

Answers issued to Members on 8 July 2009

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

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

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Questions to the Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport

Irene James (Islwyn): Will the Minister consider expanding the Heads of the Valleys regeneration programme to incorporate more of the Islwyn Constituency in light of the recent job losses? (WAQ54465)

The Deputy Minister for Regeneration (Leighton Andrews): The regeneration agenda within Wales has dramatically shifted toward a more strategic agenda, driven by the needs of the community and the opportunities available.

This 'One Wales' commitment to deliver Initiatives aimed at economic development and regeneration of which Heads of the Valleys and Mon a Menai will be exemplars is progressing successfully with recently announced Strategic Regeneration Area's in Swansea, North Wales Coast and Western Valleys.

I am continually canvassed to extend boundaries of all of these areas and with a finite resource there are difficult decisions to make on how these should be taken forward and to continue to deliver the holistic regeneration agenda across the country. I will continue to listen to representations and we will make decisions based upon the criteria set out within the Strategic Regeneration Programme.

Questions to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister confirm that functions regarding discontinuance of schools under the School Standards and Frameworks Act 1998 are excluded from the appropriate Local Authorities Regulations 2007, and must be exercised by Local Authority Cabinets? (WAQ54505)

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt): The discontinuance of schools normally involves local authorities in the exercise of powers under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Before bringing forward statutory proposals to close schools, local authorities must consult interested parties, allow time for those parties to make their views known and give consideration to any responses, before a decision is taken on whether to publish statutory notices. These are functions to be exercised by the Executive of the Local Authority in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007. This means that in every local authority which has an Executive, the decision to publish a statutory proposal to discontinue a school, should, in most instances, be taken by the Executive and not the full Council.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister make a statement on financial support for community groups to install green technologies in new buildings or existing community facilities? (WAQ54451)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): Grants for the installation of microgeneration technologies are available to charitable organisations, the public sector and community groups through the UK Government's Low Carbon Buildings Programme (LCBP) Phase 2.

This programme provides up to 50% of the cost of installing approved technologies up to a maximum of £200,000 and the UK Government recently announced an extension of the scheme to April 2011 as well as committing an additional £35 million to this phase of the scheme.

Details of all aspects of the LCBP Phase 2 grant application process, suppliers, installers and technologies can be found at the following website—<http://www.lowcarbonbuildingsphase2.org.uk>.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide an update on how the Welsh Assembly Government is ensuring local government plays an active role in helping it to meet its fuel poverty targets? (WAQ54459)

Jane Davidson: Local authorities have an important role to play in addressing fuel poverty.

Under the National Energy Efficiency Savings Plan consultation we proposed:

- Integrating affordable warmth and fuel poverty into statutory Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Plan guidance, rather than asking local authorities to prepare separate affordable warmth action plans.
- Encouraging greater joining up of, and referrals between, local services and advice agencies. This will be closely linked to our own work to create formal links and referrals between national advice agencies.

We are currently using the results of the consultation to finalise our proposals.

There are a number of important UK government initiatives that we are seeking to ensure Wales gets the maximum benefit from.

The proposed Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP) will promote a whole house approach to improve the energy efficiency of homes and reduce fuel poverty. CESP will be delivered through the development of community-based partnerships involving local authorities along with energy suppliers and electricity generators. We are working with the main energy suppliers to ensure that they engage with local authorities to develop CESP funded schemes in Wales.

We also support National Energy Action (NEA) to provide advice to local authorities to meet fuel poverty targets. Their Beating the Cold guide brings together the experiences of the 22 Welsh local authorities and partner organisations to provide a guide to what works best when tackling fuel poverty.

Angela Burns (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire): Will the Minister give an update on how the Welsh Assembly Government is ensuring Local Government plays an active role in helping the government achieve its challenging fuel poverty targets? (WAQ54460)

Jane Davidson: Local authorities have an important role to play in addressing fuel poverty.

Under the National Energy Efficiency Savings Plan consultation we proposed:

- Integrating affordable warmth and fuel poverty into statutory Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Plan guidance, rather than asking local authorities to prepare separate affordable warmth action plans.
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Peter Black (South Wales West): How many local authority and RSL (Registered Social Landlord) owned properties were demolished in 2008/09? (WAQ54486)

The Deputy Minister for Housing (Jocelyn Davies): Information on the number of Local Authority and RSL (Registered Social Landlord) owned properties which were demolished in 2008-09 has been pre-announced for publication on 26th of August 2009, in line with the National Statistics code of practice. The information will then be available on the Statistical Directorate website and I will write to you with the figures at that time. Information for 2007-08 is shown in the following table.

Total number of dwellings demolished in 2007-08 by tenure (a)

	Local Authority	RSL	Private sector	All property types
Wales	28	39	6	73

Source: Annual Demolitions and Hazards returns from local authorities.

(a) Does not include data for Wrexham.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): Will the Minister detail the process and resource needs that have been identified for the process of identifying Marine Conservation Zones in Welsh waters, under the forthcoming Marine and Coastal Access Act? (WAQ54492)

Jane Davidson: I intend to issue a public consultation paper this autumn outlining the Welsh Assembly Government's plans for identifying and designating Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in Welsh waters. The Marine Team within my Department has already been strengthened in readiness for implementing the new legislation. The need for other resources to support implementation, including the MCZ work, is being examined as part of the Assembly Government's forward budget planning process.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): Will the Minister detail the working arrangements between the Welsh Assembly Government and the UK Government and publish any Concordat or Memorandum of Understanding on the delivery of new marine management functions under the Marine and Coastal Access Bill? (WAQ54493)

Jane Davidson: I am committed to working with the UK Government to ensure that arrangements are in place to deliver our objective of joined up marine planning and delivery of effective marine management arrangements under the Bill. Discussions are ongoing at official level on how to build on our existing working practices to support implementation of the Bill's objectives. I envisage that the arrangements will be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding or concordat and which would be published when finalised.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): Will the Minister make a statement on the most recent assessment of necessary resources for the implementation of the forthcoming Marine and Coastal Access Act in Wales, or on any plans to undertake such an assessment? (WAQ54494)

Jane Davidson: The Marine Team within my Department has already been strengthened to support implementation of the new legislation. Assessing the need for further additional resources is an ongoing process as the Bill proceeds through Parliament and is being examined currently in the context of the Assembly Government's forward budget planning process.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): Will the Minister confirm the timescale for issuing guidance and consulting on the development of the marine planning system for Wales? (WAQ54495)

Jane Davidson: The two key elements in developing the marine planning system will be the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) and Marine Plans for specific marine areas. Under the Marine and Coastal Access Bill as currently drafted, both the MPS and Marine Plans will be subject to a 'statement of public participation' setting out the policy for involving interested persons in the preparation of the relevant documents, including a timetable.

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations are committed to working together to adopt a joint MPS within two years of the Bill being enacted. Engagement with stakeholders has started and the intention is to initiate public consultation early next year and in line with the proposed statement of public participation.

Marine Plans will develop from the MPS. The aim is to have an initial plan or plans for Welsh waters by 2013/14. I envisage that this process will be supported by a comprehensive programme of public engagement and consultation, again as set out in the statement of public participation.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): What discussion has the Minister had to ensure the integration of the emerging draft National Policy Statement on 'Renewable Energy' and TAN 8 in terms of planning the location of renewable energy projects onshore? (WAQ54496)

Jane Davidson: We are in regular contact with officials at DECC on the issue of the National Policy Statement on Renewable Energy. We have sought to ensure that DECC is aware of the Welsh Assembly Government policy on Renewable Energy and TAN 8, and that the final version of the National Policy Statement will be compatible with Welsh Assembly Government policy.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): What relationship is there between the emerging draft National Policy Statement on 'Renewable Energy', pursuant to the Planning Bill's new arrangements to address Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), and TAN 8? (WAQ54497)

Jane Davidson: We are working closely with colleagues in DECC who have responsibility for the National Policy Statement on Renewable Energy, to ensure that the policies of the UK government and the Welsh Assembly Government are compatible and mutually supportive. We will continue to liaise with Whitehall to ensure that the policies of the Welsh Assembly Government continue to be reflected in the emerging National Policy Statement.

Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire): When does the Minister intend to bring before the National Assembly for Wales regulations that will lift some of the barriers to microgeneration? (WAQ54499)

Jane Davidson: Subject to the National Assembly's negative resolution procedure, it is intended to introduce amendments to the Town and Country Planning, General Permitted Development Order 1995

by the end of this summer, to assist householders wishing to install certain types of micro-generation equipment. In respect of free standing solar panels, the changes will be broader and thus more flexible than those introduced in England; otherwise the provisions will be similar.

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister make a statement on any plans to make changes to the TAN 6? (WAQ54508)

Jane Davidson: One Wales includes a commitment as part of the review of TAN 6, Agricultural and Rural Development, to extend the scope of the existing agriculture and forestry dwelling category to other rural enterprises. To inform the review of TAN 6 I issued a consultation paper 'Planning Policy Changes to support Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' last summer. The draft TAN will be published in the near future and will provide guidance on the role of the planning system in supporting sustainable rural communities.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Peter Black (South West Wales): How much did the Welsh Assembly Government spend producing the Welsh GP patient survey 2008-09 and how much of this was paid to IPSOS Mori? (WAQ54458)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): The Welsh GP Patient Survey cost £565,029 all of which was paid to the survey administrator Ipsos MORI.

The UK GMS Contract for 2008/9 required an independent national survey to measure achievement of patient experience indicators in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF). The Patient surveys for Wales, England and Northern Ireland were conducted by Ipsos MORI under a single contract that was offered to open tender by Department of Health. Questionnaires were distributed to 322,700 patients and 161,159 responses were received.

William Graham (South Wales East): Is the Minister minded to extend the range of professions to be vaccinated against a future outbreak of viral infection to include funeral directors? (WAQ54463)

Edwina Hart: We are working closely with the other UK health departments to agree a common deployment strategy for the vaccination of the whole population. The rate at which vaccines will be available from the manufacturers means that prioritisation will be needed.

Prioritisation of the clinical risk groups will be based on advice from the independent expert group, the Joint Committee on Vaccination & Immunisation (JCVI).

Consideration of the need for vaccination of essential workers is, however, a matter that I am considering with other UK Health Ministers.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister make a statement on the emergency action plans put in place by the new Local Health Boards? (WAQ54501)

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): Will the Minister confirm that all of the New Local Health Boards have completed, submitted and published their emergency action plans? (WAQ54502)

Edwina Hart: The new Local Health Boards (LHBs) do not come into existence until 1 October. All of the new LHBs are required to have a civil contingencies strategy and supporting plans by the 1st October.

I expect those arrangements to be submitted to my Department but it is a matter for individual LHBs to determine whether they wish to publish those plans.

Andrew R.T. Davies (South Wales Central): How much money was spent on the development of the Specialist and Critical Care Centre in Gwent NHS Trust between January 2008 and January 2009? (WAQ54511)

Edwina Hart: Between January 1st 2008 and January 1st 2009, a total of £2.966m was spent on the development of an appropriately supported, built-up and costed Outline Business Case for this proposed scheme. This expenditure was subject to regular monitoring throughout the year and represents less than 1% of the anticipated total scheme costs.