

Cabinet's Proposals for primary legislation, 2002-3

Statement to Plenary

1. Standing Order 31.10 requires the Cabinet to put its proposals for Westminster primary legislation to Plenary before 31 March each year; standing orders 31.9 and 31.11 set out the form of this motion and the supporting information required. This document meets the latter requirement, for the debate in Plenary on 19 March.
2. The **NHS (Wales) Bill** was the subject of a successful bid for publication in draft last year. It accordingly does not feature in these new proposals.

Common Land (Wales) Bill

3. This Bill would reform and strengthen the management of common land in Wales. Its main effects would be to:
 - establish commons management associations, comprising graziers with rights to graze stock on each area of common land;
 - give such associations powers to develop and enforce a grazing regime for each area of common land, to regulate grazing numbers and promote animal welfare and biodiversity;
 - give the Assembly powers of oversight and direction in relation to commons management associations.
4. The Bill would have no financial impacts on the Assembly.

Sunday Licensing (Wales) Bill

5. This short Bill would remove the need for local authorities to hold polls on the opening of licensed premises on Sundays, where requested. It doing so it would remove what is widely seen as a needless regulatory and financial burden on the licensed trade and local authorities.
6. The Bill would have no financial impacts on the Assembly. It would, though, remove a financial burden from local authorities: the 1996 poll in Rhondda Cynon Taff is estimated to have cost the authority around £60,000.

St David's Day Bill

7. This Bill would provide for St David's Day to be a public holiday in Wales, by amending the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971. If the proposal is taken forward, we should need to consult further before deciding whether a St David's Day Holiday would be in substitution for an existing holiday, or an additional one.

8. There would be no financial impact on the Assembly arising from this proposal.

Land Use Planning Bill

9. The proposal is to implement proposals on changes to planning procedures designed to speed the operation and clarity of the system. These are currently subject to consultation following a Green Paper in England.
10. There are no financial impacts for the Assembly and potential cost savings for users of the planning system.

Education Bill

11. The proposal is to strengthen the Assembly's ability to implement proposals in the education paving document, *The Learning Country*, by extending statutory force to a range of policies currently implemented administratively.
12. There would be no financial impacts on the Assembly beyond those already envisaged for the payment of Assembly Learning Grants.

Audit (Wales) Bill

13. This Bill would merge the functions of the Audit Commission in Wales and the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) to create a single audit body for Wales (as already exist in Scotland and Northern Ireland).
14. This body would have responsibility for the Assembly; Assembly sponsored public bodies; health authorities and NHS Trusts; and local government. The new body would have a single line of accountability to the AGW but arrangements would recognise local government's constitutional independence to the same extent that the existing ones do.
15. There would be a short-term cost to the Assembly of perhaps £500,000 to £1 million, to establish the new body. That could be offset in the longer term by economies of scale.

Housing Ombudsman (Wales) Bill

16. This short Bill would extend the remit of the Local Government Ombudsman for Wales to cover registered social landlords. In doing so it would provide a proper ombudsman service for tenants of such landlords.
17. The Bill would increase the housing caseload of the Local Government Ombudsman by perhaps a quarter, giving rise to some very modest financial impacts. There would be no other financial impacts on the Assembly.

Passenger Transport Bill

18. The proposal is to follow up the recommendations of the recent Policy Review of Public Transport providing for organisational structures to support public transport planning and provision and giving the Assembly powers of direction over the Strategic Rail Authority.

The financial impact on the Assembly would depend on the extent and type of organisational change adopted.