

Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 23 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 First Minister
3	Questions to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
3	Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services
4	Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs
10	Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

To ask the First Minister

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): What is the average pay rise in absolute and percentage terms for Welsh Assembly Government civil servants for the past three financial years. (WAQ55674)

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): How much money has the Welsh Assembly Government spent on bonuses for civil servants for the past three financial years. (WAQ55675) ***Transferred for answer by the Permanent Secretary***

Answer issued on 26 May 2010

The Permanent Secretary (Gill Morgan): I thought it would be helpful if I set out some background information which will help put some context around the answer to your first question.

In order to address equal pay issues, short incremental scales were introduced as part of an award winning pay settlement in August 2001 (Castle Award). The Castle Awards are a UK Government scheme designed to recognise excellence in employers who are working to address equal pay issues. The award recognised the Assembly for its work in conducting equal pay audits and reforming its pay system to address the inequalities discovered. The new pay system introduced in August 2001 set target pay rates for each grade. For all grades below the Senior Civil Service we operate a 6 point incremental pay scale except for Team Support which has a 3 point scale. These pay scales were further revised in 2006 following the mergers.

Staff are normally recruited at the minimum of the pay scale and progress up the scale annually, subject to satisfactory performance, until they reach the maximum of the scale (i.e. the rate of the job). These increases are what are termed incremental progression increases. Currently, approximately 50% of our staff have reached the rate for the job. As this percentage increases annually, the number of incremental progression salary increases will fall.

Cost of living increases are normally applied to the scale points when the pay scales are revalorised as part of pay settlements negotiated and agreed with the Trade Unions. In these circumstances staff paid the rate for the job will only receive a cost of living increase. During the period to 31 March 2010, the average increase to the top of the pay scales were 2.6% (excluding Team Support). For the last negotiated pay settlement (2007-2010), the highest percentage increases were aimed at the lowest paid. Approximately 50% of staff only received the cost of living element in the year of March 2010.

The average pay increases identified in the table below includes both the incremental progression element and costs of living element.

Welsh Assembly Government, Average pay rises 2008-2010 12345

2008 ⁷	£1,020	3.5% ^{6*}
2009 ⁸	£1,870	6.2%
2010 ^{9 10}	£1,550	4.9%

* % not directly comparable due to change in date of data used

1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Figures in this table represent all full-time and part-time employees, which include permanent, temporary/casual, secondees in and loans in.
3. Includes salary costs only
4. Based on the actual annual gross earning of the employees.

5. Based on the full-time equivalent earnings of part-time employees.
6. Data for 2007 taken as at 30 September 2007.
7. As at 31 March 2008.
8. As at 31 March 2009.
9. As at 31 March 2010.
10. Figures are provisional and may be subject to change following validation.

This table has been prepared using the same base data used by the Officer for National Statistics for the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ASCES)

Turning to your second questions, the table below provided information on bonuses, which are known as variable pay awards, for the past three financial years.

Overall pay bill increases for members of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) are determined each year by HM Treasury. Part of the annual pay award must be paid as non-consolidated payment to those who have achieved defined objectives over the reporting year. The criteria for variable pay is determined within the framework set by HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office for the year in question, which requires a specified proportion of the SCS pay bill to be paid in the form of variable pay. It is awarded within a pool scheme based on performance i.e. achievement of objectives agreed between the individual and his or her line manager. These objectives are linked to organisation wide priorities and business targets. Variable pay awards are non-consolidated awards paid in addition to any base pay increases and are paid as a lump sum and do not count towards pension entitlements. They are determined after the performance year end, which runs from April to March, e.g. variable payments made in the 2007/2008 financial year are based on the performance for the period 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. Not everyone is eligible for a payment. They are however, a contractual entitlement which the Welsh Assembly Government has little ability to influence.

Financial Year	Amount spent
2007/2008	£685,371.75
2008/2009	£773,135.14
2009/2010	£863,054.04

To ask the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): What directions and instructions have been issued to FE institutions in Wales relating to the disposal of surplus land within the last three years. (WAQ55673)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

The Financial Memorandum between the Welsh Assembly Government and Further Education Institutions was reissued on 1st January 2007. This document contains instructions to FE institutions relating to the disposal of surplus land in paragraph 43-46 and Annex C.

To ask the Minister for Health and Social Services

Brynle Williams (North Wales): How many NHS dentists and NHS dental patients, both adult and child, were registered in each North Wales Local Authority area in each of the last five years. (WAQ55667)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

Details about the number of NHS dentists and the number of patients registered and treated under the NHS are available on the Assembly Government website at:
<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/reportFolders.aspx>
(under Health and Care > General Dental Services).

Following the introduction of the new dental contract, data is not comparable for the periods pre and post April 2006.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): What action has been taken by the Welsh Assembly Government to improve foot care services for older people in Wales since the launch of the 'Little steps can make a big difference' report by Age Concern Cymru and Help the Aged in Wales in 2008. (WAQ55677)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

I recognise the importance of good foot care for the elderly. My officials met with the Chair of Welsh Therapists Advisory Group in November to discuss draft findings on podiatry provision in Wales that was based on analysis of evidence from the field and discussions at a Stakeholder Task Group that included Age Concern Cymru. A project plan has been agreed to complete further work that is needed including dialogue with stakeholders. A final draft of a report is being planned for Spring which will be submitted to me for consideration as a basis for wider consultation.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): How will the increase in the neonatal transport service from 12 hours to 24 hours be funded. (WAQ55678)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

As a result of recommendations from the neonatal expert group a 12 hour Neonatal Retrieval Service is being funded. Any further extension will be a matter for the Health Boards and the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee to consider.

To ask the Minister for Rural Affairs

Brynle Williams (North Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's planned support for organic conversion. (WAQ55668)

Answer issued on 02 March 2010

82 scheme agreements were signed after the September 2009 application round for the Organic Farming Conversion Scheme. These agreements commenced in 1 January 2010 and represent an additional £1.1m support from Welsh Assembly for conversion until the end of 2011. As a result of the launch of the new conversion scheme approximately 10% of Welsh agricultural land is now certified as under organic management. It is intended that there will also be another application window to the scheme in 2010 with an additional £1.4m made available to these applicants for conversion between 1 January 2011 to end of 2012. Further support for Organic conversion will also be available to agreement holders in the All Wales element of the Glastir scheme and further details will be provided within the Glastir application pack.

Brynle Williams (North Wales): Will the Minister outline the Welsh Assembly Government's plans to raise awareness of the risks associated with dog-walking on farmland. (WAQ55669)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

One of the key messages included in the current Countryside Code relates to keeping dogs under close control. It highlights the potential risks associated with taking a dog into the countryside and how to prevent issues arising. For example, it covers what walkers should do if chased by livestock; the importance of preventing infections caused by dog waste; and how to prevent dogs from disturbing or worrying livestock.

The Code is also usefully supplemented by other guidance such as - “Out in the Country – Where you can go and what you can do” published by the Countryside Council for Wales; advice provided by the Kennel Club on its website; and guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive on “Cattle and public access in England and Wales”.

Brynle Williams (North Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the progress made to fulfil each 'One Wales' commitment within her portfolio. (WAQ55670)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

I refer you to the Department for Rural Affairs One Wales Delivery Plan Progress Update below:

Commitment Number	One Wales commitment	Progress
57	Increase support for farmers' markets	<p>A 2 year Information and Awareness Raising Campaign has been approved and the contract has been awarded to Francis Balsom Associates.</p> <p>A campaign called Real Food from Real People was launched at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society Winter Fair on 30 November 2009. This is a high profile, bilingual information and awareness campaign focusing on Direct Sales opportunities via Farmers' Markets, Farm Shops, Farm Gate sales, Box Schemes and Online Sales</p> <p>In addition, Officials are currently in discussions with stakeholders concerning a five year direct sales producer support mechanism.</p>
168 (i)	Support for indigenous woodlands to include tree for all new babies and adopted children	<p>By the end of this winter planting season a total of 112,864 trees will have been planted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coed Cefn Lla near Usk, Monmouthshire - 23,314 - Coed Ysgubor Wen, near Tywyn, Gwynedd - 38,720 - Coed Bryn Oer, Tredegar, Blaenau Gwent - 50,830

		Negotiations are still progressing for two more sites - one in North and one in South Wales.
168 (ii)	Support for indigenous woodlands to create a Welsh National Forest of native trees to act as a carbon sink	Forestry Commission Wales has now begun a study into the purpose of the public woodland estate in order to clarify the role of the Welsh National Forest. Work continues to increase the diversity of the Assembly Government woodlands through increased planting of native trees and the Better Woodlands for Wales grant scheme has supported the planting of 150 hectares of new native privately owned woodland this year. The scheme is being reviewed to consider how it can offer improved support for the creation of new native woodland. The new Smallwood grant scheme has also been introduced which streamlines the process for administering grants for small areas – including new woodland creation.
169 (i)	Submit rural development plan for 2007-13 to the EU based on the level of Tir Mynydd funding agreed by the Assembly in March 2007	The Rural Development Plan for Wales was approved by the European Commission in February 2008. Delivery is well underway and to date some £225million has been spent. Tir Mynydd will be replaced by Glastir in 2012 (see below)
169 (ii)	Develop a replacement Tir Mynydd scheme post 2010	In May 2009, the Minister for Rural Affairs announced a shift in approach to land management schemes in Wales. From 2012, the five existing agri-environment schemes will be replaced by one scheme, Glastir, which is better positioned to meet current and future environmental challenges.
169 (iii)	Develop a new farm entrants scheme taking into account the impact on other elements within Axis two	The Minister for Rural Affairs announced details of a new Young Entrants Support Scheme at this year's (2009) Royal Welsh Show. The scheme is now operational, with the first application window open and due to close on the 31st March 2010.
170	Major initiative on local food procurement	The Local Sourcing Action Plan

		<p>was launched in April 2009.</p> <p>Copies of the action plan have been distributed to key stakeholders to engage in delivering activities .</p> <p>Value Wales are in the process of developing a Local Procurement Food Charter.</p> <p>A tendering process is in place for ‘meet the buyer’ events for the coming months which will introduce food producers to local sourcing officers and buyers from a range of organisations</p>
171	Shortly complete, publish and implement strategy for dairy industry	<p>The Strategic Action Plan for the Welsh Dairy Industry was published in November 2007.</p> <p>The Action Plan outlines how the dairy sector can rise to the challenges and opportunities it faces and meet the needs of the market, to capitalise on Wales’ unique features, and to work in partnership throughout the supply chain.</p> <p>A review was undertaken in November 2008 and it concluded significant progress had been made in implementing the plan. Work is ongoing on monitoring and evaluation – with significant review to take place into 2010.</p>
172	Seek derogation from EU regulations to prohibit burying fallen stock on farm land	<p>Whilst WAG were unsuccessful in obtaining a blanket derogation for the lifting of the burial ban, we have been successful in achieving an amendment in the revision of the Animal By-Product Regulations to include provision for ‘on farm’ containment which is an alternative to burial of fallen stock and would provide farmers with an alternative system for dealing with fallen stock.</p> <p>An EU Council agreement on this issue, obtained at Agri Council on 7th September 2009, published in the Official Journal on 14th November 2009, is</p>

		<p>coming into force in February 2011. In parallel to this work, WAG is joint funding research into the bioreducer system. Following completion of the research, WAG will support a dossier to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to be considered an accepted process, under the revised Regulations, for the containment of fallen stock on farm. The dossier is expected to be submitted to the EFSA towards the end of 2010.</p>
173	Vigorouslly pursue programme of TB eradication	<p>We have set up a comprehensive TB Eradication Programme aimed at tackling all sources of the disease. The main components of the eradication programme involve limiting the spread of the infection by cattle. This has included heightened surveillance and control measures across Wales to find and get rid of infection at an earlier stage.</p> <p>The Minister for Rural Affairs announced on 13th January 2010 specific actions to control TB in wildlife (badgers) and strengthened requirements on cattle keepers would be taken forward.</p> <p>We have improved enforcement arrangements and are engaging with the industry on improving husbandry practices on farm. Specifically, we have decided that we will pilot an approach never used before in the UK: establishing an Intensive Action Pilot Area in west Wales, where badger culling will take place alongside stricter cattle measures.</p>
174	Identify and address needs of deep rural areas	<p>The Deep Rural Localities research report was published on 15th December 2009 and provides the Assembly Government with an evidence base for supporting isolated communities. The Department for Rural Affairs is working with WAG departments, WLGA, local</p>

		authorities and other stakeholders to consider how the issues highlighted by the report can be taken forward.
175	Maximum restriction on GM crops	<p>We have completed the consultation exercise on the WAG GM coexistence measures. The results of the consultation are being considered and will be published shortly.</p> <p>We are also undertaking an evaluation through ADAS of the role for socio-economic issues associated with the cultivation of a GM crops that can help inform the ongoing EU debate on the socio-economic impact of GM crops.</p> <p>As a separate analysis we are also surveying a number of farmers in Wales to find out their understanding and views on GM crops to help inform us in developing our policy on GM crops.</p>
180	Promote energy efficiency and renewable energy production on-farm	Farming Connect funds the Climate Change Development Programme, delivered by Bangor University and IBERS which holds a number of fully funded on-farm events giving practical demonstrations and discussion groups. One to one subsidised advice is also available to farmers interested in energy efficiency and renewable energy production.
181	Explore introduction of grant scheme to convert to energy crops	The issue has been explored. The Minister for Rural Affairs announced (as part of the Glastir announcement in Plenary in May 2009) that there would be no energy crops scheme.

Brynle Williams (North Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities for reversing the long-term decline on the GVA of Welsh agriculture. (WAQ55671)

Answer issued on 01 March 2010

The latest figures on aggregate agricultural output and income in Wales (published on the 18th February 2010) show that in 2009, Gross Added Value (GVA) from agriculture in Wales increased for the third successive year.

In 2006 GVA from agriculture in Wales (in market prices) was approximately £108 million; in 2009 the figure had increased to approximately £205 million. The most recent increase reflects strong market prices for beef and lamb, a reduction in the cost of some of the key agricultural inputs such as feed, fertiliser and fuel during 2009 and an increase in Single Payment receipts due to £/€ exchange rate movements.

Farm income figures released at the end of last year also show that average Welsh farm incomes are also on the up and have risen to £31,300, an increase of 18% on the previous year.

My Farming Food & Countryside strategy is the over-arching strategy for the Department for Rural Affairs and recognises that macro-economic influences are a major determinant on Wales' Gross Value Added and see this as one of the challenges faced by the Welsh agriculture sector. The strategy also sets the agenda for the various sub-strategies within the Department to explore ways of meeting the challenges faced, whether that be:

- to promote technical efficiency to increase profitability in the face of rising production costs;
- to explore new and diverse income streams, such as carbon trading, to counter possible constraints on production arising from the need to tackle climate change; or
- adding value to production through niche marketing to take advantage of the changing demands of the food consumer.

The Farming Connect Programme provides a support structure to encourage farm and forestry businesses to improve business performance and investigate opportunities to diversify and create a more sustainable future.

In addition, a new Food Strategy for Wales is currently being developed. This will have a vision of a market led, customer focussed, profitable and sustainable industry which adds greater value and produces distinctive Welsh products. The strategy is expected to be launched this summer.

A great many of the benefits derived from the Welsh agriculture sector are of course not considered when calculating the agricultural GVA, such as its contribution to: tourism; the environmental agenda; the Welsh language; the retention of services; and subsidiary employment in market towns.

It should be noted that GVA is a single economic measure which in no way gives a clear picture of the true benefits that Welsh agriculture gives to the nation.

Brynle Williams (North Wales): Will the Minister provide an update on the development of the Glastir agri-environment scheme. (WAQ55672)

Answer issued on 02 March 2010

Proposals for the All Wales and Commons element of the Glastir scheme have been submitted to the Programme Monitoring Committee of the Rural Development Plan (RDP) for consideration when it meets on 25 February. Subject to amendment and approval of these proposals, officials will submit the RDP modification paperwork for these elements of the scheme to the European Commission (EC) by early April. Details of the Targeted Element and the Agricultural Carbon Reduction and Efficiencies Scheme (ACRES) within Glastir are expected to be put before PMC in May 2010 and the current timetable is for a modification covering these elements to be submitted to the EC in late June.

To ask the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): How much money does the Welsh Assembly Government spend on inspecting and monitoring local Government every year. (WAQ55676)

Answer issued on 24 February 2010

The Welsh Assembly Government does not inspect local government. That is the responsibility of the Wales Audit Office and of other regulators and inspectors, as regards some specific services. Most of the WAO's work is funded by fees that it charges to local authorities although we provide an annual grant of some £1.58 million to cover its national-level studies.

A great deal of the Assembly Government's work relies on co-operation and dialogue with local authorities, and on information they provide. Some of that activity will include monitoring but the costs of that cannot be separately identified.