

Written Questions answered between 6 and 13 November 2003

[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
6	Questions to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport
14	Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning
17	Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside
26	Questions to the Finance Minister
35	Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services
46	Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Questions to the First Minister

The Richard Commission

Glyn Davies: What communication has the First Minister had with Lord Richard about the emerging findings from his commission's review? (WAQ29638)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): Apart from the two occasions on which I gave evidence to the commission in public, I have had no such communication. The commission is wholly independent, and needs to be free to reach its conclusions without any influence from me.

The Environment, Planning and Countryside Portfolio

Leighton Andrews: Will the First Minister state, for each sub expenditure group heading in the environment, planning and countryside portfolio, how many civil servants are employed in delivering the service? (WAQ29639)

The First Minister: The responsibility for detailed staffing arrangements has been delegated to the Permanent Secretary. I have asked him to respond to you by letter.

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

The Torch Theatre, Milford Haven

Lisa Francis: Can you inform me if the Torch Theatre, Milford Haven, would be eligible to receive any of the arts council fund of £1 million of lottery cash set aside for sustainable arts in Wales, which was announced on 3 November 2003, to assist with its refurbishment? (WAQ29779)

The Minister for Culture, the Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): That depends on the nature of the work planned and whether it conforms with the criteria for funding under the programme. The programme will be administered by the Arts Council of Wales and is aimed at addressing issues impacting upon the sustainability of arts organisations. To be eligible for funding, an organisation must have been in receipt of revenue funds from the arts council or received funding from the arts council in other forms totalling not less than £30,000 per annum for the current and last two financial years.

The arts council has been working in partnership with the Torch Theatre for some time to develop its plans for the refurbishment and enhancement of the building. An application for these works is currently being considered under the arts council's capital lottery funding stream.

The Future of Wales Football Clubs

William Graham: Will the Minister outline discussions he has held with the Football Association of Wales concerning the future of Wales's football clubs? (WAQ29789)

Alun Pugh: I recently met David Collins, secretary general of the Football Association of Wales and discussed a range of issues. The matter raised as a priority by the secretary general was the possibility of Wales hosting the UEFA Champions League final at the Millennium Stadium. I offered to assist the FAW in facilitating the bid process.

The Commonwealth Games

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on the possibility of Wales making a bid for staging the Commonwealth games? (WAQ29790)

Alun Pugh: I would refer to you the answer I gave to your earlier written question on this matter (WAQ25942) on 12 June 2003.

Access to Terrestrial Television Channels

Nick Bourne: What representations has the Minister received regarding access to terrestrial television channels in Wales? (WAQ29792)

Alun Pugh: Broadcasting is not devolved to the National Assembly for Wales. I do however receive a number of representations from members of the public with regard to access to both analogue and digital terrestrial television channels in Wales. We are in regular contact with the UK Government and appropriate bodies such as the Office of Communications with regard to broadcasting issues, including access to television channels.

Public Libraries

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the importance of public libraries in Wales? (WAQ29794)

Alun Pugh: Public libraries support cultural, community and economic vitality by providing a range of modern community services. They are services capable of providing lifelong learning opportunities while at the same time tackling some of the complicated and sensitive issues of social exclusion. Public libraries represent a unique, universally accessible resource, strongly positioned to work with the Assembly Government to improve the lives of people in Wales.

The Plenary debate on 24 June this year, which I opened, provides further details and specific examples.

Regional Leisure Centres

Peter Black: What is the Minister's policy towards regional leisure centres? (WAQ29795)

Alun Pugh: Leisure centres are a key resource for delivering opportunities to increase mass participation in sport and active recreation. The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the need to provide and maintain a quality and diverse range of facilities to increase mass participation, but any further capital investment should be considered within a clear framework of balance between national, regional and local development priorities.

In 'Climbing Higher', I have proposed a review of the quality, quantity and suitability of sport and physical activity facilities across Wales. Working with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors, I aim to enhance the sport, leisure and recreational infrastructure across Wales and to encourage more extensive use of existing sports and leisure facilities in all sectors. I have also proposed that we encourage the development and improvement of regional academies that maximise the education sector and community links to professional sports clubs and elite sports facilities. These proposed specific actions will be the subject of discussions at a sport and active recreation summit planned for the new year.

The Film, Television and New Media Fund

Leighton Andrews: Will the Minister make a statement on the film, television and new media fund? (WAQ29819)

Alun Pugh: The Minister for Economic Development and Transport, Andrew Davies, has instigated a review of how the Welsh Development Agency supports creative industries. Furthermore, the Welsh Assembly Government is undertaking a spending review across all portfolios. In the light of these two reviews, we have decided at this stage not to progress with the film, television and new media fund. This

is high risk venture, and we therefore feel that it is prudent to look at the fund again as part of the review process, while we concentrate on delivering our manifesto priorities.

Questions to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport

A48 Cowbridge Bypass

Alun Cairns: Would the Minister make a statement on the representations his department has received from the Vale of Glamorgan Council regarding improvements to the A48 Cowbridge bypass during the last five years? (WAQ29432) [R]

The Minister for Economic Development and Transport (Andrew Davies): My department has not received any formal representations from the Vale of Glamorgan Council regarding the A48 Cowbridge bypass.

Cyflogaeth mewn Ardaloedd Amcan 1

Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog gadarnhau (i) a yw lefelau cyflogaeth rhwng 2002 a 2003 wedi codi llawer yn llai yn ardaloedd Amcan 1 o gymharu â gweddill Cymru, ac (ii) a yw'r gwahaniaeth yn lefelau cyflogaeth rhwng ardaloedd Amcan 1 a gweddill Cymru llawer iawn yn fwy rhwng 1999 a 2003? (WAQ29579) [W]

Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ynglŷn â thwf cyflogaeth ers 1999 ar gyfer (i) Cymru gyfan, ac (ii) ardaloedd Amcan 1 yng Nghymru? (WAQ29580) [W]

Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatgan y newid yng nghanran lefelau cyflogaeth rhwng 1999 a 2003 ar gyfer (i) Cymru gyfan, ac (ii) ardaloedd Amcan 1 yng Nghymru? (WAQ29581) [W]

Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatgan y newid yng nghanran lefelau cyflogaeth rhwng 2002 a 2003 ar gyfer (i) Cymru gyfan, ac (ii) ardaloedd Amcan 1 yng Nghymru? (WAQ29582) [W]

Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog gyflwyno ffigurau lefelau cyflogaeth 1999 i 2003 gan nodi'r gwahaniaeth rhwng pob blwyddyn, ar gyfer (i) Cymru gyfan, ac (ii) ardaloedd Amcan 1 yng Nghymru? (WAQ29583) [W]

Andrew Davies: Mae'r wybodaeth angenrheidiol yn y tabl. Yn ardal Amcan 1 gorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd, gwelwyd cynnydd o 21,000 yn y lefelau cyflogaeth o gymharu'r 12 mis hyd at Awst 2003 gyda'r 12 mis blaenorol. Yn ystod yr un cyfnod, mae dwyrain Cymru wedi gweld cynnydd o 42,000 yn y lefelau cyflogaeth. O gymharu'r 12 mis diwethaf gyda 1999, mae'r lefel gyflogaeth wedi cynyddu 38,000 yng ngorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd a 47,000 yn nwyrain Cymru.

Yng ngorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd, gwelwyd cynnydd o 2.1 o bwyntiau canran yn y gyfradd gyflogaeth oedran gweithio yn ystod y 12 mis diwethaf a chynnydd o 3.0 o bwyntiau canran ers 1999. Y ffigurau cyfatebol ar gyfer dwyrain Cymru yw 4.4 a 3.2 o bwyntiau canran. Rhan o'r rheswm am y cynnydd sydyn yn nwyrain Cymru yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf yw'r gostyngiad yn y gyfradd gyflogaeth yn ail hanner 2001 a hanner cyntaf 2002 yn yr ardal honno. Ers 1999, mae'r gyfradd gyflogaeth wedi cynyddu ar raddfa weddol debyg yng ngorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd a dwyrain Cymru. Yn y ddwy ardal mae'r cynnydd yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf, ac ers 1999, wedi bod yn uwch na'r cynnydd yn y DU gyfan (0.2 ac 0.7 o bwyntiau canran yn eu trefn).

Cyflogaeth yng ngorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd a dwyrain Cymru

Change								
	1999(1)	2000	2001	2002	Medi 01 i Awst 02	Medi 02 i Awst 03	Y 12 mis diweddaraf ar y 12 mis bleanorol	Y 12 mis mwyaf diweddar ar 1999
Cyflogaeth (miloedd) (2)								
Gorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd	749.0	757.8	764.4	770.5	766.5	787.1	20.6	38.1
Dwyrain Cymru	492.7	550.0	492.5	517.7	497.0	539.3	42.3	46.5
Cymru	1,241.7	1,257.8	1,256.9	1,288.3	1,263.5	1,326.4	62.8	84.6
Y gyfradd gyflogaeth oedran gweithio (y cant) (3)								
Gorllewin Cymru a'r Cymoedd	66.2	66.7	66.6	67.7	67.1	69.2	2.1	3.0
Dwyrain Cymru	74.1	73.9	72.6	75.0	72.9	77.3	4.4	3.2
Cymru	69.1	69.4	68.9	70.5	69.3	72.3	3.0	3.2
Y DU	74.2	74.7	74.7	74.7	74.6	74.8	0.2	0.7

Ffynhonnell: Arolwg o'r gweithlu

1. Mae'r blynyddoedd yn dirwyn o Fawrth i Chwefror, e.e. 1999 = Mawrth 1999 i Chwefror 2000.
2. Nid yw'r ffigurau yn y tabl wedi'u haddasu i gymryd i ystyriaeth ganlyniadau cyfrifiad 2001.
3. Cyflogaeth oedran gweithio fel y cyfran o'r boblogaeth oedran gweithio.

Employment in Objective 1 Areas

Elin Jones: Will the Minister confirm (i) whether employment levels between 2002 and 2003 have increased much less in Objective 1 areas in relation to the rest of Wales, and (ii) whether the difference in employment levels between Objective 1 areas and the rest of Wales are much greater between 1999 and 2003? (WAQ29579) [W]

Elin Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on employment growth since 1999 for (i) the whole of Wales, and (ii) Objective 1 areas in Wales? (WAQ29580) [W]

Elin Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the difference between 1999 and 2003 in terms of employment level percentages for (i) the whole of Wales, and (ii) Objective 1 areas in Wales? (WAQ29581) [W]

Elin Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the difference between 2002 and 2003 in terms of employment level percentages for (i) the whole of Wales, and (ii) Objective 1 areas in Wales? (WAQ29582) [W]

Elin Jones: Will the Minister provide the figures for the levels of employment from 1999 to 2003, giving details of the difference between each year, for (i) the whole of Wales, and (ii) Objective 1 areas in Wales? (WAQ29583) [W]

Andrew Davies: The information is given in the table. Employment in the Objective 1 region of West Wales and the Valleys has increased by 21,000, comparing the 12 months to August 2003 with the previous 12 months. Over the same period employment in east Wales has increased by 42,000.

Comparing the latest 12 months with 1999, employment has increased by 38,000 in west Wales and the Valleys and by 47,000 in east Wales.

The working-age employment rate in west Wales and the Valleys has increased by 2.1 percentage points over the last 12 months and by 3.0 percentage points since 1999. The corresponding figures for east Wales are 4.4 and 3.2 percentage points. The sharper increase over the latest year in east Wales is partly due to the dip in the employment rate in the second half of 2001 and first half of 2002 in that region. Since 1999, the employment rate has increased by similar amounts in west Wales and the Valleys and east Wales. In both regions the increases over the last year and since 1999 have outstripped the increases in the UK as a whole (0.2 and 0.7 percentage points respectively).

Employment in west Wales and the Valleys and east Wales

	Change							
	1999(1)	2000	2001	2002	Sept 01 to Aug 02	Sept 02 to Aug 03	Most recent 12 months on previous 12 months	Most recent 12 months to 1999
Employment (thousands) (2)								
West Wales and the Valleys	749.0	757.8	764.4	770.5	766.5	787.1	20.6	38.1
East Wales	492.7	550.0	492.5	517.7	497.0	539.3	42.3	46.5
Wales	1,241.7	1,257.8	1,256.9	1,288.3	1,263.5	1,326.4	62.8	84.6
Working-age employment rate (per cent) (3)								
West Wales and the Valleys	66.2	66.7	66.6	67.7	67.1	69.2	2.1	3.0
East Wales	74.1	73.9	72.6	75.0	72.9	77.3	4.4	3.2
Wales	69.1	69.4	68.9	70.5	69.3	72.3	3.0	3.2
UK	74.2	74.7	74.7	74.7	74.6	74.8	0.2	0.7

Source: Labour Force Survey.

1. Years run from March to February, e.g. 1999 = March 1999 to February 2000.
2. None of the figures in the table have been adjusted to take account of the results of census 2001.
3. Working-age employment as a proportion of the working-age population.

Network Rail (Maintenance)

Janet Davies: What discussions has the Minister had with Network Rail regarding levels of maintenance in Wales since the company took over the maintenance function? (WAQ29590)

Andrew Davies: I have not had discussions with Network Rail since it took the decision to bring rail maintenance back in house on 24 October 2003. I did, however, meet the chairman of Network Rail, Mr Ian McAllister, and outlined to him the Assembly Government's aspirations for rail, including safety issues. Both I, and my officials, will continue to have dialogue with Network Rail and the Strategic Rail Authority on this important matter.

Free Community Transport

Janet Davies: What discussions has the Minister held recently on extending free travel to community transport? (WAQ29592)

Andrew Davies: I have established a community transport and concessionary travel working group that has met and considered an Assembly Government paper identifying the issues that would need to be addressed to implement this policy. Further consultation is taking place, and I hope that the group's initial comments will be available by the end of December.

Broadband in Radnorshire

Nick Bourne: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to bring broadband to Radnorshire, and in particular Knighton, Presteigne and Rhayader? (WAQ29597)

Andrew Davies: The implementation of the five-year, £115 million Broadband Wales programme continues to deliver a range of complementing projects. These involve tackling market failure, addressing demand and supply deficiencies and widening both the scope of affordable access to broadband and the range of technologies being used to deliver it.

The following projects are already in place and are aimed at areas across Powys, and therefore include Radnorshire.

Businesses throughout Radnorshire already have access to the broadband 'try before you buy' scheme. This scheme is available at Welsh information and communications technology support centres, including one situated in Builth Wells. Furthermore all businesses in Wales that cannot access broadband can apply to the small and medium-sized enterprise satellite subsidy scheme, which provides funding and support. To date there have been 27 approved applications from Powys. The satellite scheme is to be extended and will become technology neutral at the end of this year.

Investment in the DAWN 2 health service network has provided broadband to 59 per cent of the primary and secondary NHS sector in Powys. The lifelong learning network has delivered broadband coverage to 27.5 per cent of schools, and 24 per cent of libraries in Powys.

In January 2004, a demand stimulation project will begin with the aim of improving awareness and understanding of the benefits of broadband to business and residential users, which will, hopefully, result in increased supply and increased take up.

The broadband to business parks/locations project will deliver high capacity fibre speed services to strategic business parks/locations throughout Wales—this is likely to include Powys. The procurement process is expected to begin this winter, with the award of contract scheduled for summer 2004 and network roll-out thereafter.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Pen-y-fai Church in Wales Primary School

Alun Cairns: What timescale is in place towards funding a replacement or new build for Pen-y-fai Church in Wales primary school? (WAQ29599)

Alun Cairns: What commitment has the Minister given Bridgend County Borough Council to financially support a replacement or new build for Pen-y-fai Church in Wales primary school? (WAQ29600)

Alun Cairns: When will the Minister formally commit to supporting a replacement or new build for Pen-y-fai Church in Wales primary school? (WAQ29601)

Alun Cairns: Would the Minister list all requests for education-related capital funding Bridgend County Borough Council has made over the last five years? (WAQ29602)

Alun Cairns: Has the Minister formally committed to financially supporting a replacement or new build for Pen-y-fai Church in Wales primary school? (WAQ29603)

Alun Cairns: What application has Bridgend County Borough Council made for funding for a replacement or new build to Pen-y-fai Church in Wales primary school? (WAQ29604)

Alun Cairns: What is the process of selection in financially supporting a replacement or new build primary school? (WAQ29605)

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): My officials have been in contact with Bridgend County Borough Council regarding this school on numerous occasions. We have been assured that a new building for Pen-y-fai primary school remains the highest priority for the authority and that a scheme will be commenced as soon as it is practicable. Decisions regarding timing are for the local authority.

Responsibility for the school estate rests with local government. The Assembly provides funding to the local authorities via the local government revenue settlement, general capital funding allocations and school buildings improvement grant to allow them to meet their responsibilities.

Revenue funding and general capital funding are unencumbered and it is for local authority elected members to decide how this funding is used in light of local needs and competing priorities. School buildings improvement grant is encumbered and can only be used against set criteria for the improvement of the school estate. In the period 1997 to 2004 the Bridgend County Borough Council has been allocated £7,425,200 in encumbered capital grant for a range of school building projects.

Works to provide a replacement building for Pen-y-fai primary school would fall within the criteria set in the Education (Capital Grants) (Wales) Regulations 2002, and Bridgend can use its allocations of school building improvement grant to fund the new building. The authority has indicated that it wishes to use part of its single grant allocation of £9 million to fund a replacement building for Pen-y-fai. The order in which authorities will receive their allocations has still to be determined.

Bridgend County Borough Council

Alun Cairns: When will funding become available to Bridgend County Borough Council following the statement made to Plenary on 5 February 2003? (WAQ29606)

Jane Davidson: Local authorities will continue to get annual formula shares of school building improvement grant. In addition, it is intended that in the period 2005-06 to 2009-10 each authority should receive a single grant allocation of £9 million to enable it to carry out a large project or projects. Each authority has been asked to indicate its intended use for its £9 million allocation and when it would wish to receive it. Once responses have been received, the timing of the allocation for each authority will be discussed with the Welsh Local Government Association. I hope that it will be possible to notify authorities by the end of this financial year, taking account of the outcome of the resource allocation review being undertaken to inform decisions on indicative budgets for 2005-06.

Schools Providing Classes for Adults without Payment

Leighton Andrews: Is the Minister aware of instances of schools providing classes for adults without payment? (WAQ29645)

Jane Davidson: This is a matter for individual schools.

Governing bodies must not fund the costs of activities or services for the community from their delegated schools budgets unless such activities or services are deemed as being for the purposes of the school. Adult education provided by schools would normally be funded from other sources or through charging.

Some activities involving adults, such as family literacy, which focus on parents and children learning together, may be regarded as activities for the purpose of the school and would not be subject to charging.

Plumbing Courses

Leighton Andrews: What information does the Minister have about the availability of full and part-time plumbing courses in Wales? (WAQ29647)

Jane Davidson: The latest published data for further education courses in Wales shows that, in 2001-02, eleven Welsh further education institutions provided both full and part-time courses in plumbing. There were 420 full-time and 910 part-time enrolments on plumbing courses. Final data for 2002-03 will not be available until summer 2004.

The latest data on modern apprenticeships in plumbing, June 2003, show that there were 410 young people in training on modern apprenticeships, of which 230 were on foundation modern apprenticeships and 180 on modern apprenticeships.

Transparency and Openness in Government

David Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on her policies to improve transparency and openness in Government? (WAQ29776)

Jane Davidson: I am committed to the Welsh Assembly Government's approach to freedom of information, involving the publication of statements of information and decision reports. My regular reports to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee are intended to keep members up to date on current issues and I report to and consult Plenary on major policy issues.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Abandoned Cars

Ann Jones: What steps is the Assembly Government taking to speed up the process of removing abandoned cars? (WAQ29563)

Ann Jones: What steps is the Assembly Government taking to assist in tackling the problem of abandoned cars? (WAQ29564)

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): Discussions have been taking place with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the reduction of notice periods for abandoned vehicles in Wales so that they match those applied in England from April 2003. The delay has been due to non-devolved police powers under the road traffic Acts. The changes to the police powers made via DEFRA in 2002 only applied to England. The next transfer of functions Order from the Wales Office will allow the Assembly the relevant police powers under the road traffic Acts. In anticipation of this, we will be consulting with stakeholders shortly.

Dredging from the Helwick Bank

Peter Black: What further announcements is the Minister planning with regards to dredging from the Helwick bank? (WAQ29565)

Carwyn Jones: In September, I agreed a favourable Government view for an extension of time to the Crown estate licence for the extraction of sand from Helwick bank by Llanelli Sand Dredging Ltd, to take up to 107,000 tonnes of sand per year over two years. This will allow the company to extract sand that was included in the favourable Government view given in 1998 but not dredged within the licence period.

The bank lies within the Carmarthen bay and estuaries candidate special area of conservation. I also approved the findings of the appropriate assessment (required under the habitats directive) that this additional time would not harm the candidate special area of conservation. Press statements accompanied both our consultations on this application and the decision.

The process to determine a separate application to extract 4.5 million tonnes of sand at a rate of 300,000 tonnes per annum over 15 years continues. The environmental statement and coastal impact study was issued by the operator for consultation for a period of 10 weeks commencing 16 January 2003. When the report of the consultation responses and the environmental statement supplementary report are completed, they will be formally submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government for a Government view, probably early next year. I am not anticipating any further announcements until then.

Sand Dredging in the Bristol Channel

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on sand dredging in the Bristol channel? (WAQ29566)

Carwyn Jones: Dredging is important to the south Wales economy. Ninety per cent of the supply of sand to south-east Wales, is dredged from the Bristol channel. Of about 1.5 million tonnes of Crown estate aggregates dredged in the Bristol channel, around 1 million tonnes are landed at Welsh ports and a further 150,000 tonnes are landed from other ownership.

The sand and gravel supply for south-east Wales position statement was issued in December 2002. It states that the use of marine-dredged sand and gravel will continue for the foreseeable future, but only where this remains consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

'Marine Aggregates Dredging Policy: South Wales' is due to be completed in early 2004. The purpose of the document is to steer industry towards those areas where dredging is sustainable and likely to be acceptable.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister make a statement about Bovine TB in Wales? (WAQ29567)

Carwyn Jones: I am very concerned about the impact of Bovine TB in Wales and the complexity of agreeing an effective way forward. I am pleased to announce that the additional resource applied to testing has virtually eradicated the backlog. There are no easy answers to this problem, but the Welsh Assembly Government will be consulting widely on a review of the TB strategy late in 2003. The consultation is likely to include a range of possible measures, including closer application of EU controls, better operational mechanisms to test and remove animals, and pre and post-movement testing.

Locally Sourced Food

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister make a statement about locally sourced food in Wales? (WAQ29568)

Carwyn Jones: We have made a great deal of progress in this very important area. I welcome the collaboration between the Welsh procurement initiative team and the Welsh Development Agency in exploring measures aimed at strengthening local Welsh food supply to the public sector, and helping Welsh small and medium-sized food producers to win local public sector business, such as from schools and hospitals.

Construction and Maintenance of Public Buildings

Nick Bourne: How is the Minister encouraging sustainability in the construction and maintenance of public buildings in Wales? (WAQ29569)

Carwyn Jones: With regard to ‘sustainability’ in construction, I take this to be as outlined in the Assembly’s sustainable development scheme, with its four objectives of social progress, protection of the environment, prudent use of natural resources, economic growth and employment.

My ministerial remit does not include direct responsibility for Assembly policy or guidance on the construction and maintenance of ‘public buildings’, which I would define as buildings funded, constructed, owned or maintained by public sector bodies, including the Assembly.

However, I am responsible for the Assembly’s duty to promote sustainable development, and the sustainable development scheme and action plan. I have recently issued a new scheme for consultation and it is proposed that a revised action plan will look at how commitments can be strengthened towards procurement, including construction.

The direct responsibility for the construction and maintenance of public buildings and, therefore, the means of encouraging sustainability in their construction, is widely spread and goes beyond my ministerial portfolio. Nevertheless, I can assure you that there are a number of ways in which sustainability is being promoted in public sector construction procurement.

The Welsh procurement initiative is investigating through trial projects how public sector construction projects can better achieve sustainable development objectives: it has also established the local government support unit to assist local authorities in implementing best practice in construction procurement, including sustainability.

The Assembly is actively promoting the principles of ‘Rethinking Construction’ to the public sector. ‘Rethinking Construction’ recommends a commitment to continuous improvement and to achieving better quality, value for money, and sustainability in construction.

Within the Assembly Government, the Assembly construction forum is established to assist Assembly divisions and Assembly sponsored public bodies in adopting current best practice, including considerations of energy efficiency and sustainable development. Through its policies and grant schemes, the Assembly promotes the implementation of improved environmental performance and energy efficiency in the construction and maintenance of social housing.

Welsh Health Estates has been instructed to review current procurement guidance and technical standards with regard to current best practice on energy efficiency and sustainable construction.

Through its funding of the Wales Millennium Centre, the Assembly has ensured the maximum possible use of Welsh products and materials and, of course, the new Assembly building in Cardiff bay is providing an exemplar of best practice in sustainable, energy-efficient design and construction.

Compensation to Cockle Gatherers

Brynle Williams: Will the Minister make a statement outlining the reasons for the delay in paying compensation to cockle gatherers from the Burry estuary? (WAQ29577)

Brynle Williams: Will the Minister outline exactly when compensation will be paid to cockle gatherers from the Burry estuary? (WAQ29578)

Carwyn Jones: I wrote to all licensed gatherers on 31 October to outline the basis for individual payments under the financial support scheme. Where claimants have provided all the necessary supporting information, payments will be made shortly. Separately, officials will be contacting those claimants where information remains outstanding.

It has taken longer than expected to finalise the details of the financial support package. A range of complex issues have had to be resolved to ensure that the scheme fully meets the requirements associated

with the use by the Welsh Assembly Government of public funds. This also encompasses European requirements given that the financial support is being delivered under the European Union financial instrument for fisheries guidance.

The Wool Export Market to China

Kirsty Williams: What discussions has the Minister had regarding the re-establishment of the wool export market to China? (WAQ29584)

Carwyn Jones: I have had no discussions directly but my officials have maintained contact with DEFRA given that department's responsibility for UK bilateral negotiations on export health certification with China, including the reinstatement of direct exports of UK wool to China.

I understand that the Chinese authorities have officially agreed the UK's export health certification for 'greasy wool' and, subject to the verification of certain administrative details, exports should recommence soon.

Licence to Export Lambs

Kirsty Williams: What discussions has the Minister had with his DEFRA counterparts with regards to the re-establishment of licence to export lambs direct from the market? (WAQ29585)

Carwyn Jones: None. Live exports have always been possible, subject to appropriate rules to prevent any possible spread of disease.

Achosion o TB Ymysg Bywyd Gwyllt

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Sut mae nifer yr achosion o TB ymysg bywyd gwyllt yn cael ei fesur yng Nghymru? (WAQ29640) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynllunio a Chefn Gwlad (Carwyn Jones): Nid ydym yn mesur nifer yr achosion o TB ymysg bywyd gwyllt yng Nghymru, ac eithrio ymysg ceirw gwyllt. Mae TB yn glefyd hysbysadwy mewn ceirw ac mae'n rhaid hysbysu'r rheolwr milfeddygol rhanbarthol ynghylch unrhyw arwyddion o TB mewn cyrff ceirw gwyllt, a fydd yna'n trefnu'r profion cadarnhau angenrheidiol.

Cases of TB in Wild Animals

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: How is the number of cases of TB in wild animals being measured in Wales? (WAQ29640) [W]

Carwyn Jones: Apart from among wild deer, we do not measure the number of cases of TB in wild animals in Wales. TB is a notifiable disease in deer and any lesions of TB in wild deer carcasses must be reported to the local divisional veterinary manager, who will then arrange for the necessary confirmatory tests.

TB Ymysg Moch Daear

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar nifer y profion TB sydd wedi eu cynnal yn flynyddol ers 1999 yng Nghymru ar foch daear a oedd wedi cael eu lladd mewn damweiniau traffig? (WAQ29641) [W]

Carwyn Jones: Nid oes unrhyw broffion wedi'u cynnal. Nid oes arolwg o ddamweiniau traffig ar y ffyrdd wedi'i gynnal yng Nghymru.

TB Among Badgers

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of TB tests that have been held each year since 1999 in Wales on badgers killed in road accidents? (WAQ29641) [W]

Carwyn Jones: None; there has been no road traffic accident survey in Wales.

Canlyniadau Diweddaraf Treialon Krebs

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar unrhyw wybodaeth mae wedi'i derbyn parthed canlyniadau diweddaraf treialon Krebs? (WAQ29642) [W]

Carwyn Jones: Yn sgîl cyngor oddi wrth y Grŵp Gwyddonol Annibynnol ar TB mewn Gwartheg, mae lladd moch daear mewn ardaloedd trin adweithiol o'r treial lladd moch daear ar hap wedi dod i ben ar unwaith. Trwy ddadansoddi data o'r treial gwelwyd bod cynnydd o 27 y cant mewn achosion o TB ymysg gwartheg mewn ardaloedd lladd adweithiol o'i gymharu â'r ardaloedd arolygu yn unig cysylltiedig lle na laddwyd unrhyw foch daear. Mae arbrofion yn parhau fel y bwriadwyd yn yr ardaloedd lladd blaenweithgar ac yn yr ardaloedd arolygu yn unig a bydd y casgliadau hyn yn sail ar gyfer datblygu polisi yn y dyfodol.

The Latest Results of the Krebs Trials

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on any information he has received concerning the latest results of the Krebs trials? (WAQ29642) [W]

Carwyn Jones: In the light of advice from the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB, the culling of badgers in reactive treatment areas of the randomised badger culling trial has been suspended immediately. Analysis of trial data demonstrated a 27 per cent increase in cases of bovine TB in reactive culling areas compared to the related survey-only areas where no badger culling took place. Trial operations continue as planned in the proactive culling and survey-only areas, and these findings will inform the development of future policy.

Farms in the Rhondda Constituency

Leighton Andrews: How many farms in the Rhondda constituency are supported by schemes in the Minister's departments? (WAQ29643)

Carwyn Jones: Information for all schemes is not held centrally nor collected for local authority areas. However, there are an estimated 31 farms in the Rhondda constituency in receipt of agricultural subsidies.

The Compulsory Purchase of Land

Leighton Andrews: Further to WAQ28816, will the Minister list those powers that would need to be devolved to allow him to permit the compulsory purchase of land whose ownership remains uncertain after five years? (WAQ29644)

Carwyn Jones: Under the current devolution settlement, the Assembly does not have primary legislative powers, and it would be a matter for new primary legislation to permit the compulsory acquisition of land solely for the reason that its ownership has been uncertain for a minimum period of five years.

Questions to the Finance Minister

Research on Electoral Registration Rates

Ann Jones: What research on electoral registration rates has the Assembly Government commissioned in the past three years, and what future research does it intend to commission on this subject? (WAQ29433)

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): The Welsh Assembly Government has not commissioned any research into electoral registration rates and has no current plans to do so. The Sunderland commission reviewed some aspects of the electoral process but its remit did not include voter registration. The Electoral Commission is the body with responsibility in this area. It has conducted a number of consultations and produced a number of reports on the electoral registration process.

Amounts Spent on Electoral Registration

Ann Jones: What were the amounts spent on electoral registration by each local authority in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available (a) as a total amount, and (b) per head of the electorate? (WAQ29434)

Sue Essex: The most recent figures available of local authority spend on electoral registration are for 2001-02, as set out in the table below.

Net current expenditure on registration of electors, 2001-02 (a)		
	£ thousand	£ per head
Isle of Anglesey	5	0.07
Gwynedd	140	1.20
Conwy	151	1.38
Denbighshire	74	0.80
Flintshire	152	1.02
Wrexham	159	1.24
Powys	114	0.90
Ceredigion	72	0.95
Pembrokeshire	137	1.21
Carmarthenshire	153	0.88
Swansea	123	0.55
Neath Port Talbot	164	1.22
Bridgend	62	0.48
Vale of Glamorgan	112	0.94
Rhondda Cynon Taf	192	0.83
Merthyr Tydfil	138	2.45
Caerphilly	11	0.06
Blaenau Gwent	96	1.37
Torfaen	172	1.89
Monmouthshire	70	0.82
Newport	88	0.64
Cardiff	294	0.96
Wales	2,679	0.92

Substantial Falls in Electoral Registration Rates

Ann Jones: What is the Minister's assessment of the reasons for substantial falls in electoral registration rates in Wales over recent years? (WAQ29435)

Sue Essex: There could be a variety of reasons for the fall in voting registration, from political apathy to lack of understanding of the democratic process. The Electoral Commission is responsible for promoting public awareness of electoral matters, including voter registration. Assembly officials will be working with the Electoral Commission and others to encourage local authorities to share best practice in the electoral process.

Individuals who Fail to Register to Vote

Ann Jones: Will the Minister list the Welsh authorities that have, at any time in the past three years initiated proceedings against individuals who fail to register to vote? (WAQ29436)

Sue Essex: This information is not collected centrally.

Best Practice Electoral Registration Procedures

Ann Jones: Will the Minister list the local authority registration departments in Wales that are (a) adopting and (b) not adopting the best practice electoral registration procedures outlined in the Electoral Commission report of 2002, 'Making an Impact'? (WAQ29437)

Sue Essex: This information is not collected by the Assembly. The Electoral Commission liaises closely with electoral administrators on issues relating to best practice. In order to promote best practice guidance on tackling under-registration, the commission is planning to undertake, and complete early next year, research that will build on previously published reports, including 'Making an Impact—local promotion of electoral issues'. This research is intended to lead to the establishment of a national framework for the continued monitoring of electoral registration rates.

The commission has also reviewed electoral registration in 2002-03 as part of its statutory report on the Assembly elections to be published on 19 November. Its report will therefore make some recommendations about electoral registration in Wales.

A seminar is currently being organised by Assembly officials, to be held at the end of November, where best practice in relation to electoral procedures is to be discussed.

Adults Registered to Vote

Ann Jones: Will the Minister state how many (a) adults in total, and (b) adults registered to vote there are in each Assembly/parliamentary constituency in Wales this year in descending order according to the disparity between the two figures? (WAQ29438)

Sue Essex: Below is a table which shows the count of adults (that is persons aged 18 and over) in each Assembly/parliamentary constituency in Wales, taken from the published 2001 census report for parliamentary constituencies, compared with electoral register data from February 2001. The data has been sorted with the constituency showing the greatest number of adults not on the electoral register at the top, and the constituency showing the greatest number of adults registered to vote but not resident in that constituency according to the census at the bottom.

The census and electoral register data are not directly comparable for a number of reasons. These include definitional differences in the way the sources are compiled. For example, while the census recorded students at their term-time address, students may have been registered at either their term-time or vacation address or at both; there are differences in the timing of the data for each source being collected, and there

is the delay in people being removed from the electoral register in a constituency after they move away from the area. In addition to this, it is possible for people to be on the electoral register in more than one constituency or none at all.

Comparison of number of persons aged 18 and over (1) with number of registered voters (2) in Wales, by Assembly/Parliamentary Constituency in 2001

Parliamentary Constituency	Persons aged 18+	Registered Voters (2)	Difference (Adults-Voters)
Ceredigion	60,734	56,276	4,458
Vale of Clwyd	54,293	51,153	3,140
Vale of Glamorgan	70,316	67,772	2,544
Cardiff South and Penarth	65,034	62,546	2,488
Pontypridd	68,724	66,616	2,108
Wrexham	52,839	51,031	1,808
Swansea West	59,601	57,988	1,613
Clwyd South	55,390	54,173	1,217
Conwy	55,988	54,976	1,012
Newport West	60,061	59,154	907
Cardiff Central	60,660	59,907	753
Montgomeryshire	44,523	44,086	437
Cardiff North	63,512	63,175	337
Torfaen	61,073	61,038	35
Alyn and Deeside	60,258	60,339	-81
Llanelli	58,683	58,811	-128
Clwyd West	53,957	54,247	-290
Swansea East	57,149	57,471	-322
Brecon and Radnorshire	52,699	53,102	-403
Meirionnydd Nant Conwy	32,763	33,213	-450
Cynon Valley	48,093	48,604	-511
Blaenau Gwent	53,253	53,776	-523
Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	56,185	56,723	-538
Cardiff West	58,110	58,665	-555
Newport East	55,417	56,098	-681
Delyn	53,879	54,610	-731
Ogmore	51,437	52,177	-740
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr	53,769	54,598	-829
Ynys Mon	52,098	52,928	-830
Rhondda	55,245	56,096	-851
Aberavon	49,077	49,979	-902
Caernarfon	46,366	47,278	-912
Preseli Pembrokeshire	53,751	54,663	-912
Gower	58,654	59,573	-919
Bridgend	60,362	61,471	-1,109
Neath	55,431	56,547	-1,116
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	54,552	55,856	-1,304
Caerphilly	66,311	67,636	-1,325
Islwyn	49,756	51,393	-1,637
Monmouth	60,693	62,466	-1,773

Source: Office of National Statistics

1. 2001 census report for parliamentary constituencies April 2001

2. Annual returns from councils to ONS (Feb 2001) giving numbers registered to vote in parliamentary elections: the number of Assembly electors will have been slightly higher as EU citizens resident in Wales are able to register to vote at National Assembly and local government elections.

The Relocation Strategy

Ann Jones: Will the Minister give an update on the progress of the relocation strategy? (WAQ29570)

Sue Essex: The Cabinet is scheduled to discuss the location strategy in November.

The Cost of the New Assembly Building

William Graham: Is the Minister minded to commission an inquiry into the cost of the new Assembly building? (WAQ29571)

Sue Essex: No. The project has already been the subject of a fundamental review, which included a report by the Auditor General and a review of the procurement strategy. This culminated in the appointment of the design and build contractor following a competitive tendering process, and the agreed lump sum was endorsed by our independent cost consultants and project management team.

Furthermore, gateway reviews are undertaken at key stages throughout the project, in line with Office of Government Commerce best practice, the most recent of which was undertaken prior to the award of the design and build contract.

The Local Government and Public Services Portfolio

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on the financial resources allocated to the local government and public services portfolio? (WAQ29572)

Sue Essex: The draft budget noted by the Assembly on 22 October shows that in 2004-05 the local government main expenditure group will receive £161.3 million more than in 2003-04. This represents a 5 per cent increase, bringing the total budget of the group to £3.4 billion in 2004-05.

The Level of Council Tax

Glyn Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on the level of council tax for next year? (WAQ29573)

Sue Essex: Local councils, not the Assembly, are responsible for taking final decisions on their council tax levels.

Council Tax Increases

Glyn Davies: Will the Minister advise local authorities to limit next year's council tax increases to inflation? (WAQ29574)

Sue Essex: Local councils, not the Assembly, are responsible for taking final decisions on budgets and council tax levels. It is important that we respect local democracy.

The Wales Programme for Improvement

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress resulting from the Wales programme for improvement? (WAQ29800)

Sue Essex: The Wales programme for improvement is a central element of Welsh Assembly Government local government policy and is designed to achieve continuous improvement in local government performance in Wales. In order to measure progress resulting from the Wales programme for improvement, a formal evaluation will be made within the context of a wider programme of evaluation of the local government modernisation agenda.

To date, all local authorities have published their first improvement plans and are currently planning and implementing actions needed to tackle the priority issues identified in the risk assessments flowing from their whole authority analyses.

At this early stage of assessment the Wales programme for improvement has clearly shown positive results, and has succeeded in gaining a sense of ownership by authorities of the key service risks facing them, and has stimulated a concerted, partnership approach to tackling the most important areas for improvement. The main challenges still lie ahead, as authorities continue to tackle the issues that will make the most difference in delivering improved performance.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

NHS Dentists

Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister confirm the total number of (a) NHS dentists in 1999 and also 2003, and (b) registered dentists in 1999 and also 2003? (WAQ29374)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 5 November 2003.

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): (a) The figures for 2003 are not available. However, the available numbers of NHS hospital and community/public health dental staff are provided below, together with the numbers of dentists working as independent contractors in the general dental service who treat at least some NHS patients. Data is provided for 1999 and the most recent available date, September 2002.

Dental Staff 1999 and 2002
(a) NHS dentists 1999 2002

	Number	Wte (whole-time equivalent)	Number	Wte
Hospital dental staff	195	124.6	193	126.9
Community / public health dental	106	87.3	103	83.7 staff
General Dental Service dentists (1)	998	1,015 of which principals	913	927

1. Independent contractors treating at least some NHS patients, as at 30 September.

(b) I understand from the General Dental Council that, as at 1 January 1999, there were 1,313 dentists registered with the GDC with an address in Wales. (NB some dentists on the GDC register would not necessarily be practising).

According to information provided by the GDC in August/September 2003, using its postcoded data, the number of dentists registered with the GDC with a Welsh postcode was 1,317.

NHS Dentists

Jonathan Morgan: Can the Minister confirm whether NHS dentists are to be included as part of the new primary care teams, to which patients will have access within 24 hours? (WAQ29375)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 5 November 2003.

Jane Hutt: The primary care team in this context means a doctor, a practice nurse or other healthcare staff within the 'practice'. It would be highly unusual for the team to include a dentist.

The Welsh Assembly Government is working with NHS Direct towards the provision of an all-Wales system of access to emergency dental services available to all patients irrespective of registration status.

The Primary Care Team

Jonathan Morgan: How is 'access' defined when providing patient access to a member of the primary care team within 24 hours? (WAQ29376)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 5 November 2003.

Jane Hutt: By 'access' I mean direct contact between the patient and the professional, in line with the practice's consultation arrangements. In most cases, this consultation will be face to face, but telephone consultation will be a useful alternative for many patients. Patients' wishes in this matter will need to be taken into consideration. A professional, clinical opinion and/or diagnosis is required in order to determine a further course of action e.g. to treat, to refer or to decide that no further action is required. This must be recorded in the normal way in accordance with terms and conditions of service.

Spina Bifida Sufferers (Cranberry Juice Capsules)

Ann Jones: What medical evidence exists that cranberry juice capsules can be of benefit to spina bifida sufferers? (WAQ29403)

Jane Hutt: Cranberry juice has been demonstrated to reduce the incidence of bacterial infections of the bladder. Patients who have difficulty emptying their bladder, such as those with spina bifida, tend to have an increased incidence of urinary infections. This does not imply that a regimen of cranberry juice should displace antibiotics as the therapy of choice when treatment is needed, but it is possible that it might be a useful adjunct to treatment in high-risk groups.

Spina Bifida Sufferers (Cranberry Juice Capsules)

Ann Jones: What plans does the Minister have to make cranberry juice capsules available on prescription for spina bifida sufferers in Wales? (WAQ29404)

Ann Jones: Are cranberry juice capsules available on prescription for spina bifida sufferers in Wales? (WAQ29405)

Jane Hutt: Products intended for medicinal use are required to be licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency under the Medicines Act 1968. In order to be granted a licence by the MHRA a medicinal product needs to demonstrate acceptable standards of safety, quality and efficacy. The MHRA acts on behalf of the decentralised Governments, since this function has not been devolved.

Cranberry juice capsules are not available as a licensed medicinal product. It is the responsibility of the product manufacturer to apply for such a licence.

The Distribution of Consultation Documents

Mark Isherwood: Will the Minister make a statement on the cross-border arrangements in respect of the distribution of consultation documents by the Countess of Chester Hospital to residents in Deeside? (WAQ29410)

Jane Hutt: The Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Trust has distributed a summary document seeking views on the trust's proposals to become a NHS foundation trust to all households in the Flintshire area that fall within the hospital's catchment area. It is important that local voices are heard and I am encouraged that the trust has taken this approach.

Overseas Treatment

Jonathan Morgan: What budgetary provision has been made for the financial impact that patients winning the legal right to overseas treatment will have on health service funds in Wales, and will the Minister make a statement? (WAQ29545)

Jane Hutt: Healthcare commissioners are responsible for providing the appropriate care to their local population within the resources allocated to them. The recent High Court ruling in the case of Watts versus Bedford Primary Care Trust would be another factor that healthcare commissioners would need to take into account in determining the priority and provision of services within their allocation.

The judgment of the High Court case is complex and my officials are in liaison with Department of Health officials to provide clear guidance on this issue as soon as possible. The Department of Health has been given leave to appeal and is considering whether to proceed.

Sending Patients Abroad for Treatment

Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister clarify Assembly Government policy on sending patients abroad and paying for treatment in other European countries, and will she make a statement? (WAQ29546)

Jane Hutt: One of the prime aims of the Welsh Assembly Government is to improve patient access to health services and reduce the time that patients have to wait for hospital appointments and treatment. Additional resources are being made available to increase the capacity of the NHS in Wales through a range of approaches so that more patients can be treated more quickly through sustainable, local NHS services.

There already exists a long-established arrangement under European law whereby it is possible for people to be authorised by the Department of Health, following support from their healthcare commissioner, to go to another EU country for specific treatment under that country's state healthcare scheme. If authorisation is given, form E112 is issued to certify that the treatment costs will be reimbursed to the host country on the basis of the costs that the host country would meet for one of its own residents.

I am aware of the judgment in the recent case of Watts versus Bedford Primary Care Trust. We are currently considering the implications of the judgment with the Department of Health and will be issuing national guidance as soon as it is possible to do so. I cannot comment any further as the Secretary of State has been given leave to appeal against the Watts judgment and is currently considering whether or not to proceed with an appeal.

Overseas Treatment

Jonathan Morgan: How many patients currently waiting for treatment on the NHS in Wales would qualify for overseas treatment following the High Court case of Watts versus Bedford Primary Care Trust, and what would be the total cost of this treatment? (WAQ29547)

Jane Hutt: The Department of Health has been given leave to appeal against the judgment in this case and is considering whether to proceed.

The information requested cannot be quantified, as the judgment does not set out the time limits within which a patient should receive healthcare. The judgment indicates that, in providing healthcare treatment, all the circumstances of each specific case should be taken into account.

Treating Asylum Seekers

Jonathan Morgan: With reference to the answer given to WAQ29115 and WAQ29117, will the Minister give a full yearly breakdown since 1999 of the amount of money spent by NHS Wales on catering for asylum seekers whose cases have not yet been dealt with by the Home Office? (WAQ29548)

Jonathan Morgan: With reference to the answer given to WAQ29115 and WAQ29117, will the Minister give the full cost to NHS Wales, including the four 'cluster areas' previously eluded to, of treating asylum seekers whose claims have not yet been dealt with by the Home Office? (WAQ29551)

Jane Hutt: The information you requested is not held centrally.

Treating Asylum Seekers

Jonathan Morgan: With reference to the answer given to WAQ29115 and WAQ29117, will the Minister define 'cluster areas'? (WAQ29549)

Jane Hutt: Cluster areas are simply areas where larger concentrations of asylum seekers live. In Wales, there are four cluster areas, namely Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham.

The 'Needs Assessment' of Asylum Seekers

Jonathan Morgan: With reference to the answer given to WAQ29115 and WAQ29117, will the Minister explain what the 'needs assessment' of asylum seekers entails? (WAQ29550)

Jane Hutt: Needs assessments are the responsibility of local health boards. People seeking asylum are seen by a primary care professional such as a nurse or general practitioner who makes a general assessment of health needs and creates a record which is sent to the GP whom the person registers with. Other health or social care professionals may be involved if appropriate.

The advisory group on asylum seekers is currently developing standard procedures to support this process.

Waiting Lists

Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister make a statement on why the number of in-patients waiting over three months has risen from August to September of this year? (WAQ29552)

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Jane Hutt: While August is traditionally a time for patients to take holidays and for leave to be taken by staff, monthly variations need to be viewed in the context of the longer-term picture. This month, the number of patients waiting over 12 and over 18 months fell for both in-patient/daycase and out-patients. Over the last year, the number of people waiting over three months for a first out-patient consultation has fallen by over 12,000 and the number waiting over six months has fallen by over 10,000.

Hospital Waiting List Figures

Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister make a statement on the recent hospital waiting list figures relating to September 2003? (WAQ29556)

Jane Hutt: Significant investment has been made in reducing waiting times and modernising the way that they are managed and services are delivered.

Considerable progress has been made in specialities targeted by the Assembly Government. The number of patients waiting over 18 months for orthopaedic treatment has fallen by 276, compared with September 2002 figures. In cardiac surgery the service is continuing to sustain the important target that no patient waits longer than 12 months, and at the end of September there were only 13 patients waiting over 10 months, our target by March 2004. Only one person was waiting over six months for an angiography, a reduction of 602, compared with September 2002 figures. Over the last year, the number of people waiting over six months for a first out-patient appointment has fallen by over 10,000, with reductions this month in those waiting over 12 and over 18 months.

We want this extended to all areas. The innovations in care team is supporting the NHS in modernising the way that patient care is managed and delivered.

Amersham Plc

Jonathan Morgan: What health impact assessment has been undertaken prior to the commissioning of the Environment Agency's proposed decision on the Amersham plc re-authorisation? (WAQ29557)

Jane Hutt: This is a matter for the Environment Agency Wales. Radiation dose assessments were carried out by the Environment Agency, Amersham and the Food Standards Agency. I am advised that public health staff of the former Bro Taf Health Authority were consulted on the Environment Agency process of issuing a proposed decision document on the re-authorisation of the Amersham site. The public health advice provided to the Environment Agency by the former health authority concluded that the proposals were unlikely to have any measurable effect on health.

Media Advertising for NHS Direct

Jonathan Morgan: How much was spent by NHS Wales on media advertising for NHS Direct in a) 1999-2000, b) 2000-01, c) 2001-02 and d) 2002-03? (WAQ29560)

Jonathan Morgan: How much was spent by NHS Wales on media advertising in a) 1999-2000, b) 2000-01, c) 2001-02 and d) 2002-03? (WAQ29561)

Jane Hutt: The information you requested is not held centrally.

The Discontinuation of Prescribed Drugs

Leighton Andrews: Will the Minister review guidelines on the discontinuation of prescribed drugs which have significant withdrawal effects such as Mysoline? (WAQ29648)

Jane Hutt: To ensure that the discontinuation of a product does not cause unnecessary problems for patients and prescribers, it is important that sufficient notice is given so that alternative sources of supply can be found, or patients switched to alternative therapies. Guidelines to ensure this were agreed between the Department of Health and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, and published in May 2001. These guidelines also apply in Wales.

The manufacturers of Mysoline, Astra Zeneca, have assured my officials that, following public concern regarding its withdrawal from sale, supplies of the drug will now be available until at least August 2006.

Between now and then they will be searching for another manufacturer, so that the drug should also be available after that date.

Public and Patient Involvement Plans

Val Lloyd: Can the Minister make a statement on how the recommendations set out in each local NHS Trust and health group's annual public and patient involvement plan will be considered, reviewed and implemented? (WAQ29765)

Jane Hutt: Each NHS trust and local health board is required, as part of its clinical governance arrangements, to produce an annual patient and public involvement plan. This should be developed with key stakeholders, including patient representatives, community health councils and voluntary organisations. Plans should reflect achievements as well as key local priorities to engage with patients and the public to help shape NHS services.

These are local plans, developed with local partners, to suit the local situation of the trust or local health board that has the responsibility for their implementation and review. The Welsh Assembly Government has issued guidance on how PPI plans should be developed, and has made extra resources available to help with their implementation. However, the content of PPI plans and the priorities for development are for local determination by trusts/local health boards.

A Universal Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Val Lloyd: Following the document issued in Scotland in January 2003 laying down guidelines for the development of a universal occupational health and safety policy for Scotland, are there any such policies under development in Wales? (WAQ29767)

Jane Hutt: The occupational health and safety sub-group of the NHS Wales partnership forum will work closely with the Health and Safety Executive Wales to devise a strategy. As a starting point, a discussion document is currently being developed which will be considered by the NHS Wales partnership forum and then distributed to NHS Wales for consultation. A strategy will then be devised during 2004.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales

Val Lloyd: Can the Minister outline the effect the appointment of a children's commissioner is having in Wales? (WAQ29768)

Jane Hutt: The commissioner has brought the views of children and young people into the heart of government in Wales. Since his first annual report, we have taken action in a number of ways to address the matters he raised, including setting up a child poverty task group to advise on a child poverty strategy.

The commissioner has also published 'Telling Concerns', a survey of advocacy, complaints and whistleblowing arrangements. The Assembly Government has accepted all five of the recommendations made to it, including the establishment next year of a national advocacy unit.

The Assembly Government will respond formally to the commissioner's second annual report by the end of January.

NHS Dentists

Michael German: What percentage, value and volume of custom-made dental services requested by NHS dentists is outsourced from outside the UK? (WAQ29784)

Jane Hutt: This information is not held centrally. General dental practitioners are independent contractors and may purchase their materials, appliances and medical devices from wherever they wish. They are responsible for the quality of the work wherever it is sourced.

I am not aware of any dentists employed in the salaried services in Wales who source their laboratory work outside the UK.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

The Post Office Development Fund Scheme

Glyn Davies: What is the value of approvals that have been granted under the post office development fund scheme? (WAQ29575)

Glyn Davies: How much money has been paid out under the post office development fund scheme? (WAQ29576)

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): Of the £1,040,000 approved to sub-postmasters since the launch of the post office development fund in November 2002, approximately £260,000 has been paid.

Currently, successful applicants are allowed until 31 December 2005 to claim the award, giving them the time to make the improvements when business needs and circumstances allow. However, I appreciate that the majority of sub-postmasters wish to make those changes, and thereby increase the viability of their businesses, as soon as possible. With this in mind, and as part of the ongoing review of the fund, I have instructed officials to amend the guidance to align expenditure to any given financial year.

Even though the maintenance of the post office network is not a devolved concern, the Assembly Government was the first administration in the UK to take the initiative and launch a support scheme for post offices at risk of closure. The Assembly Government was not obliged to launch such a fund, but my concern is to preserve for the people of Wales this most valuable community resource.

The All Wales Ethnic Minority Association

David Davies: Further to my written questions about AWEMA, is the Minister aware of any funding it has received from the Home Office, and, if so, from what date was the money made available and to what use was it put? (WAQ29598)

Edwina Hart: This is a matter for the Home Office. However, I understand that during the period April 2001 to September 2003, AWEMA received funding of £313,870 from the Home Office. The money was used to help set up networks and build capacity within Welsh black and minority ethnic communities, and to fund the AWEMA Times newsletter.

Promoting Good Relations with Ethnic Minorities

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on the Assembly Government strategy to promote good relations with ethnic minorities in Wales? (WAQ29775)

Edwina Hart: Part of the general duty of the Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000 is to promote good race relations. This general duty applies to the National Assembly for Wales. An extensive consultation exercise is now underway on the Assembly's revised race equality scheme, involving a broad range of meetings and focus groups across Wales. This will inform the Assembly's plans to promote good race relations across Wales.

AWEMA Internal Management and Audit Report

David Davies: Will the Minister let me have a copy of the internal management and audit report on AWEMA, which was written earlier this year? (WAQ29781)

Edwina Hart: Yes. I am sending a copy direct to you and placing a copy in the Library. A copy is also available published as further information to WAQ29781.