

## **Written Questions answered from 13 to 20 April 2000**

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

### **Contents**

2	Questions to the First Secretary on Economic Development
2	Questions to the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development
2	Questions to the Secretary for Health and Social Services
6	Questions to the Secretary for Local Government and Housing
7	Questions to the Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport
8	Questions to the Secretary for Education and Children
9	Questions to the Secretary for Post-16 Education and Training
10	Questions to the Finance Secretary

## Questions to the First Secretary on Economic Development

### BAE Systems Superjet Project

**Alun Cairns:** What plans is the First Secretary aware of in relation to British Aerospace taking the superjet project away from Broughton, possibly to another part of Europe? (WAQ4867)

**Alun Cairns:** What is the latest progress on the superjet project originally planned for Broughton? (WAQ4868)

**The First Secretary (Rhodri Morgan):** I am not aware of any such plans. BAE Systems said it wishes to look again at the extent of the A3XX super-jumbo work undertaken at Broughton. I have agreed to meet the company to discuss the issue further.

### BAE Systems Superjet Project (RSA Grant)

**Alun Cairns:** What considerations were taken into account to decide not to approve the £25 million regional selective assistance grant for the Broughton superjet project? (WAQ4869)

**The First Secretary:** BAE Systems has asked me not to divulge any details in relation to its application for regional selective assistance, including the company's case for grant assistance, details of the factors considered in our deliberations and the rationale behind the decision not to offer support. I have agreed to the company's request.

### Releasing Genetically Modified Organisms

**Michael German:** What was the First Secretary's response to the opinion presented to him by Friends of the Earth on 8 March 2000 regarding consents to release GMOs? (WAQ4874)

**The First Secretary:** Christine Gwyther will respond shortly.

## Questions to the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development

### Releasing Genetically Modified Organisms

**Michael German:** What was the First Secretary's response to the opinion presented to him by Friends of the Earth on 8 March 2000 regarding consents to release GMOs? (WAQ4875)

**The Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development (Christine Gwyther):** I will respond shortly.

## Questions to the Secretary for Health and Social Services

### Transmission of CJD

**Peter Rogers:** What information has the Secretary for Health and Social Services received regarding the transmission of CJD through infected bovine tissue used in the manufacture of vaccines? (WAQ4863)

**The Secretary for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt):** The safety of vaccines is a matter for the Medicines Control Agency, which has provided the following information.

Bovine material is not an ingredient of any vaccine. It is used in the manufacture of some vaccines, but only to promote the growth of cells, viruses or bacteria during manufacture. Subsequent purification is

designed to remove all materials that are associated with the manufacture but not required in the finished product. The manufacturers provide validation of those processes to the Medicines Control Agency.

In 1988 the Southwood report stated that the risk of transmission of BSE to humans was remote and theoretical. The Committee on the Safety of Medicines accepted this advice. However, as a precautionary measure in 1989 the CSM published guidelines for the pharmaceutical industry on the sourcing and processing of animal materials. The guidelines cover the geographical source of the material, the type of tissue used and the processes to which such material must be subjected to minimise any risk that it may represent.

There is no evidence to link variant CJD with vaccines. A recent analysis of the vaccine exposure of vCJD cases has been undertaken by experts from the CJD Surveillance Unit, the National Institute for Biological Standards and Controls and the Department of Health. It concluded that:

‘if CJD is the result of exposure to BSE cattle infected material, vaccines given before the age of 2 appear to have no role in its aetiology to date’.

### **Blood Products from Foreign Animals**

**David Davies:** What steps are being taken to ensure that blood products from foreign animals imported to Wales are BSE free? (WAQ4877)

**Jane Hutt:** Raw blood products imported into Wales intended for human consumption must originate from EU approved establishments within an EU listed third country and be accompanied by veterinary health certification. In addition, they need to comply with the UK Specified Risk Material Order 1997 and accompanied by a declaration stating that they do not contain specified risk material as defined in that order.

Blood and blood products not intended for human consumption are subject to the requirements of an import licence, which require certain health guarantees concerning the origin of the products. These must also comply with the UK Specified Risk Material Order 1997. Blood and blood products intended for uses other than human or animal consumption would also be subject to UK national rules and an import licence.

### **Waiting Time for Outpatients**

**David Davies:** What was the average waiting time for outpatients in Wales in each of the past six months, and the comparable figures for the previous year? (WAQ4880)

**Jane Hutt:** Data on average waiting times for outpatients are not available centrally. Statistics are available on the number of outpatients on waiting lists for less than three or less than six months. The following table shows those numbers as percentages of the total number of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment.

	<b>Percentage waiting less than three months</b>		<b>Percentage waiting less than six months</b>	
	Sept 1998 to Feb 1999	Sept 1999 to Feb 2000	Sept 1998 to Feb 1999	Sept 1999 to Feb 2000
End: September	60.0	53.7	86.9	80.4
October	58.8	53.2	86.3	79.3
November	59.9	55.4	86.1	79.4
December	57.9	51.8	84.2	77.5

January	56.1	50.9	82.8	76.0
February	57.1	50.4	83.4	75.9

### Vacant Nursing Posts

**David Davies:** Will Jane Hutt provide details of vacant nursing posts in the period September 1999 to January 2000 broken down by individual hospital trusts, grades and speciality? (WAQ4887)

**Jane Hutt:** The following table shows the number of vacant nursing posts (this includes nurses, midwives and health visitors) in hospitals and trusts during the period of 31 August 1999 to 1 January 2000. Information on individual grades is not available centrally.

Hospital / NHS Trust	Whole Time Equivalent Vacancies
Pontypridd & Rhondda NHS Trust	23.13
Ceredigion & Mid Wales NHS Trust	7.00
Carmarthenshire NHS Trust	25.54
Cardiff & District Community NHS Trust	58.98
Bro Morgannwg NHS Trust	26.00
Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust	91.67
North Glamorgan NHS Trust	55.15
Velindre Hospital	4.80
Powys Health Care NHS Trust	7.00
Swansea NHS Trust	53.00
Pembrokeshire & Derwen NHS Trust	3.20
North West Wales NHS Trust	65.52
North East Wales NHS Trust	86.25
Conwy & Denbighshire NHS Trust	21.00
University of Wales & Llandough Hospital NHS Trust	198.27
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>726.51</b>

### Adoption Procedures

**David Melding:** What is the average length of adoption procedures within local authorities in Wales, and the range between the slowest and quickest procedures among Welsh local authorities? (WAQ4889)

**Jane Hutt:** This information is not routinely collected centrally. Guidance in paragraph 10 of National Assembly for Wales Circular 6/99, 'Adoption - Achieving the Right Balance', indicates that directors of social services should provide regular reports to elected members about children in the care of their local authority who wait to be placed with new families.

### Greater Use of Private Sector

**David Melding:** Is there any scope for greater use of the private sector in the NHS? (WAQ4890)

**Jane Hutt:** I refer to Nick Bourne's question on 20 December (WAQ2804) on this subject and restate our commitment to working in partnership with the private sector where it is in the interests of individual patients, their families and carers. Clearly we cannot be prescriptive about the level of involvement of the private sector with the NHS in Wales as this must reflect local needs and circumstances. I anticipate that the NHS Wales corporate strategy will provide a framework within which NHS Wales and the private sector can work in partnership when it makes recommendations about the long-term direction of the NHS later this year.

### **Zyban (Bupropion Hydrochloride SR)**

**David Melding:** When will Jane Hutt make a decision on whether to make zyban (bupropion hydrochloride SR) available on the NHS? (WAQ4891)

**Jane Hutt:** Several products intended to help people give up smoking can be supplied under the NHS by clinics, but may not be prescribed under the NHS by general medical practitioners. This policy is now a matter for the Assembly and I shall be considering its application to new products, where appropriate, as they come on to the market.

### **EU Working Time Directive (Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust)**

**David Davies:** What progress has the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust made in implementing the provision of the EU Working Time Directive and what is the anticipated timescale for full compliance, if applicable? (WAQ4892)

**Jane Hutt:** A personnel policy on the implementation of the Working Time Directive has been agreed with the staff side of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust following consultation.

### **Breast Screening**

**David Davies:** Are there any plans to extend breast screening to include women over the age of 64? (WAQ4893)

**Jane Hutt:** I am extremely concerned about the high incidence of breast cancer and the suffering that it causes to those affected and their families.

When the NHS breast screening programme was first set up in 1988, evidence suggested that older women would not accept screening invitations. However, women over 64 have always been able to be screened under the programme upon self-referral.

In view of the increasing numbers of women over 64 who are now coming forward to self refer, pilot schemes have been set up in Leeds/Wakefield, Nottingham and Brighton to test the feasibility and effectiveness of including routine screening for women over 64. The last of these three-year long trials ends soon.

The national screening committee, which advises the Government on which screening programmes the NHS should undertake, will make recommendations this summer on what changes are necessary to the present NHS breast screening programme, after having examined the pilot schemes. I will consider carefully the committee's recommendations at that time

### **Registered Nurses**

**David Davies:** What is the target for increasing the number of registered nurses in Wales in 2000-01? (WAQ4894)

**Jane Hutt:** The number of nurse training places financed directly by the Assembly reflects workforce planning figures collated prior to course inception to reflect anticipated service needs at completion of course. The figures below refer to the number of student nurses in Wales currently in pre-registration training expected to graduate in 2000 and 2001. These figures, however, are subject to wastage between now and end of course.

<b>Inception Date</b>	<b>Anticipated Graduation Date</b>	
Spring 1997	Spring 2000	349

Autumn 1997	Autumn 2000	408
Spring 1998	Spring 2001	380
Autumn 1998	Autumn 2001	435

While the above figures reflect the number of nursing students graduating in Wales in 2000 and 2001, they do not reflect cross-border flows of newly qualified and existing NHS staff. The NHS in Wales in 2000 and 2001 will employ nurses other than those reflected in the above figures and a percentage of the above students will gain employment in England, Scotland and beyond.

Priority discussions for the effective implementation of recently announced additional resources assigned to the national health service in Wales are in progress.

### Nursing Places

**David Lloyd:** How many nursing places are available each year in Wales for the past five years and planned for the next five years? (WAQ4902)

**Jane Hutt:** The number of contracted student nurse places for the last five years in Wales is as follows.

1996	-	811
1997	-	872
1998	-	999
1999	-	953
2000	-	949

The number of contracted student nurse places each year is determined by trust workforce plans. The numbers for 2001 will be determined by the trust workforce plans which are being received by the Assembly this month. The workforce planning process will be reviewed over the next few months and the possibility of longer term plans to enable student numbers to be planned further into the future rather than one year at a time will be discussed.

## Questions to the Secretary for Local Government and Housing

### Empty Premises

**Alun Cairns:** What action and guidance is the Secretary for Local Government and Housing taking in relation to empty premises for business rate and council tax collection? (WAQ4854)

**The Secretary for Local Government and Housing (Peter Law):** The Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 prescribes classes of dwelling for which no council tax is payable. Class A allows an exemption from council tax for dwellings which are empty and undergoing or requiring repair or structural alteration to make them habitable. From 1 April 2000 there is a change to this legislation, which means that properties in Class A will only receive an exemption from the tax for a maximum of 12 months. Dwellings which have already received 12 months or more exemption on 1 April 2000, will no longer qualify for exemption under Class A and if the property remains empty there will be a charge for council tax on the property of 50 per cent of the amount of the full bill. The council tax legislation has been changed to limit the exemption to provide an incentive to owners to complete repairs and bring properties back into use. Appropriate guidance has been issued to all local authorities in Wales.

Legislation provides for all rateable business properties that are unoccupied for a period of up to three months to full rate relief. Properties that remain unoccupied beyond the initial three-month period are liable for unoccupied rates at a 50 per cent discount. There are no plans to alter the current legislation on empty properties for business rates.

## **Local Government Elections**

**Nick Bourne:** Will Peter Law publish any representations he has received regarding the holding of local government elections? (WAQ4870)

**Peter Law:** No representations have been made to me in relation to holding local government elections. The legislation governing holding local government elections is a matter for the Home Office.

## **Fair Elections**

**Nick Bourne:** Will Peter Law make representations to Powys County Council on the holding of fair elections? (WAQ4871)

**Peter Law:** I will not make representations to Powys County Council about holding fair elections, as the conduct of local government elections is a matter for the Home Office.

## **Political Asylum Seekers**

**David Davies:** How many people who claim political asylum in the UK are being dispersed in Wales? (WAQ4884)

**Peter Law:** The Home Office estimates that approximately 5,000 asylum seekers will be dispersed to each cluster area, including Wales, in 2000-01. No asylum seekers have been dispersed to Wales so far and the dispersal arrangements are not expected to be fully operational until the autumn.

## **Youth Homelessness**

**Ann Jones:** What steps are being taken or are planned to deal with the increasing problem of youth homelessness in the north Wales area? (WAQ4898)

**Peter Law:** A report—‘Rough Sleeping in Wales’—by a secondee to the Assembly from the voluntary sector was presented to the Local Government and Housing Committee on 8 December 1999. The report acknowledged the problem of homelessness throughout Wales and identified gaps in provision. A national housing strategy task group has also been looking at the needs of vulnerable people. It has considered ‘Rough Sleeping in Wales’, and looked at the needs of the homeless across Wales.

Much is already being done in north Wales. Supported housing revenue grant provides over £300,000 per year for 85 bed spaces for the single homeless in Conwy, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham. For 2000-01, a further 11 bed spaces have been allocated (£39,000 per annum) for the single homeless in Wrexham.

In addition, there is a supported living project in Wrexham being funded by the Assembly under Section 180 of the Housing Act 1996.

The Assembly budget for 1999-2000 includes an increase of £800,000 in the funding under Section 180 to provide assistance to the homeless. In addition, £3.6 million is provisionally allocated to local authorities to develop strategic approaches to the problem of homelessness (and the related problem of houses in multiple occupation) in their areas.

## **Questions to the Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport**

### **Suspending the Right of Access to Farmland**

**Nick Bourne:** Will the Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport consider making representations regarding suspending the right of access to farmland when lambing, calving and pest

control is taking place outside of the proposed 28 days limit under the proposals for the right to roam? (WAQ4648)

**The Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport (Sue Essex):** The proposed right of access to open countryside only applies to uncultivated rough grassland, not to farmland in general. The Countryside and Rights of Way Bill provides that a landowner or occupier will be entitled to exclude or restrict access to land on up to 28 days within a calendar year and, with the exception of weekends and certain holidays, it will be open to landowners and occupiers to decide on which days the restrictions or closures will apply. However, landowners will also be able to apply for further closures, in addition to the 28 days on land management grounds.

### **Introduction of Right to Roam (Costs)**

**Glyn Davies:** Further to my question of 15 March (OAQ4144), will Sue Essex make clear the total costs to the Assembly of introducing the right to roam legislation, including the total sum allocated by the Countryside Council for Wales? (WAQ4687)

**Sue Essex:** The regulatory impact assessment for the Countryside Bill does not identify costs for Wales separately and it is too early to say what resources the Assembly will allocate to work arising from secondary legislation. The Countryside Council for Wales has allocated £280,000 for access work in the financial years 1999-2001 and will also allocate some of the further £800,000 proposed by the Finance Secretary on 28 March in this financial year.

### **Extra Train Service**

**Lynne Neagle:** How will the extra train service between north and south Wales affect the timetable of trains calling at Cwmbran and Pontypool? (WAQ4820)

**Sue Essex:** To accommodate the new Cardiff to Holyhead return service that comes into effect on Monday 29 May, some amendment to services which will compete for the same rail path will be needed.

From 29 May, the 06.28 Bristol Temple Meads to Abergavenny service that currently serves Cwmbran (07.21) and Pontypool (07.27) will terminate at Newport at 07.06. It will connect with the new Cardiff to Holyhead service at Newport, which will depart Newport at 07.24 and will not stop at Cwmbran and Pontypool.

The 07.20 Cardiff to Manchester train will provide an alternative stopping service from Newport to Abergavenny. This means that the new services from Cwmbran and Pontypool to Abergavenny will run approximately 20 minutes later than the current provision.

On the return trip, the 14.30 Holyhead to Cardiff return service will call at Pontypool and Cwmbran approximately 25 minutes later than the existing 19.00 Abergavenny to Cardiff service, which it replaces.

## **Questions to the Secretary for Education and Children**

### **Expenditure on Schools**

**David Davies:** Will the Secretary for Education and Children detail local government expenditure on schools in the past five years, and projected expenditure in future years where available, per pupil and as a total? (WAQ4885)

**The Secretary for Education and Children (Rosemary Butler):** The information available is given in the following table.



## Total Revenue Expenditure on Schools by Local Authorities

	Total Spend £ million	Spend per pupil £
1996-97	1,151.2	2,360
1997-98	1,200.1	2,450
1998-99	1,232.1	2,510
1999-2000	1,304.1	2,660

Information is awaited from local authorities on their budgets for 2000-01. An analysis will be provided to the Pre-16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee in due course.

Expenditure in 2001-02 and beyond will depend on the Assembly's decisions on funding for local authorities and on local authorities' decisions about the use of resources available to them.

### Notes

- Source of expenditure data for 1996-97 and 1997-98 revenue outturn returns (RO) and 1998-99 and 1999-2000 revenue budget returns (RA).
- Pupil numbers are full-time equivalents and are financial year estimates.
- Covers all local education authority maintained schools and grant maintained to 1999-2000.
- Expenditure is taken as all spending allocated by the LEA to school's functions.
- This includes delegated services and those retained for schools by the LEA.
- Expenditure is net of income from fees, sales and charges.
- Expenditure excludes funds raised by individual schools.
- Expenditure excludes funds drawn from individual school reserves.

## Questions to the Secretary for Post-16 Education and Training

### Expenditure per University Student

**David Davies:** What is the actual, estimated and planned expenditure per university student, in the higher education budget in Wales in each year for which the figures are available? (WAQ4886)

**The Secretary for Post-16 Education and Training (Tom Middlehurst):** The expenditure per student in Wales from 1993-94, which is the year that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales came into existence, up to 2001-02 is as follows.

						Estimated	Planned	
1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
£ 4,811	£ 4,890	£ 4,676	£ 4,671	£ 4,422	£ 4,546	£ 4,712	£ 4,944	£ 5,113

These figures include HEFCW grant for the Welsh higher education sector, both recurrent and capital, and public and private tuition fee contributions. The figures exclude HEFCW running costs.

### Substance Misuse Prevention Strategy

**Jocelyn Davies:** Does Tom Middlehurst have any plans to develop a substance misuse prevention strategy for post-16 education and training institutions, in particular further education colleges? (WAQ4896)

**Tom Middlehurst:** The 'Strategic Prevention Action Plan for Drugs and Alcohol' was published by the Welsh Office and Welsh Drug and Alcohol Unit in 1997. One of the aims of the plan is to encourage and support preventive action in a number of settings, including colleges and institutions of further education. A key objective is to encourage and support further education institutions to develop campus policies on substance misuse and the provision of education and harm reduction literature for students. A recent evaluation of the plan suggests that, if this objective is to be achieved, drug and alcohol action teams in Wales need to better engage with institutions.

A refocused substance misuse strategy for Wales will be launched next month. This strategy will build on the work that has been achieved in Wales since the launch of the previous strategy for Wales, 'Forward Together'. 'Forward Together' prioritised prevention work with the young and the new strategy will place the same emphasis on children and young people under 25, whilst recognising the need for work with individuals of all ages. One of its four key aims will be to help children, young people and adults resist substance misuse in order to achieve their full potential in society and to promote sensible drinking in the context of a healthy lifestyle.

## **Questions to the Finance Secretary**

### **Miners' Pension Funds**

**Nick Bourne:** What representation has the Finance Secretary received in relation to the Government receiving £4,000 million in surpluses from the miners' pension funds, and will she bring these representations to the attention of her Westminster colleagues? (WAQ4916)

**The Finance Secretary (Edwina Hart):** I refer to the statement that was made by the then First Secretary, Alun Michael, when the matter was raised during the Assembly debate on miners' compensation payments on 14 September 1999.

Prior to privatisation, the trustees of the two British Coal pension schemes reached agreement with the Government whereby the Government would guarantee the schemes' solvency thus ensuring that future pension entitlements would rise at least in line with inflation. In exchange for this massive commitment to guarantee the miners' pension schemes (over £17 billion) the Government would receive a 50 per cent share of any surpluses from the schemes.

Over the last 40 years successive Governments have needed to inject £3 billion to meet deficiencies in the schemes. The schemes have been profitable in the last five years, but there will be periods when the taxpayer will receive no benefit while continuing to be exposed to contingent liability.

I understand that the trustees of the two schemes remain content with the present arrangements. It is particularly noteworthy that a large proportion of the funds that have accrued to the Government under them has, in fact, been used to help regenerate former mining communities.