good palliative care provision is ensuring that the views and preferences of patients and their carers are taken into account, which includes honouring, as far as possible, the wishes of where people wish to die. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the importance placed on end-of-life care including where people would prefer to die and its policy for palliative care lies within 'A Strategic Direction for Palliative Care Services in Wales', which reiterates this very issue. A Welsh health circular was also published in June 2006 by the Assembly Government endorsing end-of-life care and the all-Wales care pathway for the last days of life.

Peter Black: What precautions are being taken to protect the public from the potential health risks of the dumping of gamebird carcasses in Beulah, Powys? (WAQ48983) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside.*

Carwyn Jones: This instance of disposing of game birds carcasses following a shoot is not considered to present a public or animal health risk. The pit in question, which was on private land, is no longer in use and has been covered. However, investigations are ongoing as to whether this practice contravenes the requirements of the animal by-products regulation.

Janet Ryder: Will the Minister state how many nurse vacancies in the NHS there were in Wales on 31 December 2006? (WAQ48988)

Janet Ryder: Will the Minister state how many GP, junior and staff grade doctor vacancies in the NHS there were in Wales on 31 December 2006? (WAQ48989)

Janet Ryder: Will the Minister state how many allied health professionals, healthcare scientists and technicians' vacancies in the NHS there were in Wales on 31 December 2006? (WAQ48990)

Brian Gibbons: A source of data on GP vacancies is the GP practice vacancies survey. This replaces the general practitioner recruitment, retention and vacancy survey for England and Wales. Practices were asked about the whole-time equivalent number of vacancies as at 31 March 2006, which they had been actively trying to fill for three months or more. In the 2006 survey, 2,000 practices were sampled in England and Wales overall with the achieved sample in Wales being 23 per cent of all Welsh practices. The data show that the three-month vacancy rate for all GP types in Wales was 1.8 per cent, as at 31 March 2006. This represents the three-month vacancies as a percentage of the three-month vacancies plus staff in post.

Data on NHS trust vacancies are collected every six months as at 31 March and 30 September. The latest available data relates to 31 March 2006 and can be found on the StatsWales site: <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx>

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister provide information on what specialist facilities are available in Wales for treating people suffering from Tourette's? (WAQ48993)

Brian Gibbons: People suffering with Tourette's should have prompt access to neurology, psychiatric and other support services provided by appropriately trained staff.

Depending on an individual's assessed level of clinical need he or she would be managed either in primary care or, if appropriate, by either neurology or psychiatric services. Again such services would respond to any individual depending on his or her level of assessed clinical need, as with any other condition.

A key action of the revised adult mental health national service framework and action plan calls for a range of specialist services, which will include neuropsychiatry and liaison psychiatry, to be available and accessible across Wales. Each LHB has submitted local action plans to show how they intend to take forward the national service framework and implement the action plan. These local action plans are now being agreed with Assembly officials, who are also looking to develop a performance management framework to ensure effective implementation.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make statement detailing the travel costs for people who have to travel outside Wales for treatment for Tourette's, and what provision exists for reimbursing such costs? (WAQ48994)

Brian Gibbons: Patient transport services provide planned transportation to and from hospitals for patients who are considered to have a medical need for ambulance transport. The GP or consultant concerned normally makes the initial decision on whether or not a patient has a medical need for ambulance transport.

For follow-up appointments, it is for the receiving hospital to arrange and fund the cost of patient transport. It will make an assessment of whether a patient fits the criteria for ambulance transport or if there is a more appropriate option available.

A Welsh health circular will be issued shortly to the NHS advising them of an all-Wales protocol for determining whether a patient has a medical need for free non-emergency patient transport.

Additionally, the hospital travel cost scheme exists and was set up to provide financial help to those patients who do not have a medical need for ambulance transport and who cannot meet the cost of travel to hospital. The rules setting out entitlement to help with health costs are detailed in the HC11W—'Help with health costs' document, which can be found at www.wales.gov.uk/healthforms.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister detail the number of attacks on ambulance staff for each year since 1999? (WAQ49052)

Brian Gibbons: This information has been collected centrally only in respect of years 2004-05 and 2005-06. The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust has reported 179 and 285 incidents of physical and verbal abuse against its staff in these years.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning the provision of social housing in South Wales East? (WAQ48891)

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): Since 1999, the Assembly Government has provided just over £120 million in social housing grant to housing associations working in local authorities in south-east Wales to assist with the provision of new social housing.

Laura Anne Jones: What representations has the Minister made regarding the housing of sex offenders at Prescoed open prison in Monmouthshire? (WAQ48892)

Edwina Hart: I have written to Home Office Ministers on a number of occasions expressing my concern about the housing of sex offenders at Prescoed open prison. I have also sought assurances that all possible steps are taken to prevent sex offenders absconding from the open prison.

Val Lloyd: Will the Minister make a statement on what action the Welsh Assembly Government is taking to combat binge drinking? (WAQ48910)

Edwina Hart: The fourth substance misuse annual report, which I provided for the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 21 September, included an update on progress in tackling substance misuse including alcohol. This can be found on the intranet.

Rosemary Butler: Will the Minister make a statement on the progress being made by credit unions in Wales? (WAQ48937)

Edwina Hart: Credit unions are indispensable in combating financial exclusion. Although progress varies across Wales, we are determined to continue strengthening the movement so that all unions are equally viable and integral to their community. They offer a feasible alternative to the hamper industry, doorstep lenders and loan sharks.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister give an update on the home energy efficiency scheme? (WAQ48940)

Edwina Hart: The scheme will have assisted over 70,000 households by the end of 2006-07. An additional £5 million is available this year and next to assist pensioner households bringing the total budget to £19.6 million in each year. The scheme's latest annual report has recently been published and can be found at: http://www.eagagroup.com/downloads/pdf/energy_efficiency_report1.pdf

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister provide details of the funding package included in the budget for community radio, along with an explanation of how this funding will be administered, including what help will be offered to help those applying to access the funds? (WAQ48977)

Edwina Hart: The Assembly Government has earmarked £100,000 of revenue funding per year over the next five years to support community radio in Wales. My officials are working with the Office of Communications, which has responsibility for broadcasting in Wales, and will make recommendations to me once these discussions are complete.

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister explain the fact that constituents being advised at Swansea energy advice centre were informed that subsidy grants for home insulation can only be used on unsustainable products

such as the roof insulation 'synthetic wool', and, if this advice is correct, why grant vouchers cannot be used for sustainable alternatives such as wool and hemp? (WAQ48995)

Edwina Hart: While I can confirm that grants for home insulation do offer alternatives to synthetic wool, based on the information you have provided I am unable to comment on whether the advice given by the Swansea energy advice centre was correct as this would depend on the context of the question to them. I should add that grant programmes, rather than vouchers, do offer some alternative sustainable products such as Warmcell loft insulation.

Mark Isherwood: What annual statistics are available to show either an increase or reduction in substance misuse in Wales? (WAQ48999)

Edwina Hart: Please refer to section 2, paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3 and 2.11 of my fourth annual progress report to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 21 September 2006.

Mark Isherwood: What funding has been made available to helpline services to aid substance misuse in Wales? (WAQ49000)

Edwina Hart: Funding of £60,000 from the Home Office drug intervention programme was made available to establish the all-Wales drug and alcohol helpline on 1 September 2006.

Mark Isherwood: What funds will be allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government, by unitary authority, to combat substance misuse, defined in separate terms of alcohol and also drugs in Wales, for the period 2006-07? (WAQ49001)

Edwina Hart: The allocation of funding between drug and alcohol services is a matter for local determination by the community safety partnerships. I provided a detailed breakdown of how each CSP had allocated its funding for 2006-07 to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 23 November 2006.

Mark Isherwood: How many organisations are operating in Wales to combat substance misuse in Wales and what is their geographical dispersal? (WAQ49003)

Edwina Hart: Those organisations who are commissioned by the community safety partnerships to deliver services are listed by police authority area in the first annual report of the Welsh database for substance misuse, which was included in my progress report to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 21 September 2006

Mark Isherwood: What Welsh Assembly Government funding is available to support drug and alcohol rehabilitation in Wales for organisations such as CAIS in north Wales, Cyswllt Ceredigion, and Gwent Council on Alcohol and Drug Misuse? (WAQ49004)

Edwina Hart: The sum of £13.4 million will be available for 2007-08, representing a 32 per cent increase on the substance misuse action fund for 2006-07.

William Graham: What discussions has the Welsh Assembly Government had with the Home Office regarding the funding of the police service in Wales? (WAQ49043) *Transferred for answer by the Finance Minister.*

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): The Welsh Assembly Government is in regular contact with Home Office both at ministerial and official level on issues of police authority finance.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister detail allocated funding for Supporting People for the current and next financial year? (WAQ49048)

Edwina Hart: I can confirm that for 2006-07 the following Supporting People funding was allocated to each local authority:

Local Authority	Supporting People Grant 2006-07	Supporting People Revenue Grant 2006-07
Anglesey	£2,200,813.56	£936,397.03
Blaenau Gwent	£771,995.81	£1,120,663.03
Bridgend	£3,277,228.33	£2,212,446.02
Caerphilly	£4,033,955.20	£1,807,922.26
Cardiff	£5,325,848.83	£14,461,355.37
Carmarthenshire	£2,947,549.29	£3,536,016.58
Ceredigion	£1,009,661.78	£2,448,910.40
Conwy	£6,175,158.30	£1,662,263.42
Denbighshire	£3,672,452.14	£2,946,123.05
Flintshire	£5,333,230.87	£1,691,044.80
Gwynedd	£3,533,972.52	£2,610,835.66
Merthyr Tydfil	£772,657.01	£539,126.58
Monmouthshire	£642,815.23	£1,279,468.37
Neath Port Talbot	£1,832,038.00	£2,081,314.06
Newport	£3,024,562.57	£3,107,805.74
Pembrokeshire	£1,360,564.51	£556,039.36
Powys	£4,356,918.34	£1,791,926.17
Rhondda Cynon Taf	£4,985,645.27	£3,499,659.90
Swansea	£8,974,413.44	£4,267,331.30
Torfaen	£1,238,974.10	£1,862,868.27
Vale of Glamorgan	£1,482,295.95	£1,743,684.81
Wrexham	£3,727,243.60	£2,329,701.43
TOTAL	£70,679,994.66	£58,492,903.61

No decision has yet been taken as to the level of funding to be allocated to individual authorities for 2007-08.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on any representations she has received regarding the cost-effectiveness of investing in Supporting People? (WAQ49049)

Edwina Hart: In spring 2006 I commissioned Matrix Consultancy and Research to carry out a study on the cost and benefits of Supporting People in Wales. The final report made a useful contribution to the Welsh Assembly Government 2006 spending review.

Matrix concluded that the net benefit of the Supporting People programme is approximately £73 million. This figure relates £107 million spend out of a total Supporting People budget of £128 million. There were significant savings in the following client group areas:

- women seeking refuge from domestic violence;
- homeless or potentially homeless people;
- older people.

These savings accrued to service areas like the NHS, the criminal justice system and social services. It should be noted that this model looks only at the costed impacts for the public exchequer and does not take into account benefits such as the quality of life and independence for the individual. It should also be noted that the potential savings that have been modelled relate to one year only and, for some service users, the Supporting People services can have a potential lifetime effect.

Cymorth Cymru, the representative body for providers of housing-related support in Wales, has also commissioned research into the impact of supported housing. Its report 'Bringing it Home' provides 'qualitative' insight into the contribution supported housing makes to a range of vulnerable people across Wales. Its document concludes that Supporting-People-funded services have a major contribution to make to the transformation of public services in Wales following the Beecham review.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how the revised guidance on the new licensing laws will be applied within Wales to tackle anti-social behaviour? (WAQ49054)

Edwina Hart: Policy responsibility for licensing law and associated guidance is not devolved to the National Assembly for Wales. The lead department, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, is currently consulting on revised guidance to licensing authorities. Consultation ends on 11 April, and details can be found on its website at <http://www.culture.gov.uk/>

Owen John Thomas: What steps is the Government taking to help first-time home buyers? (WAQ49055)

Edwina Hart: The principal means of assistance to first-time buyers in Wales is through the homebuy scheme, which provides an interest-free equity loan. We have also given housing associations the facility to offer homebuy loans to both new and existing tenants to enable them to access home ownership.

Last year we issued a comprehensive package of policy measures and guidance aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing, including our affordable housing toolkit, and revisions to planning policy. These should help to increase the opportunities available to first-time buyers both inside and outside of the social housing grant programme.

Owen John Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on regeneration initiatives in the community of Butetown? (WAQ49056)

Edwina Hart: Since 1999, the Assembly Government has provided £13.18 million in social housing grant to housing associations to assist with the provision of additional social housing in Butetown. Recently this has included social housing grant contributions towards Cardiff Community Housing Association schemes to provide 174 flats for rent and low-cost home ownership as part of the redevelopment of the area.

To date, £4,042,117 of Communities First funding has been awarded to the Communities First programme in Cardiff, of which £348,439 has been awarded to the Communities First area of Butetown. The community facilities and activities programme has awarded £334,726 since May 2003 to two projects in the Butetown area, including £259,726 to Cardiff Women's Workshop for the training of women

returning to education, training and the workplace, and £75,000 to ProMo Cymru to help engage young people in social and cultural entrepreneurship.

Peter Black: Will the Minister report on the effectiveness of the Welsh Assembly Government's crime fund? (WAQ49057)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government's crime fighting fund enables joined-up action to be taken on crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. During the period April 2002 to March 2006 recorded crime in Wales has fallen by 15 per cent.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on her plans to promote social inclusion in north Wales? (WAQ49058)

Edwina Hart: My social justice report 2006 details the significant number of policies and programmes in place across the Assembly Government aimed at promoting social inclusion across Wales.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on the closure of post offices in rural communities? (WAQ49059)

Edwina Hart: I refer you to the written statement that I issued on 15 December 2006.

Carl Sargeant: How is the Welsh Assembly Government helping individuals on low incomes to tackle the problem of personal debt? (WAQ49060)

Edwina Hart: Tackling personal debt is one of the significant issues highlighted by the review of over-indebtedness. We are implementing the 10 recommendations, including work on financial literacy in schools, the provision of debt advice, raising awareness of illegal money-lending, and support for the credit union movement.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister outline the Welsh Assembly Government's main achievements in the field of social justice and regeneration in Alyn and Deeside? (WAQ49061)

Edwina Hart: Since 1999, the Assembly Government has allocated £20.1 million to housing associations operating in Flintshire to assist with the provision of affordable housing in the area. The home energy efficiency scheme has been able to assist over 1,400 households in Alyn and Deeside, providing over 3,000 energy-efficiency measures at a cost of £1.4 million, and £637,391 has also been allocated to support the Higher Shotton estate under the Communities First programme.

The community facilities and activities programme has committed £530,592 to five projects in Alyn and Deeside, including £100,000 to refurbish the Mancot and Moor Village Hall and £33,000 towards the refurbishment of Rock Salt Community Centre, Caergwrle. Under the scheme, £384,855 has also been allocated to Flintshire Local Voluntary Council for schemes throughout the area.

The Flintshire Community Safety Partnership has also benefited from funding such as £408,531 in 2006-07 to address substance misuse problems, resulting in 90 additional treatment places in Flintshire. In addition, £27,419 per annum has been provided to fund a domestic abuse coordinator from 2006-09, and £610,356 from the Safer Communities Fund for the prevention and reduction of youth crime in the Flintshire area.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress in reducing alcohol abuse in Wales? (WAQ49062)

Edwina Hart: I refer you to the progress report that I provided for the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 21 September.

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on tackling fuel poverty in Wales? (WAQ49063)

Edwina Hart: 'A Fuel Poverty Commitment for Wales' recognises the importance of partnerships in the public and private sectors, and the role played by the Energy Saving Trust, Welsh Local Government Association and others in helping us to reduce fuel poverty. Our main vehicle for tackling fuel poverty is the home energy efficiency scheme. We anticipate that it will have assisted over 70,000 vulnerable households by the end of 2006-07. An additional £5 million has been made available to the scheme for 2006-07 and 2007-08 to assist pensioner households.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on poverty issues currently affecting Wales? (WAQ49064)

Edwina Hart: The percentage of people in Wales living in poverty has fallen from 25 per cent at the time of devolution to 21 per cent in the most recent period. During the same period the percentage of children living in poverty in Wales has fallen from 35 per cent to 28 per cent.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on any recent discussions she has had with the UK prisons Minister regarding Prescoed open prison in Monmouthshire? (WAQ49065)

Edwina Hart: I refer you to my report at the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 18 January.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on what she is doing to encourage regeneration in Powys? (WAQ49066)

Edwina Hart: I have approved funding totalling £1,597,669 for the three Communities First partnerships in Powys to enable local communities to take the lead in driving forward the regeneration of their areas.

The community facilities and activities programme also encourages regeneration within communities. I have approved £1,353,333 towards the cost of 28 community and voluntary organisations projects in Powys. This includes £121,040 towards the cost of the social inclusion reaching employment needs wood workshop scheme, which encourages socially excluded young people into the workplace through working with wood.

Under the physical regeneration fund, targeted at planning authorities in Wales, I have approved funding of £1,661,000 in Powys. Projects supported include £1,301,000 for the Powys built heritage scheme, which aims to enhance the built environment, thus stimulating investment and encouraging tourism.

Volunteering is an essential element in regenerating communities and I have approved core funding of £198,000 for Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations to provide support for volunteers.

Glyn Davies: What steps is the Minister taking to address the shortage of affordable housing in Wales? (WAQ49090)

Edwina Hart: We have progressively increased the budget for the social housing grant programme over the period 2005-06 to 2007-08 and introduced a package of policy measures and guidance aimed at increasing supply. These include revised technical advice notes 1 and 2, a local housing market assessment guide, and the affordable housing toolkit. We have also made orders restricting the right to acquire and resale of properties sold under the right to buy scheme in rural Wales.

Glyn Davies: What steps is the Minister taking to address the long-term underinvestment in social housing in Wales? (WAQ49091)

Edwina Hart: Huge sums of money are needed to tackle the backlog of repairs and improvements to our council houses. The Welsh housing quality standard was issued in 2002 as a minimum standard for the physical and environmental condition of existing social housing. All social landlords must submit business plans to the Welsh Assembly Government which demonstrate the achievement of the standard by 2012 and its continuing maintenance during the 30-year planning period. It is for a local authority to decide how it intends to achieve the Welsh housing quality standard.