

Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 15 February 2010

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

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

Contents

- 2 Questions to the Minister for Business and Budget
- 3 Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing
- 3 Questions to the Minister for Heritage

To ask the Minister for Business and Budget

Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central): Further to WAQ55538, WAQ55539, WAQ55540, WAQ55541, WAQ55543, WAQ55542, WAQ55544 and WAQ55545, will the Minister identify the source of funding for Task & Finish Groups commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government. (WAQ55605)

Answer issued on 18 February 2010

The information you requested is not collected.

William Graham (South Wales East): Will the Minister outline her considerations for increasing the budget for the Social Justice and Local Government portfolio. (WAQ55607)

Answer issued on 18 February 2010

The strategic approach to the 2010-11 budget has been to both protect and sustain the key public services that people rely on, and to seek contributions to the necessary savings and efficiencies from all portfolio areas.

Within this strategic context, the 2010-11 budget allocation to the Social Justice and Local Government portfolio was developed in consultation with the Minister. Excluding inter departmental transfers, the 2010-11 Social Justice and Local Government revenue budget has increased by £97.0 million compared to 2009-10, an increase of some 2.2%. This includes a strategic allocation of an additional £34 million to the Revenue Support Grant, ensuring a 2.1% increase on a like for like basis for 2010-11.

William Graham (South Wales East): Will the Minister make a statement on the preparations for the conducting of the Census in Wales. (WAQ55608)

Answer issued on 18 February 2010

The Welsh Assembly Government is working closely with the Office for National Statistics on the development of the 2011 census and is represented at all levels of census governance.

In recent years, users have been consulted on the topics on the census form and this included specific consultation with users in Wales. The inclusion of a question on national identity in the next census, which will allow people to express that they are Welsh, is particularly welcome in Wales.

In October 2009, the Office for National Statistics held a rehearsal of the census in three areas, including the Isle of Anglesey. Feedback from this rehearsal will now help to shape the final field procedures to be used in 2011. Address checking will soon be carried out, including in Wales, to provide a good quality address list for the 2011 census. The Welsh Assembly Government has also been working with stakeholders in Wales, including the Welsh Language Board, to ensure that the field procedures are suitable for Wales. All people in Wales will have the opportunity to complete their census questionnaire in English or Welsh. All census material, including publicity, the website and contact centre, will also be available in English or Welsh.

The Census Order, which sets out the date of the census, who needs to complete the census and the topics to be asked, came into force in December 2009. The Welsh Assembly Government is now working on the census Regulations, which set out in legislation the procedural and practical arrangements for the census in Wales. These will be made by Welsh Ministers for the first time later this year.

To ask the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Jeff Cuthbert (Caerphilly): What plans does the Welsh Assembly Government have to designate Ruperra Castle and its surrounding land as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. (WAQ55604)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

In terms of possible designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, this is a matter for the Countryside Council for Wales as they have the statutory responsibility in Wales for such designations rather than the Welsh Assembly Government.

In this context though I think it is worth noting that the castle and its surroundings are already protected by a number of designations/means. I understand that the castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the garden is on the register for Historic Parks and Gardens, and the castle and its surroundings have also been designated as a conservation area. In addition known colonies of European Protected Species are present on the site and are protected under the Habitat Regulations (1994).

To ask the Minister for Heritage

William Graham (South Wales East): Will the Minister outline how Welsh culture and heritage will be promoted during 2010. (WAQ55609)

Answer issued on 16 February 2010

The One Wales document outlines our aim to support and promote Welsh cultural and heritage events and attractions throughout Wales and abroad.

In addition, my historic environment strategic statement builds on the priority given in One Wales to promoting a sense of ownership and pride in Welsh heritage. This year will see increased initiatives to promote public access to and appreciation of heritage, making it engaging, valuable and relevant to residents and visitors. This will include a pan-Wales interpretation plan, the first for any European country, and projects for sites associated with the Welsh princes under the Welsh Cultural Heritage Initiative.

2010 also sees ACW reviewing its existing funding policy to identify and consider alternative funding models and to ensure maximum benefit for the arts and art organisations in Wales.

National Theatre Wales will be undertaking its first full year and this will encompass a variety of new productions, some to be staged in conventional venues, others to be in unusual locations.

As you are aware, this year National Eisteddfod will be hosted by Blaenau Gwent and Heads of the Valleys - aptly in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's Heads of the Valleys Programme. The National Eisteddfod will receive £493,000 from the Welsh Assembly Government through the Welsh Language Board during the 2010-11 financial year.

Free entry to Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales continues to be an overwhelmingly popular and successful policy. It is a One Wales commitment to continue this policy.

I will also be launching The People's Collection this summer. This is an innovative approach to collect, interpret, distribute and discuss Wales' cultural heritage in an online environment. Information and knowledge about our rich and diverse heritage will be available to everyone, those who live in Wales, visitors and potential visitors, right across the world.

In addition, a Cultural Tourism steering group is taking forward my Cultural Tourism Action Plan. The work of the group is influencing the wider Heritage portfolio with a growing emphasis on joint working between cultural bodies aimed at delivering wider public benefits.

Earlier this year I launched the a new five year (2010-15) physical activity action plan, Creating an Active Wales, closely linked to the public health strategy. There will also be a strategy for performance and excellence sport in 2010.

Finally, this year of course sees the Ryder Cup being held in Newport and it will provide Wales with a once and forever opportunity to showcase ourselves to the World via a huge television audience. Visit Wales' task is not to run the event, which will be the responsibility of the European tour, but to capitalise on the world wide publicity which the event will generate.

William Graham (South Wales East): Will the Minister outline how the Welsh Assembly Government supports the restoration of the Newport Medieval Ship. (WAQ55610)

Answer issued on 16 February 2010

In the previous and current year, the Welsh Assembly Government – through Cadw – has grant-aided Newport City Council the sum of £23,500. This is to produce a full post-excavation research assessment of the all the artefacts and environmental data recovered during the excavation of the Newport Ship and the contemporary historical records. It is expected that this will lead to the production of a full report on these aspects of the Newport Ship in 2010/11. This grant does not cover the recording, conservation and modelling of the Newport Ship, which is currently being undertaken by Newport City Council with support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

I had the pleasure of visiting the Newport Ship last October and met members of the archaeological team and representatives of the council. Councillors asked me if I could support requests for help with the purchase of a freeze drier to conserve the ship's timbers prior to their re-assembly, and towards the design and construction of a new museum building to display this magnificent vessel. However to date, neither I nor my officials have received any correspondence on these matters.