Dear Alun,

You tabled the Written Assembly Questions shown below for answer on 11 August 2004, to which you received a reply saying that I would be unable to send a reply until week commencing Monday 13 September 2004. I regret that this substantive reply was not sent to you due to an administrative oversight.

Alun Cairns (South Wales West): What review has the Minister conducted of the Safe Routes to School initiative (WAQ37341)

Alun Cairns (South Wales West): What guidelines has the Minister issued to the individuals who carry out the route assessment under the Safe Routes to School initiative (WAQ37342)

Alun Cairns (South Wales West): How does the Minister secure the independence of assessors in relation to the Safe Routes to School initiative, considering the recommendations are likely to result in a cost on the authority employing them (WAQ37343)

An independent review of the Safe Routes to School initiative in Wales was conducted by Babtie Group Cardiff, on behalf of Assembly Ministers, in 2001. This indicated that the initiative was well received by local authorities and a number of worthwhile schemes had been introduced. However, more schemes needed to be in place before there was further evaluation and I am now looking to arrange a formal evaluation at the end of the current three-year funding cycle in 2005. In addition, local authorities provide monitoring and evaluation evidence from safe routes to school schemes funded by the Assembly Government. This gives an indication of the success or otherwise of various schemes, particularly over longer time periods, and includes any increase in walking and cycling to school, reductions in car use and reductions in road casualties.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Davies AM/AC
Minister for Economic Development & Transport
Gweinidog dros Ddatblygu Economaidd a Thrafnidiaeth

Mr Alun Cairns AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

4 November 2004
The safe routes to school initiative is funded from Transport Grant and local authorities submitted bids for funding for 2005-06 by 31 August 2004. These are currently under consideration and I hope to make an announcement on funding later this year. A copy of the Transport Grant Guidance issued for these round of bids is in the Members' Library, with information for completing the safe routes to school bid being found on page 3 of the Guidance. This is the only Guidance issued to local authorities and is done so annually when invitations to bid are sent out.

External assessors assist the Assembly Government in the assessment of these bids. There is a nil cost to local authorities for this process.