

Written Questions answered between 23 and 30 January 2003

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

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

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Question to the First Minister

Welsh Office and Assembly Government Car Fleet

David Ian Jones: Would the First Minister list the figures for the Welsh Office and Assembly Government's car fleet year by year from 1997 to 2003 inclusive, including vehicle make, engine size and purpose of usage? (WAQ22255)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): The information requested is shown in the following table:

Organisation	Year	Make	Engine Size - cc
Welsh Office	1997-98	Rover	1994cc
		Vauxhall	1998cc
		Vauxhall	1799cc
Welsh Office	1998-99	Rover	1994cc
		Vauxhall	1998cc
		Vauxhall	1799cc
		Vauxhall	2498cc
National Assembly for Wales	1999-2000	Rover	1994cc
		Vauxhall	1998cc
		Vauxhall	1799cc
		Vauxhall	2498cc
		Ford	1988cc
National Assembly for Wales	2000-01	Rover	1994cc
		Vauxhall	1998cc
		Vauxhall	1799cc
		Vauxhall	2498cc
		Ford	1988cc
		Rover	1991cc
		Rover	1991cc
National Assembly for Wales	2001-02	Rover*	1994cc
		Vauxhall*	1998cc
		Vauxhall	1799cc
		Vauxhall	2498cc
		Ford	1988cc
		Rover	1991cc
		Rover	1991cc
		Ford	2300cc
National Assembly for Wales	2002-03	Vauxhall	1799cc
		Vauxhall	2498cc
		Ford	1988cc
		Rover	1991cc
		Rover	1991cc
		Ford	2300cc

Note: Period 2001-02—the number of vehicles reduced from eight to six.

Two of the older vehicles* were disposed of in November 2001.

Purpose of usage: With the exception of the Vauxhall Vectra R682 EHB, which is used for local mail deliveries between Cathays Park and Cardiff Bay offices, all other vehicles are for use by Ministers and senior officials on official business.

Questions to the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad

Antibiotic Resistance Marker Genes (GM Seeds)

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on whether any genetically modified seeds containing antibiotic resistance marker genes have been planted in Wales? (WAQ22152)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad (Michael German): In 1997, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, on the advice of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment, issued consents under part B of the deliberate release directive for trials of a variety of oilseed rape. The only Welsh location was in Monmouthshire. The oilseed rape in question contained a kanamycin-resistant gene from TN5 and was resistant to the antibiotic. The recently adopted new deliberate release, 2001/18/EC, will phase out the use of antibiotic resistance markers.

The consents expired in 2000, and any new part B release applications in Wales would need authorisation from the National Assembly for Wales as the competent authority.

Planting Calgene Oilseed Rape Seeds

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement whether any Calgene oilseed rape seeds have been planted in Wales? (WAQ22153)

Michael German: In 1997, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, on the advice of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment, issued consents under part B of the deliberate release directive for trials of the Calgene variety of oilseed rape. The only Welsh location was in Monmouthshire.

The consents expired in 2000, and any new part B release applications in Wales would need authorisation from the National Assembly for Wales as the competent authority.

Reducing the Number of Bees Officers

Alun Pugh: Will the Minister make a statement on the plans to reduce the number of bees officers serving Wales from eight to two, and can he give an assurance that the monitoring of the health of bees will not be put at risk? (WAQ22270)

Michael German: There are no such plans. The bee health programme in Wales is run by the National Bee Unit, which is part of the Central Science Laboratory in York, operating under a memorandum of understanding with the National Assembly. Having spoken to the National Bee Unit, our understanding is that there are no plans to reduce the numbers of bees officers in Wales.

Questions to the Minister for Economic Development

Statutory Registration in the Tourist Industry (Cost of Meetings)

Alun Cairns: Would the Minister list the number of consultation meetings, together with their cost, that have been held in seeking to establish the view of statutory registration in the tourist industry? (WAQ22097)

The Minister for Economic Development (Andrew Davies): The Wales Tourist Board, in response to the First Minister's request for a report on the justification for statutory registration in April 2000,

embarked upon a period of consultation with the tourist industry in Wales. Two conferences were held in June 2001 at a combined cost of £18,500. In addition, the Wales Tourist Board attended meetings of seven organisations between April and June 2002 at which statutory registration was discussed. Only one of these meetings entailed any extra expenditure, namely the hiring of a meeting room in Cardiff at an additional cost to WTB of approximately £200.

Statutory Registration in the Tourist Industry (Policy)

Alun Cairns: How much money has been spent creating policy for statutory registration in the tourist industry? (WAQ22098)

Andrew Davies: The table below shows the Wales Tourist Board's expenditure to date on the development of its policy for a statutory registration scheme for tourist accommodation in Wales:

Year	WTB Programme Expenditure Statutory Registration
2000-01	£16,000
2001-02	£22,000
2002-03	£17,000 to date

Source: Wales Tourist Board

Single Programming Document Commitment Targets

Phil Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the commitment of Objective 1 funding against commitment targets agreed in the single programming document? (WAQ22099)

Andrew Davies: There are no commitment targets in the single programming document. All of the de-commitment targets for 2002, which were set by the European Commission, were met.

European Structural Funding

Phil Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the possible de-commitment of Objective 2 and 5b money unspent from previous round of European structural funding? (WAQ22100)

Andrew Davies: As the programmes are still in the process of being closed, I have nothing further to add to my reply to WAQ19817.

European Structural Funding

Phil Williams: Will the Minister give a breakdown of spending of Objective 2 and 5b funding from the previous round of European structural funds in the last six months? (WAQ22101)

Andrew Davies: Grant paid out on these programmes since 1 July 2002 is as follows:

Objective 2 (industrial south Wales—1994-96)	European regional development fund	£2.6 million
Objective 2 (industrial south Wales—1997-99)	European regional development fund	£20.2 million
Objective 5b (rural Wales)	European regional development fund	£3.6 million
	European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund	£1.6 million

Jobs in the Manufacturing Sector

Elin Jones: Will the Minister give a breakdown, by area, of the 25,000 jobs created in the manufacturing sector over the last year? (WAQ22102)

Andrew Davies: The latest numbers available are given in the table below.

Manufacturing employment, job gains, 2000-01 (a)

	Job gains (b)(c)	Percentage (%) of 2001 stock (d)
Blaenau Gwent	800	11
Bridgend	800	8
Caerphilly	1,400	10
Cardiff	1,300	8
Carmarthenshire	700	9
Ceredigion	100	4
Conwy	200	12
Denbighshire	400	9
Flintshire	5,400	23
Gwynedd	400	10
Anglesey	900	25
Merthyr Tydfil	800	17
Monmouthshire	800	25
Neath Port Talbot	1,400	14
Newport	1,500	11
Pembrokeshire	600	19
Powys	1,000	16
Rhondda Cynon Taf	1,900	12
Swansea	1,200	14
Torfaen	700	8
Vale of Glamorgan	100	2
Wrexham	2,700	19
Wales	25,100	13

Source: Welsh Register of Manufacturing Employment, which contains details of plants that employ 11 people or more.

(a) Data is for more than one year due to a timing delay in obtaining figures for 2001.

(b) Manufacturing plants that opened and entered the register due to an increase in employment above 11 and openings.

(c) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.

(d) Rounded to zero decimal places.

Mesur Tyfiant Swyddi

Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar ba ffynhonnell y mae'n ei defnyddio i fesur tyfiant swyddi a pha ddulliau sy'n cael eu defnyddio i gasglu'r ffigurau yma? (WAQ22110) [W]

Andrew Davies: Y Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol sy'n paratoi'r ffigurau cyflogaeth cyffredinol ar gyfer Cymru. Mae dwy brif ffynhonnell. Un ohonynt yw'r Arolwg o'r Gweithlu, sy'n arolygu sampl o gartrefi. Rhydd amcangyfrif o lefelau a chyfraddau cyflogaeth. Ar gyfer Cymru gyfan, cyhoeddir yr amcangyfrifon bob mis gan ddangos cyfartaledd o dri mis, gyda mis o oediad. Er enghraifft, cyhoeddwyd

y lefelau a'r cyfraddau cyflogaeth am y tri mis rhwng Medi a Thachwedd 2002 ym mis Ionawr 2003. Y ffynhonnell arall yw'r ymchwiliad busnes blynyddol—arolwg mawr o gyflogwyr (sy'n cynnwys yr holl gyflogwyr mawr a sampl o rai llai), sy'n rhoi amcangyfrif o swyddi gweithwyr ym mis Rhagfyr bob blwyddyn. Ategir y wybodaeth flynyddol hon gan arolygon byrdymor o gyflogwyr, er mwyn paratoui cyfres chwarterol sy'n dangos swyddi gweithwyr. Crëir cyfres arall o ystadegau ar gyfer swyddi yn y gweithlu sifil drwy ychwanegu'r gyfres ar gyfer swyddi gweithwyr at yr amcangyfrif o swyddi hunan-gyflogaeth (sy'n deillio o'r Arolwg o'r Gweithlu) a nifer hyfforddeion y llywodraeth.

Measure Employment Growth

Elin Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the sources he uses to measure employment growth and what methods are used to collect these figures? (WAQ22110) [W]

Andrew Davies: The Office for National Statistics produces overall employment figures for Wales. There are two main sources. The first is the Labour Force Survey, which is a survey of a sample of households. This provides estimates of employment levels and employment rates. For the whole of Wales, estimates are published monthly for three-month averages with a one-month lag. For example, employment levels and rates for September to November 2002 were published in January 2003. The second source is the annual business inquiry, a large survey of employers (including all the large employers and a sample of smaller ones), which provides an estimate of employee jobs in December each year. This annual information is supplemented with smaller short-term employer surveys to produce a quarterly series for employee jobs. A further series for civilian workforce jobs is derived by adding the employee jobs series to estimates of self-employment jobs (derived from the Labour Force Survey) and numbers of government trainees.

'Cymru'n Ennill'

Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar y nifer o swyddi sydd wedi'u creu ers cyhoeddi 'Cymru'n Ennill' a faint o'r swyddi hyn sydd yn rhai llawn amser? (WAQ22111) [W]

Andrew Davies: Mae'r targed cyflogaeth yn 'Cymru'n Ennill' yn gynydd mewn cyflogaeth yn hytrach na nifer y swyddi a grëwyd. Hyd at fis Tachwedd 2002, gwelwyd cynnydd net o 19,000 ers 2001 yn nifer y bobl sy'n cael eu cyflogi ledled Cymru, sef 1.261 miliwn ac, yn yr un cyfnod, gwelwyd cynnydd net o 24,000 yn nifer y bobl sy'n gweithio'n llawn amser, sef 954,000.

'A Winning Wales'

Elin Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of jobs created since publishing 'A Winning Wales' and how many of these are full-time jobs? (WAQ22111) [W]

Andrew Davies: The employment target in 'A Winning Wales' is an increase in employment rather than numbers of jobs created. Up to November 2002, there was a net increase of 19,000 on 2001 in the number of people employed across Wales to 1.261 million and, in the same period, there has been a net increase of 24,000 in the number of full-time people employed to 954,000.

Alcoa Extrusions and End Products in Swansea

Peter Black: What actions has the Minister taken in response to the announcement on 21 January 2003 that Alcoa Extrusions and End Products in Swansea is to close? (WAQ22252)

Andrew Davies: I explored whether Assembly Government assistance could help to avert the loss of 120 jobs, but Alcoa had made its commercial decision as part of its worldwide restructuring and consolidation. I responded to inquiries by explaining that the extrusion facility was separate from the rolling mill, where a £12.5 million investment by Alcoa has been supported by the Assembly Government

to safeguard 287 jobs. I also discussed the closure with the relevant Transport and General Workers' Union officer and offered all possible help to those being made redundant.

Allied Steel and Wire Plant

Owen John Thomas: When will the Minister be able to give a starting date for the resumption of steel production at the Allied Steel and Wire plant in Cardiff? (WAQ22254)

Andrew Davies: It is not possible to provide a date at this time as Celsa's business plan for the Cardiff plant will not be completed until March or April. Celsa has yet to commit to recommencing steel production in Cardiff, although it has indicated that, subject to market conditions, its first choice would be to restart production in Cardiff later this year. Both the First Minister and I have spoken to Celsa's senior management team and we expect to meet them when they are next in the UK.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

National Council for Education and Training for Wales

Helen Mary Jones: When was the decision taken not to establish the National Council for Education and Training for Wales as a shadow body, prior to it becoming fully operational? (WAQ22108)

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister confirm whether the decision not to establish the National Council for Education and Training for Wales as a shadow body prior to it becoming fully operational was taken at ministerial level? (WAQ22109)

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): The National Council for Education and Training for Wales was established in autumn 2000 prior to becoming operational on 1 April 2001. All the relevant ministerial decisions were taken to support measured progress towards achieving the transfer of functions and operational capacity to the council.

The Assembly debated the recommendations of the Post 16 Education and Training Committee regarding implementation of the education and training action plan on 1 February 2000. The motion approved during that Plenary debate instructed that the necessary work should be put in hand with the training and enterprise councils and Further Education Funding Council for Wales, so as to implement the new arrangements for post 16 education and training by 1 April 2001.

This timescale took account of the prospective progress of the then Learning and Skills Bill towards Royal Assent (which itself duly conditioned the timing of the council's establishment). It also took account of the Committee's recommendation that there should be a staged approach towards the assumption by the National Council—ELWa of the full range of its operational functions.

Subsequently, the Post 16 Education and Training Committee considered guidance on the roles of community consortia for education and training and the regional committees of the National Council—ELWa, which itself contributed towards the preparations for the new arrangements. Augmented support for other preparatory work was constituted by the education and training action plan transition project machinery established in March 2000 which included representatives of all of the bodies involved directly in the transfer of functions as well as other external stakeholders. The project steering committee monitored the progress of the project throughout the transition period and kept the issues associated with the project under regular review.

The National Council—ELWa came into being in November 2000 with the appointment of its chairman and chief executive. Its other Members and senior staff were appointed subsequently and the council met in full for the first time in February 2001. The appointment of the chair and members of the council were

made in accordance with the relevant Assembly procedures. The council was fully committed to taking up its operational responsibilities from 1 April 2001.

Upon appointment, the senior staff of the council (who had been undertaking key roles within the project management machinery) took over responsibility for organisational planning within it, drawing on information and advice prepared as part of the project arrangements.

My predecessor and I received regular progress reports—indeed the project’s progress was fully charted through its newsletter ‘Ymlaen—Ahead’ and other documents that were routinely made available to Assembly Members and the public on the Assembly’s website—and at no point were we given advice that the timetable for the transfer of functions was unachievable.

In line with the principles established by the Post-16 Education and Training Committee, certain aspects of the education and training action plan recommendations have been phased because they required a longer period of preparation. In particular, the transfer of responsibility for sixth-form funding from local education authorities to the National Council—ELWa was deferred until 1 April 2002, and the National Council—ELWa’s review of post-16 planning and funding arrangements commenced last year and has yet to be concluded.

Fires in School Buildings

Ann Jones: Further to her answer to OAQ21746, what was the total number of fires in primary and secondary school buildings in Wales over a five year period from 1997 to 2002, and how many of those fires were classified by the fire service as being of doubtful or malicious origin? (WAQ22120)

Jane Davidson: This information is not held centrally.

Reducing the Risk of Fire in Schools

Ann Jones: Further to her answer to OAQ21745, what guidance is offered to local education authorities by the Welsh Assembly Government on reducing the risk of fire in schools, and particularly fires caused by arson, through fitting modern fire sprinkler systems into new or refurbished school buildings? (WAQ22121)

Jane Davidson: Since 1 July 2002, new school buildings have had to meet the requirements of the 2000 edition of approved document B of the Building Regulations 1991, which deals with fire safety.

The Assembly-led community fire safety working group has been commissioned to consider the issue of arson and make recommendations for an all-Wales arson strategy. The Local Government and Housing Committee considered a draft report in October 2002, and its proposals were widely endorsed.

The report recommends that the Assembly looks to promote the widespread use of sprinklers in schools. This builds on an earlier report from the group in October 2001 on the issue of domestic fires, which recommended the installation of sprinkler systems in multi-occupied public buildings.

My colleague, Edwina Hart—who has responsibility for community fire safety—and I are keen to move this issue forward. To this end, we are looking with colleagues in local education authorities and the fire services at the potential for a pilot programme of sprinkler installations in schools, with funding from the Assembly’s community fire safety budget (£4 million in 2003-04).

Hyrwyddo Argaeledd Addysgofal Cyfrwng Cymraeg

Owen John Thomas: Pa gamau y mae’r Llywodraeth yn eu cymryd i hyrwyddo argaeledd addysgofal cyfrwng Cymraeg? (WAQ22124) [W]

Jane Davidson: Mae swyddogion y Cynulliad wedi cyfarfod â'r 22 awdurdod addysg lleol er mwyn hyrwyddo darpariaeth gymysg ar gyfer ein plant ieuengaf. Byddwch yn ymwybodol bod 'Dyfodol Dwyieithog: Bilingual Future' yn nodi y bydd Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru'n cydweithio'n glòs ag awdurdodau addysg lleol er mwyn cynyddu'r ddarpariaeth addysg feithrin cyfrwng Cymraeg. Yn ogystal, drwy Fwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg, bydd yn parhau i gynorthwyo gwaith Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. Bellach, mae llawer o awdurdodau lleol wedi sefydlu contractau gyda'r mudiad i wella'u darpariaeth eu hunain.

Mae Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin yn derbyn cyllid o'r grant i fudiadau plant a theuluoedd, sydd ar gael i ddarparu gofal dydd drwy grwpiau plant a rhieni/gofalwyr, grwpiau chwarae a darpariaeth feithrin. Dros y ddwy flynedd ddiwethaf, derbyniodd y mudiad £410,884 o'r grant hwn. Am dair blynedd o 2002-03 ymlaen, byddant hefyd yn derbyn £35,000 y flwyddyn o'm darpariaeth innau ar gyfer y blynyddoedd cynnar er mwyn cyflogi swyddog datblygu i hyrwyddo'r ddarpariaeth cyfrwng Cymraeg ledled Cymru.

Ym mis Gorffennaf 2002, cyhoeddodd y Gweinidog dros Ddiwylliant, Chwaraeon a'r Gymraeg £450,000 yn rhagor i gynorthwyo a hyrwyddo'r Gymraeg. Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin fydd un o'r sefydliadau a fydd yn elwa o'r cyllid ychwanegol hwn. Drwy'r arian, bydd yn gallu cyflogi chwe swyddog rhan amser i gynorthwyo'r grwpiau chwarae mewn aradaloedd dan anfantais ac ardaloedd lle ceir diffyg darpariaeth. Mae'r ardaloedd a fydd yn derbyn cymorth yn cynnwys Brynbuga, Penydarren a'r Gurnos, Abergwaun a de Llanelli.

Yn fwy cyffredinol, yn ystod y flwyddyn ariannol bresennol, bydd Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin yn derbyn cymorth anuniongyrchol o'r £6.2 miliwn yr wyf wedi ei ddarparu i ymestyn y ddarpariaeth blynyddoedd cynnar rhan amser i bob plentyn tair mlwydd oed. Rhagwelaf y bydd y cymorth hwn yn parhau a, chan ddibynnu ar drafodaethau pellach, mae'n ddigon posibl y bydd yn cynyddu yn ystod y blynyddoedd ariannol sydd i ddod.

Availability of Welsh Medium Educare

Owen John Thomas: What steps is the Government taking to promote the availability of Welsh medium educare? (WAQ22124) [W]

Jane Davidson: Assembly officials have held meetings with all 22 local education authorities to promote a mixed economy of provision for our youngest children. You will also be aware that 'Dwyieithog: Bilingual Future' indicates that the Welsh Assembly Government will work closely with local education authorities to increase provision of Welsh-medium nursery education and, through the Welsh Language Board, will continue to support the work of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin. Many local authorities are now contracting with MYM to enhance their own provision.

MYM receives funding from the children and families organisation grant, which is intended for day-care provision through parent/carer and child groups, play groups and nursery provision. Over the last two years, MYM has received £410,884 from the CFOG. It has also received, from 2002-03, £35,000 per annum for three years from my own early-years provision to employ a development officer to promote Welsh-language provision throughout Wales.

In July 2002, the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language announced £450,000 additional funding to support and promote the Welsh language. MYM will be one of the organisations benefiting from this additional funding and will be able to employ six part-time officers to support new playgroups in disadvantaged areas and in areas where there is a shortfall in provision. Areas to be included for support are Usk, Penydarren and the Gurnos, Fishguard and south Llanelli.

More generally, MYM will indirectly receive support in the current financial year from the £6.2 million that I made available for the expansion of part-time early-years places for all three-year-olds. I envisage that this support will continue and, subject to further discussions, could well increase in the forthcoming financial years.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

Owen John Thomas: Sut y mae'r Gweinidog wedi ymateb i'r angen am gymorth cyllidol i helpu Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin sicrhau cyflogau rhesymol i arweinwyr eu cylchoedd meithrin? (WAQ22125) [W]

Jane Davidson: Mae fy swyddogion wedi cwrdd â phob un o'r 22 partneriaeth blynyddoedd cynnar yng Nghymru lle y cynrychiolir y sector gwirfoddol. Yn ystod y cyfarfodydd, cafwyd trafodaethau penodol ynghylch costau staffio y lleoliadau nad ydynt yn cael eu cynnal ac yn enwedig y gost o recriwtio staff addas. Bydd canlyniadau'r trafodaethau hyn yn sail i'm penderfyniadau ar ddyraniad yr adnoddau sydd ar gael ar gyfer 2003-04.

Yn achos addysg feithrin drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg, yr oedd cyhoeddiad y Gweinidog â chyfrifoldeb dros ddiwylliant ar 27 Tachwedd 2002 yn rhagweld pecyn cymorth ychwanegol er mwyn datblygu'r Gymraeg. Rhagwelaif y bydd Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin yn elwa o'r adnoddau ychwanegol hyn. Yr oedd y pecyn yn cynnwys £7 miliwn yn ychwanegol at gefnogi addysg feithrin ddwyieithog yn ystod 2004-06 a'r bwriad yw darparu staff hyfforddedig sy'n gallu sicrhau darpariaeth cyfrwng Cymraeg erbyn mis Medi 2006. Cynhelir trafodaethau maes o law gyda'r sefydliadau a fydd o bosibl yn elwa o'r adnoddau ychwanegol hyn, gan gynnwys Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

Owen John Thomas: How has the Minister responded to the need for budgetary aid to help Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin ensure reasonable salaries for its nursery group leaders? (WAQ22125) [W]

Jane Davidson: My officials have held meetings with all 22 early-years partnerships in Wales on which the voluntary sector is represented and during which there have been specific discussions on the staffing costs of the non-maintained settings, especially the costs of recruiting suitable staff. The outcomes of these discussions will inform my decisions on the distribution of the available resources for 2003-04.

In the case of Welsh-medium nursery education, the announcement made by the Minister with responsibility for culture on 27 November 2002 envisaged a package of additional support for Welsh-language development. I anticipate that Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin will benefit from these additional resources. This package included an additional £7 million in support of bilingual nursery education in the period 2004-06, and it is intended that it should provide additional trained practitioners capable of delivering such provision through the medium of Welsh by September 2006. Discussions are due to take place shortly with the potential beneficiaries of the additional resources, including Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

Expanding Construction Training and Skills

Alun Cairns: What plans does the Minister have to expand construction training and skills as a result of major construction projects that are planned, such as the film studios near Bridgend and the increased road-building budget? (WAQ22256)

Jane Davidson: The increase in construction projects, such as these, is expected to impact mainly in south-east Wales. A construction training centre is being developed in Cardiff bay in conjunction with Barry College and the local authority. In addition, the National Council—ELWa has agreed additional training provision with Bridgend College for 2003-04, and is discussing similar increases in provision with other colleges. The National Council—ELWa is also working with the Construction Industry Training Board to develop a strategy for construction provision across Wales.

Promoting the Construction Skills Certification Scheme

Alun Cairns: What role does ELWa have in promoting the construction skills certification scheme? (WAQ22257)

Jane Davidson: The prime responsibility for promoting the construction skills certification scheme rests with the Construction Industry Training Board. However, the National Council—ELWa is working with the CITB and is committed to supporting this scheme.

Questions to the Minister for Environment

Flood Defences in Wales

Mick Bates: Will the Minister make a statement on flood defences in Wales? (WAQ22089)

The Minister for Environment (Sue Essex): We are conducting a review of flood-defence funding and administrative arrangements with the UK Government, and are considering the way forward following consultation. It is for the operating authorities to progress individual flood-defence schemes and satisfy themselves that adequate and sustainable flood defences are in place. The Welsh Assembly Government has taken an active role in promoting flood-defence preparations and has allocated £38 million over this and the next three financial years to support operating authorities in Wales. I have encouraged local authorities to undertake some 400 pre-feasibility studies, for which 100 per cent grant support has been provided, and have increased the grant assistance available to local authorities to 85 per cent to take forward schemes to reduce flood risk.

Support for Renewable Energy

Mick Bates: Does the Minister agree that support for renewable energy needs to be promoted through supportive technical advice and planning procedures? (WAQ22094)

Sue Essex: Yes, I do and that is why planning policy for renewable energy contained in ‘Planning Policy Wales’ will be supplemented by more detail in the revised technical advice note. The technical advisory group, which is assisting in the review of technical advice note 8, is working towards achieving consensus on the technical guidance needed to support that policy.

There are encouraging signs that the industry and other stakeholders see the potential of a decision support tool designed to help local authorities identify the key impacts of proposals. Work is underway on developing a tool, which can underpin future policy at both local and national levels, to enable Wales to make an appropriate contribution to UK Government renewable energy targets.

Question to the Finance Minister

Reducing the Risk of Fire in School Buildings

Ann Jones: What guidance is offered by the National Assembly on the need for any private finance initiative specifications for new school buildings to contain recommendations for the fitting of modern sprinkler systems, to help reduce the risk of fire? (WAQ22122)

The Finance Minister (Edwina Hart): The private finance initiative is a procurement method. Schools built using private finance initiatives must meet the same requirements as those that are procured traditionally. I refer you to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning’s answer to WAQ22121.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Delayed Discharges

David Lloyd: How many days were lost in the national health service in Wales due to delayed discharges in the last 12 months, and what was the estimated cost to the NHS? (WAQ22072) [R]

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): The delayed transfers of care monthly census is a snapshot of the number of delays each month. It cannot be used to quantify the total number of delays that may have occurred in any one year, because each census records the total number of days that a patient has been delayed. As a result, to add the days delayed at each census would involve double counting.

The Welsh Assembly Government records delays in discharge and transfer together, so a number of days 'lost' to the national health service cannot be quantified in the way asked.

However, as an indicator, some information on a different basis was used in 'A Question of Balance: a Review of Capacity in the Health Service in Wales 2002' at pages 98 to 99.

Digital Hearing Aids

Geraint Davies: How many people have been fitted with digital hearing aids and how much of the estimated budget has been spent? (WAQ22123)

Jane Hutt: Since August 2002, 4,440 digital hearing aids have been fitted in Wales.

Considerable funding has been provided for improvements to the infrastructure and provision of sound-proof booths in audiology departments within the NHS across Wales.

A total of £1.7 million has been allocated to health authorities in 2002-03, which has been distributed to NHS trusts in their area. The chart below shows how much was allocated to each health authority:

Health authority	Amount
Iechyd Morgannwg	£284,587.00
North Wales	£374,645.00
Dyfed Powys	£273,821.00
Gwent	£317,055.00
Bro Taf	£422,892.00

Additional funding has also been allocated to purchase new technology hearing aids and to provide extra staff. Further funding will be made available in 2003-04.

Response to Office of Fair Trading Paper

Geraint Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on whether she has made any representations for the proposals contained within the 'The control of entry regulations and retail pharmacy services in the UK' paper published by the Office of Fair Trading to be decided upon by the National Assembly for Wales in its application to Wales? (WAQ22157) [R]

Jane Hutt: We are considering the Office of Fair Trading's recommendations, as are colleagues in the English, Scottish and Northern Irish health departments and the Department of Trade and Industry. We shall be responding in due course. In formulating our official response, I shall consider any comments on the report that representative bodies or individuals wish to feed in.

Care Home Sector (Wales Care Strategy Group)

Dai Lloyd: Will the Minister make a statement on the contribution of the Wales care strategy group to stabilise the care home sector? (WAQ22261) [R]

Jane Hutt: The Wales care strategy group has an important role to play in bringing together representatives from residential and domiciliary care providers, local authorities, the NHS, the voluntary sector, service users and others, to provide a strategic focus to help bring more stability and confidence to the care sector.

The group's work, to date, has included reviewing draft statutory guidance on commissioning and contracting for social care, and the development of a blueprint for the care sector for the next decade and workforce issues among others.

There will be a paper and a presentation on the work of the Wales care strategy group for the Health and Social Services Committee meeting on 5 February.