

Answers issued to Members on 18 December 2007

[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

Joyce Watson (Mid and West Wales): What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to extend the coverage of bus services in Brecon and Radnorshire? (WAQ50803)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones): I am bringing forward proposals in the draft Local Transport Bill to promote more effective working between local authorities and bus operators. In addition, I have announced plans to develop the TrawsCambria Network that provides vital links around mid Wales to key settlements and connects with the train network. I also expect the TRACC Regional Transport Plan to set out regional priorities for improving bus services in mid Wales.

The Assembly Government has provided Powys County Council with around £1.2m in the Local Government Revenue Settlement for 2007-08 to support the provision of local bus services. I have also awarded £752,636 in 2007-08 for Powys under our Local Transport Services Grant scheme to support the provision of socially necessary bus services. However, it is for the Council to decide how to use this funding to meet local priorities.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Has an assessment been made on the impact of small shops and the number of empty shops in relation to the advent of large supermarkets in our towns/communities, if so will he give details of that survey, if not will he consider setting up a survey? (WAQ50818)

Ieuan Wyn Jones: Competition Policy is not a devolved matter and I have made no such assessment. However, the Competition Commission (CC) is currently undertaking a survey into the Groceries Market. The CC is considering whether features of this market or markets prevent, restrict or distort competition.

The provisional findings were published on 31 October 2007 and the final report is required by 8 May 2008.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Is the Welsh Assembly Government using the commercial success of Hay on Wye in Powys as the paradigm rural town in Wales? (WAQ50831)

Ieuan Wyn Jones: The Assembly Government's approach to creating a prosperous and sustainable society is set out in 'One Wales'. Hay on Wye is one of many successful rural towns throughout Wales which has a strong and enterprising economy.

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

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): What measures is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to ensure that educational support is made available for children with dyslexia in Welsh schools? (WAQ50826)

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt): The Welsh Assembly Government is fully committed to ensuring appropriate and consistent support is in place for children and young people with dyslexia in all Welsh schools.

To that end, last year we assisted the British Dyslexia Association Cymru with funding totalling £25,000 for printing and distribution of the 'Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools in Wales' resource pack to support the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Initiative in Wales.

We also have in place an External Reference Group for Specific Learning Difficulties (which includes Dyslexia), consisting of a range of stakeholders from LEAs, schools, the voluntary sector and experts in the field.

In the New Year, the External Reference Group will embark upon a study to scope a review of approaches and guidance to service providers and schools for children and young people with specific learning difficulties. It is expected that following this review, guidance will be issued later in 2008. The guidance document will include best practice in terms of assessment and support for children and young people with dyslexia and other associated specific learning difficulties.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Has the Minister made a representation to her counterpart in Westminster about the Planning White Paper and if so what was it and will a copy be made available? (WAQ50812)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): I have made representations to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government regarding several aspects of the Planning White Paper. A copy of the correspondence will be made available to you.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What measures are in place to deal with flooding in the region of Lampeter, Ceredigion? (WAQ50819)

Jane Davidson: The Environment Agency Wales, Local Authorities and Dŵr Cymru are the principal organisations with operational responsibility for dealing with flooding throughout Wales. These bodies manage the river and land drainage systems, flood defences and sewer infrastructure which serve our communities. There are also well-practiced multi-agency plans involving the emergency services to deal with incidents of flooding when they occur. I understand that there are complex drainage systems serving Lampeter operated by these organisations.

I am aware there was flooding in Lampeter in June of this year, when the town was affected by heavy thunder storms and the sewers and drainage systems were overwhelmed. Some properties were flooded as a result. Since the incident, Dŵr Cymru inform me that the public sewers in the whole town have been desilted and surveyed to ensure that their full capacity is available in such events.

I understand the Environment Agency have plans to review the level of flood risk in Lampeter from the rivers Dulas and Towy during 2009 as part of its medium term programme.

Welsh Assembly Government funds the Agency and provides financial support and grants to local authorities in support of their flood risk management activities.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What measures are in place to deal with flooding in the area of Ciliaeron in Ceredigion? (WAQ50820)

Jane Davidson : The Environment Agency Wales, Local Authorities and Dŵr Cymru are the principal organisations with operational responsibility for dealing with flooding throughout Wales. These bodies manage the river and land drainage systems, flood defences and sewer infrastructure which serve our communities. There are also well-practised multi-agency plans involving the the emergency services to deal with incidents of flooding when they occur.

I understand that there is a range of systems operated by these organisations in place in Ciliau Aeron to address flood risk in the community.

Dŵr Cymru have reported sewer maintenance issues with blockages in the village which it hopes to resolve shortly by root cutting work followed by CCTV surveys. Dŵr Cymru also intends to carry out sewer relining work in the area as part of its planned capital maintenance programme.

Welsh Assembly Government funds the Agency and provides financial support and grants to local authorities in support of their flood risk management activities.

Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on flood protection and alleviation measures in the region of Cwmann in Carmarthenshire? (WAQ50821)

Jane Davidson: The Environment Agency Wales, Local Authorities and Dŵr Cymru are the principal organisations with operational responsibility for dealing with flooding throughout Wales. These bodies manage the river and land drainage systems, flood defences and sewer infrastructure which serve our communities. There are also well-practised multi-agency plans involving the emergency services to deal with incidents of flooding when they occur.

I understand that there are complex drainage systems serving Cwmann operated by these organisations. Dŵr Cymru report that there are known problems with hydraulic overloading of the sewers in Cwmann and there is a history of flooding incidents. Dŵr Cymru contractors are currently carrying out modification works to Cwmann Sewage Pumping Station. These works are 50% complete and once finished will ensure further efficiency in pumping flows from the area. Dŵr Cymru are also carrying out relining works in this area in order to further improve the sewerage network.

I understand the Environment Agency have plans to review the level of flood risk in Cwmann from the rivers Dulas and Towy during 2009 as part of its medium term programme.

Michael German (South East Wales): What progress has the Welsh Assembly Government made on setting and achieving targets for the carbon neutrality of public buildings? (WAQ50824)

Jane Davidson: I have established the Climate Change Commission for Wales and I chaired the first meeting of the Commission on 10 December. The Commission will assist with the development of new policies, including the work on developing the targets set out in the One Wales Document.

Our Sustainable Buildings policy sets out our aspiration that all buildings built in Wales from 2011 should be zero carbon and we will be ensuring that the public sector sets an example for this.

Local authorities in Wales have already signed the Welsh Declaration on Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and actions is underway to reduce emissions.

Michael German (Cardiff Central): Does the Welsh Assembly Government have any plans to change the class divisions for the current A3 planning use? (WAQ50825)

Jane Davidson: The Assembly Government has consulted on changes to Use Class A3, similar to those already taken forward in England—subdividing the class into three classes, for restaurants and cafes; drinking establishments; and hot food uses.

I anticipate that these changes will be taken forward later in 2008.

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Will the Minister provide details of the total budgeted and actual capital expenditure by the Welsh Assembly Government on coastal and inland flood defences for each of the last 5 financial years? (WAQ50829)

Jane Davidson: Welsh Assembly Government flood and coastal defence budgets are used to support improvements works promoted by the Environment Agency and local authorities. For both these organisations the level of funding has increased and funding mechanisms have changed over the last five years.

The information on capital expenditure is provided on a Local Government and Environment Agency basis as follows:

Environment Agency

Budget Spend

2006/07	£11,934,000	£11,934,000
2005/06	£9,934,000	£9,934,000
2004/05	£3,768,000	£3,713,000
2003/04	£2,605,000	£2,004,000
2002/03	£3,286,000	£2,210,000

Local Authorities

2006/07	£5,800,000	£4,996,000
2005/06	£5,800,000	£4,995,000
2004/05	£3,945,000	£3,025,000
2003/04	£3,670,000	£3,004,000
2002/03	£3,808,000	£1,062,512

Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Can the Minister confirm whether tenders submitted by DEFRA for the purchase of bluetongue vaccine include provision of the vaccine for use on Welsh livestock? (WAQ50811)

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones): I refer you to my Written Statement of 13 December 2007.