

Written Questions answered from 11 to 18 November 1999

[R] signifies the Member has declared an interest.

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Questions to the First Secretary

Radyr Farm

Rod Richards: Does the First Secretary intend to call in planning applications relating to Radyr Farm (99/951W, 98/2000W, and 98/1467W) and if so will he make a statement? (WAQ2100VB)

The First Secretary: The planning applications referred to in the question relate to the following developments:

- a) 99/951/W - Residential development with access from Windsor Road (approval of reserved matters) in respect of condition 1 of planning permission 95/588/W;
- b) 98/2000/W - Residential development with access from Llantrisant Road, new roundabout at A4119/B4262 Junction; and
- c) 98/1467/W - Construction of a temporary haul road.

The Assembly received several requests to call in these applications. After careful consideration Assembly officials concluded that the proposed developments did not raise planning issues which warranted taking responsibility for their determination away from Cardiff County Council. Consequently interested parties were notified on 28 July 1999 that the Assembly did not propose to intervene.

An appeal was subsequently made to the Assembly on 16 August 1999 against non-determination of application 99/951/W by the Council. A public inquiry was arranged for 9 November 1999 but the appeal was not heard as it was withdrawn on 20 October.

I understand that permission for application 98/2000/W was granted by the Council on 28 July 1999 and that application 98/1467/W is yet to be determined by them.

Objective 1

Alun Cairns: What representation has the First Secretary received requesting an outside agency, with significant private sector involvement, to implement the Objective 1 programme? (WAQ2137VB)

The First Secretary: I have received no representations requesting an outside agency to implement the Objective 1 programme. We are encouraging the representatives of business—including medium and small enterprises—to come up with ways of being directly involved in implementing specific aspects of the programme.

Questions to the Secretary for the Environment and Local Government

European Directive on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control

Peter Black: Who has responsibility for implementing the European Directive on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control 96/61/EG in Wales, who will be drawing up and approving the regulations for the implementation of this legislation, and what is the timescale for its implementation in Wales? (WAQ927)

What is the timescale for the introduction of regulations in Wales under the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999? (WAQ1016)

The Secretary for the Environment and Local Government (Peter Law): At present, responsibility for implementing the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive in the UK lies with the UK Government. Provision has been made for implementing the directive in the 'Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999'.

The Act requires that the first-time regulations covering England and the devolved administrations, must be approved by the UK Parliament. I am considering, with the relevant government departments, the most effective way of taking this forward for Wales given the need for early implementation of the Directive.

The 1999 Act also contains provision to transfer regulation-making powers to the Assembly. Work on this is already in hand.

Carmarthen Eastern Bypass

Nick Bourne: What allowance has been made for compensation claims from homeowners living close to the new Carmarthen eastern Bypass?

Peter Law: The basis for the payment of compensation in respect of trunk road schemes is set out in legislation and associated case law: -

- The Land Compensation Act 1973
- Compulsory Purchase Act 1965
- Planning and Compensation Act 1991

£8.96 million has been allocated for compensation to homeowners living close to the new Carmarthen eastern bypass. The main element of compensation is for the cost of land acquisition and associated land compensation. Land compensation can be paid for loss in property value arising from the construction of the road scheme. Claims for loss of property value can also result from the adverse effects of the use of the new road, the claim period for which will commence 12 months after the road is opened to traffic, which will be announced in the local press.

Newbridge-on-Wye Bypass

Kirsty Williams: What plans does Peter Law have to build a bypass for Newbridge-on-Wye? (WAQ2039JS)

Peter Law: A bypass does not feature in the trunk road forward programme as set out in the document 'Driving Wales forward: a strategic review of the Welsh trunk roads programme', although possible routes have been investigated in connection with the feasibility study for improvements between Cwmbach and Newbridge-on-Wye. This will be a factor taken into consideration by the consultants who are currently investigating for the Assembly, ways to improve travel between north and south Wales.

Speeding Traffic (Newbridge-on-Wye)

Kirsty Williams: What are the results of the Assembly monitoring of speeding traffic through Newbridge-on-Wye? Does Peter Law intend to implement traffic calming measures? (WAQ2049JS)

Peter Law: The monitoring of traffic speed is intended to be complementary to fresh trials by Dyfed Powys Police into the effectiveness of speed cameras in enforcing speed limits. Because of equipment problems, the Police have been unable to start the trials, but hope to do so in the near future. Since the cameras were installed, 85 percentile speeds have fallen by some 4 miles per hour to about 37 mph, but it is anticipated that the higher level of policing associated with the new trials will achieve a further reduction. When the trials are complete and the results analysed, the need for additional traffic calming measures in Newbridge-on-Wye will be assessed, together with their relative priority against other sites throughout Wales. The results of the trials should be available early next year.

Homelessness

Peter Black: What powers does the Assembly have to implement secondary legislation to assist local authorities in better catering for the needs of homeless persons in their area? (WAQ2086VN)

Peter Law: The allocation of local authority housing is governed by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. Responsibility for homelessness is governed by Part VII. Section 169 and Section 182 of the Act allow the Assembly to issue guidance to local authorities on how they should meet their responsibilities under Parts VI and VII of the Act. We are currently reviewing the Code of Guidance on the allocation of Housing Accommodation and Homelessness to ensure that it reflects the priorities for Wales.

The other powers of the Assembly under the Act in respect of allocations and homelessness are set out below:

Provision	Description
Section 2(7)	To add permissible purposes, objects or powers of Registered Social Landlords.
Section 17	Power to apply part V of the Housing Act 1985, with modifications.
Section 17(1)	To specify amount or rate of discount
Section 17(1) b	To designate exempted rural areas
Sections 160(4),	To prescribe certain criteria - allocations.
Section 161(2)	Power to prescribe persons qualifying for housing accommodation
Section 162(4)	To prescribe contents of local authority housing register.
Sections 163(7)& 165	To prescribe criteria for removal from register and appeals.
Section 167(3), (4)&(5)	To specify further descriptions of persons to whom preference is to be given; factors to be discounted in allocations and to prescribe principles for framing allocations.
Section 172	Power to make consequential, etc., provisions
Section 177(3)	Power to make order in relation to continued occupation of property
Section 180(1)	Power to give grant or loan assistance to voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness
Section 181(2)	Power to determine terms of assistance under s180.

Provision	Description
Section 185	Power to prescribe persons who are not eligible for housing assistance. The Order directs that the function is to be exercisable concurrently by the Assembly and the Secretary of State
Section 186	Duty to record details concerning asylum-seekers etc.
Section 187	Duty to provide housing authority with information concerning asylum-seekers.
Section 189	Power to specify further classes of persons having a priority need for accommodation
Section 198(5)	Power to give directions as to referral of case to another local housing authority
Section 199(5)	Power to specify further circumstances as regards "local connection"
Section 203(2)	Power to provide for the procedure on a review under s202
Section 207	Power to give directions as to the provision of accommodation by a local housing authority
Section 210	Power to specify circumstances re suitability of accommodation

Transco

David Davies: What representations has Peter Law made to Transco regarding the siting of the proposed gas pipeline in the Brecon Beacons National Park? (WAQ2101VB)

Peter Law: I met Transco on 12 August and listened to its ideas on the siting of the proposed pipeline. I asked the company about its justification for the route and restoration plans. I was told that an Environmental Impact Assessment on the proposed route had already been carried out and that alternative routes had been considered. I was assured that, whatever the route, Transco would be sensitive to the needs of those parties affected.

Sound Barriers (A449)

David Davies: Will Peter Law give consideration to the provision of sound barriers on the A449 between Raglan and Usk to alleviate problems of noise from this road? (WAQ2102VB)

Peter Law: The Assembly is currently undertaking a review of noise levels affecting properties adjacent to trunk roads and motorways in Wales. This review will develop new criteria to identify those sections of trunk road and motorway where traffic noise levels are excessive and significantly greater than those predicted at the time of construction. These sift criteria will be used to identify cases needing study in greater detail to determine whether practical and cost effective noise mitigation measures can be provided. The review is scheduled to be completed early next year and its findings will be reported to the Assembly, which will then need to decide future policy on this issue. The provision of noise barriers on the A449 between Usk and Raglan will be considered with regard to the above criteria.

Orange Disabled Badges

Peter Black: What guidance is issued to local councils on the issue of orange disabled badges and the eligibility criteria? (WAQ2104VB)

Peter Law: Guidance was issued to local authorities in Welsh Office Circular 67/91, 'The orange badge scheme of parking concessions for disabled and blind people'. The eligibility criteria are detailed in the circular. A copy is in the Library.

Nuclear Sites

Jane Davidson: Under the 1998 Sintra Annex to the OSPAR Commission, Britain agreed to 'progressive and substantial reductions of discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances' to protect maritime areas. The Department of Education, Transport and the Regions is currently considering implementation with regard to discharges in England, particularly discharges from Sellafield.

When and how will the Assembly be involved in implementation with regard to nuclear sites in Wales, particularly discharges from Nycomed Amersham? (WAQ2106VB)

Peter Law: The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions is currently preparing a radioactive discharge strategy for the United Kingdom. This should be published towards the end of 2000 and will set out how the OSPAR target for 2020 is to be met.

In the light of this, I shall then prepare appropriate guidance for issue to the Environment Agency to ensure that authorised discharges from sites in Wales are in line with the UK's OSPAR commitments.

North-South Transport Links (Bypass)

Peter Black: Why is the construction of the A487 Penygroes bypass along the former railway track-bed going to commence before the commissioned study into north-south transport links is completed? (WAQ2222VB)

Peter Law: We have an ongoing programme of improvement work on the north-south routes. driving Wales forward, the strategic review of the trunk road programme published in July 1998, found there were no transport alternatives to the Llanwnda to Llanllyfni scheme. The proposals deal with traffic congestion, safety, community severance, and will improve bus journey time reliability and enhance the environment of those living alongside the existing trunk road.

The north-south transport links study will consider the scale and priority of any further route improvements, including improvements to the A487 in north Wales and the potential for rail service enhancement. Nothing would be gained by reviewing the extensive consideration that went into the planning of this scheme. The decision taken last year to construct the scheme as a priority remains valid and is consistent with our long-term objective of improvement in north-south transport links.

Questions to the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development

Consultants

David Davies: How much money is the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development's department spending on consultants? Will she list the consultants used and specify the reason for each consultant being used? (WAQ999VB)

The Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development (Christine Gwyther): Expenditure incurred in the current financial year on external consultants in the areas for which I am responsible is expected to amount to £61,000. Details of these consultations, all of which are concerned with the proper management of the Common Agricultural Policy, are as follows:

Consultant Appointed	Reason for Consultancy
Goodwin Hynam Associates	To prepare an outline business case and define a short term migration plan for new IT systems.
Ethos Management Ltd	To assist in the deployment of the Business Excellence Model within the Agriculture Department.
Central Communications & Telecommunications Agency (CCTA)	To provide external advice to the Joint Initiatives for Government Services Across Wales (JIGSAW) IT Project Board on the draft and final outline business case in connection with the development and procurement of new IT systems which will under-pin the JIGSAW project.

Milk Marque

Glyn Davies: What representations did the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development and the First Secretary make to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry before he published the Competition Commission's report on Milk Marque? (WAQ1063JS)

Christine Gwyther: I had numerous discussions with Stephen Byers and Alun Michael and presented my view that the report is fundamentally flawed for the reasons I have already set out.

Milk Marque (Processing Raw Milk)

Glyn Davies: What success has Christine Gwyther had in persuading the Government to allow Milk Marque the freedom to expand into the processing of raw milk? (WAQ1076JS)

Christine Gwyther: Following Milk Marque's announcement that it intends to split into three companies, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Stephen Byers, has indicated that if separation is completed successfully, he could allow the successor bodies to engage in milk processing as early as April 2000.

Questions to the Secretary for Economic Development

Business Services Level in Wales

Alun Cairns: What is the business services level in Wales compared to every other region in the UK? (WAQ1951JS)

The Secretary for Economic Development (Rhodri Morgan): There is no specific definition of Business Services within the Standard Industrial Classification. However, the total numbers of VAT-registered businesses in the services sector in Wales and in UK regions are shown in the table below:

Government Office Region/Country	Service sector businesses at Jan. 1999 ^{1,2}	
	Stock	As a percentage of all businesses
North East	29,740	70.8
North West	116,320	72.7
Yorkshire and the Humber	80,510	68.4
East Midlands	73,110	65.7
West Midlands	89,945	66.0
East of England	112,260	69.0
London	229,945	85.2
South East	189,075	74.7
South West	96,815	64.7
England	1,017,720	72.6
Wales	43,565	57.9
Scotland	77,645	65.2
Northern Ireland	25,215	46.2
United Kingdom	1,164,135	70.5

Source: DTI, SME Statistics Unit

(1) VAT registered.

(2) Service sector consists of the following 1992 Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC):

- Wholesale and retail trade and repairs
- Hotels and restaurants
- Transport and communication
- Financial intermediation
- Real estate, renting and business activities
- Public administration and defence: compulsory and social security
- Education
- Health and social work
- Other community services

EU Structural Funds (Private Sector)

Alun Cairns: What amount of funds will be available to support the private sector in terms of technical assistance in applying for EU structural funds? (WAQ2087VB)

Rhodri Morgan: The Objective 1 single programming document stipulates the overall levels of technical assistance to be included in the programme and the general activities on which technical assistance might be utilised. Decisions on particular uses of technical assistance during the lifetime of the programme will be a matter for the Programme Monitoring Committee.

In addition to technical assistance the wider resources of the secretariat will be available to support all applicants, including the private sector, in developing appropriate projects and applying for funding.

Application for Structural Funds (Excessive Profit)

Alun Cairns: What is considered to be excessive profit in terms of application for structural funds? (WAQ2088VB)

Rhodri Morgan: Structural funds' regulations do not specify a specific level of profit for particular projects that is deemed to be excessive. Rather, determination of excess profit is made by reference to average returns in the sector of the project sponsor for the activity supported.

Excess profit is liable to be repaid to the Commission.

Objective 1 (State Aid)

Alun Cairns: When will the Government be in a position to inform the Assembly on the conclusion of discussions in relation to which state aid facility could be used in conjunction with the Objective 1 programme? (WAQ2089VB)

Rhodri Morgan: The regulations state that the programme complement must be presented to the European Commission three months after the approval of the single programming document. The Assembly will be consulted on draft versions of the programme complement.

Our proposals for the Pathway to Prosperity Fund will include proposals for state aid to be used in connection with the Objective 1 programme.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (Structural Fund Applications)

Alun Cairns: What form of publicity will the Assembly follow to encourage structural fund applications from the private sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises and how much money is expected to be spent? (WAQ2091VB)

Rhodri Morgan: Publicity on the use of structural funds under the new programme will be directed by the Programme Monitoring Committee and implemented by the new secretariat body that will be established early next year.

A major focus of these publicity initiatives will be the need to encourage greater private sector involvement in structural programmes. Private sector organisations will be closely consulted on the best ways of reaching their members for this purpose.

No budget has yet been agreed for this task.

Welsh Development Agency (License to Lend Money)

Rod Richards: Does the Welsh Development Agency have a license to lend money and if so could Rhodri Morgan make a statement? (WAQ2099VB)

Rhodri Morgan: Under section 1(7)(d) of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 (as amended), the Welsh Development Agency does have the power to make loans. The Welsh Development Agency does so in a variety of ways. For example, its small loan fund can provide loans of between £5,000 and £50,000 to businesses in Wales.

Questions to the Secretary for Education and Children

Expenditure on School Pupils

David Davies: What is the average amount of money spent on each pupil in Wales, for each key stage up to key stage 4 (i) at present; and (ii) for each of the last three years? (WAQ2015VB)

The Secretary for Education and Children (Rosemary Butler): Expenditure by local education authorities cannot be sub-divided by key stage because teachers, classrooms and other resources are shared over the whole school.

The table below shows the average per pupil expenditure in Wales for primary, secondary and all schools for the four years requested.

		<u>Pre-primary & primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>	<u>Total</u>
1999-2000	Budget	2,223	2,947	2,658
1998-99	Budget	2,078	2,827	2,512
1997-98	Out turn	2,089	2,691	2,456
1996-97	Out turn	1,972	2,675	2,368

Notes:

Includes all maintained schools

Total includes special schools and pupil referral units

Spending figures in these calculations include the part delegated to schools and a share of the total retained centrally by local education authorities for education overall. This share is calculated by apportioning the total central spend according to the spending designated for each type of school and continuing education.

1997-98 figures have been adjusted to take account of the Nursery Vouchers Scheme.

Class Sizes in Secondary Schools

David Davies: How many classes taught by one teacher in maintained secondary schools contained a) 31 or more pupils and b) 36 or more pupils in i) July 1997 and ii) the most recent date for which figures are available broken down by A) the local education authority and B) the Assembly constituency? (WAQ 2018VB)

Rosemary Butler: Information is collected centrally on the average class size for each year group in each secondary school but is not collected centrally on the number of classes, or pupils in class, according to the size of class.

Questions to the Secretary for Health and Social Services

Care for Dementia Sufferers

Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the Secretary for Health and Social Services had with local authorities concerning the provision of specialist care facilities for dementia sufferers? (WAQ1833VB)

The Secretary for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): I have not yet had any opportunity for discussions with local authorities about the provision of specialist care facilities for dementia sufferers. I know that for the families and carers of those with dementia, the disease presents many practical and emotional problems. In recognition of this the Assembly has been able to provide £48,564 in grant assistance this year to support the work of the Alzheimer's Disease Society Wales. I am always willing to consider any particular concerns that Assembly Members may have about the provision of services for people with dementia.

Digital Aids

David Melding: Does Jane Hutt have any plans to make the provision of digital aids standard in the NHS? (WAQ2092VB.)

Jane Hutt: I referred to my intentions for improving hearing aid technology in my replies to Peter Black on the 4 October (WAQ1341VB) and Kirsty Williams on 15 October (WAQ1538VB). A number of pilot schemes have been set up in England to test the feasibility of various options of delivering hearing aid services and improving the range and technology of hearing aids available. I will be looking with interest at their conclusions to see if they are suitable to introduce into the NHS in Wales.

Hearing Tests Waiting Times

David Melding: What is the mean waiting time for a hearing test in the NHS? (WAQ2093VB.)

Jane Hutt: This information is not available.

Fitting Hearing Aids

David Melding: How many patients wait over a month for a hearing aid to be fitted? (WAQ2094VB.)

Jane Hutt: This information is not available.

Professions Allied to Medicine Representative

David Melding: Will Jane Hutt examine the need for a professions allied to medicine representative on local health groups? (WAQ2095VB)

Jane Hutt: The introduction of local health groups reflects a broad approach to partnership working and collaboration within and out with the local health group.

I addressed the concerns of the professions allied to medicine at their recent conference and made it clear that I expect local health groups to seek their advice locally. I also confirmed their

role in informing the development of health improvement programmes, both through their advisory groups and trusts.

The local health group board is already large. They are new organisations and need time to develop. I do not wish to make them too unwieldy to work well but I am prepared to review the position when the groups have had time to establish themselves.

Paediatric Hearing Services

David Melding: How will paediatric hearing services be improved through the Children's Strategy? (WAQ2096VB)

Jane Hutt: It is too early to make any statement on a children's strategy. Consultations have been arranged or planned with a wide range of interests including children and young people themselves. A draft document will be considered by the Assembly in the spring.

Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

David Melding: What effect is methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) having in Wales's hospitals and nursing homes? (WAQ2097VB)

Jane Hutt: As you are aware the Assembly and its Officials, are taking MRSA seriously and I have previously let you have details of strategies which are underway in Wales to encourage the adoption of effective infection control measures. Measures which involve excellent surveillance and education of both the public and professionals.

Please find below the rates for MRSA infection in Wales, provided by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre Wales:

1996	2699
1997	5203
1998	5659
1999	3722 (up to 31/07/99)

Our surveillance procedures in Wales are excellent, we pick up and record every case known, which will result in a perceived higher rate of infection, but this is a positive, as it heightens awareness to the problem to those in the NHS who are in a position to influence good infection control procedures.

MRSA (Hospitals and Nursing Homes)

David Melding: Will Jane Hutt make a statement on what action the administration is taking to combat MRSA in hospitals and nursing homes across Wales? (WAQ2098VB)

Jane Hutt: I share your concerns about MRSA and the importance of good infection control. In Wales there are a number of strategies underway which encourage the adoption of effective infection control procedures, particularly in hospital, residential and nursing home settings.

First, we have provided over £140,000 to the Public Health Laboratory Service in Wales, to enable it to undertake a three-year survey of nosocomial infections. All five Public Health Laboratories in Wales, and the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre Welsh Unit, are committed to the project which now includes the involvement of the Welsh NHS laboratories. At the conclusion of the study, a properly co-ordinated system for infection control will be in

place. This will contribute to improvements in clinical practice in the management of infections. The development of the study's outbreak reporting system will allow fast dissemination of information as well as making the experience gained widely known.

Second, the CDSC Welsh Unit is undertaking a surveillance project specifically on cases of MRSA. Seminars to encourage participation in the study have been held and over 18 Welsh district hospitals and Public Health Laboratories are now involved in the project.

These two projects together with the extensive guidance which has already been issued in Wales on infection control procedures, will go some way to ensuring that cases of hospital acquired infection are kept to a minimum.

NHS Compensation Payments

David Davies: How much money was spent on compensation payments by the NHS in Wales in 1998-99? (WAQ2020VB)

Jane Hutt: The amount of compensation payments by the NHS in Wales in 1998-99 was £21.6 million.

Source: Annual accounts of health authorities and NHS Trusts 1998-99.