

Answers issued to Members on 17 April 2008

[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

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister outline what plans the Welsh Assembly Government has to fund the current concessionary fares scheme for Old Aged Pensioners travelling on the Heart of Wales Railway Line after May of this year? (WAQ51597)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones): A full evaluation of 12 month pilot scheme, which commenced on Sunday 20 May 2007, is currently being progressed. Any decision to extend or continue this scheme will not be made until the outcome of the pilot scheme evaluation, which I expect to receive shortly.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): Will the Minister outline how many applicants were unable to secure funding in South East Wales following the termination of the Knowledge Exploitation Fund scheme? (WAQ51610)

The Deputy First Minister: The Knowledge Exploitation Fund continues to operate until September 2008, whereupon its services will continue under the auspices of the 'Academia 4 Business' initiative. Subsequently, there have been no instances of applicants to the Knowledge Exploitation Fund being unsuccessful due to the forthcoming changes.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): Would the Minister outline who was responsible for overseeing the Knowledge Exploitation Fund? (WAQ51611)

The Deputy First Minister: The continued responsibility for the overseeing of the Knowledge Exploitation Fund lies with officials within the Department of the Economy & Transport's Technology & Innovation Team.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): Would the Minister outline what the criteria were for the funding of the Knowledge Exploitation Fund? (WAQ51612)

The Deputy First Minister: Criteria for the funding of the Knowledge Exploitation Fund and future convergence projects are based on several strategic links with wider Welsh Assembly Government policies including 'WAVE' and the Science Policy, economic impact, project viability and value for money.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): Would the Minister outline how the Knowledge Exploitation Fund was funded? (WAQ51615)

The Deputy First Minister: The Knowledge Exploitation Fund has been and continues to be funded by successful European Structural Fund applications and direct Welsh Assembly Government funding under Pathway to Prosperity. The forthcoming convergence project 'Academia 4 Business', replacing KEF in September 2008, will be funded in the same way.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): What assessment has the Welsh Assembly Government made of the impact on the economy of the Knowledge Exploitation Fund? (WAQ51616)

The Deputy First Minister: An independent evaluation of KEF, completed in November 2007 by PACEC concluded that 'The aims of KEF reflect strategic framework and policy for Wales to create a

vibrant economy. KEF makes a contribution to the economy by strengthening the enterprise/innovation culture, assisting in the development of Welsh employment and incomes’.

Nick Ramsay (Monmouth): What representations has the Minister received regarding the Knowledge Exploitation Fund? (WAQ51617)

The Deputy First Minister: I continue to be made aware of the success of the Knowledge Exploitation Fund via DE&T officials. I have been made aware of large KEF funded projects including Port Talbot’s Gas Turbine Research Centre and am monitoring closely the transition of the programme’s services to the ‘Academia 4 Business’ initiative.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Since it was launched, a) how many times have you used the Cardiff to Anglesey air service; and b) how many of the staff within your department have used it? (WAQ51604)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): I have not yet used the service. I have asked the head of the Department of Health and Social Services to provide a separate response in relation to the staff in her department.