

# **Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 17 January 2011**

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

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

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***To ask the Minister for Business and Budget***

**Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central):** Will the Minister confirm how many of the fifty eight motorbike/car loans offered to staff members as part of their relocation to Merthyr Tydfil have been written off, giving the value of any such write-offs. (WAQ56921)

***Answer issued on 19 January 2011***

None of the fifty eight motorbike/car loans offered to staff members as part of their relocation to Merthyr Tydfil have been written off.

***To ask the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning***

**Paul Davies (Preseli Pembrokeshire):** Will the Minister outline whether the recent grant issued to Bangor University included funding to develop a new Welsh dyslexia screening test. (WAQ56906)

***Answer issued on 19 January 2011***

My Department has commissioned Bangor University to produce Welsh-medium testing tools for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The three year programme, from 2009, covers the development of Welsh assessment tools for the 11-15 and 2 to 7 age ranges; the profiling of children with different conditions, such as language disorders, within those tests; and the structuring of any adaptations to material that may be required in the future. These initial language tools will not be dyslexia-specific, but are intended to pick up a variety of speech and language difficulties, including dyslexia. They will therefore be able to help identify children and young people with the condition.

**Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire):** For each budget expenditure line that finds capital development for schools, either directly or through local authorities, please state how much was spent in the previous three financial years and how much is budgeted to be spent in the next three financial years. (WAQ56920)

***Answer issued on 19 January 2011***

£762.4m capital funding will have been provided during the lifetime of this Assembly. This figure is comprised of £681.134m (to include General Capital Funding, School Buildings Improvement Grant, VA school grant, and Early Years capital grant), £34.093m for 2 PFI projects and SCIF funding of £81.3m. Indicative DCELLS capital budgets for the financial years 2011-12 to 2013-14 total £478.3m. Whilst there is a reduction in overall grant, the Welsh Assembly Government remains committed to delivering on all current approved transitional capital projects and will work closely with both local authorities and the WLGA to ensure maximum effective use is made of available capital funds.

***To ask the Minister for the Economy and Transport***

**Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central):** With reference to the Minister's answer to WAQ56837, will the Minister please provide a breakdown of the costs associated to the Aerospace Park development in St Athan, giving totals for professional fees, land acquisition fees and general development costs. (WAQ56910)

*Answer issued on 05 April 2011*

The information you requested is set out in the attached table.

Overall expenditure on the St Athan estate includes costs associated with the Aerospace Business Park (ABP), general site development costs and costs in support of the defence technical training project. The attached table is a detailed breakdown of all these costs, including those for the ABP, as requested.

**St Athan Programme Expenditure Breakdown to date (2003-31/10/2010)**

	<b>Defence Training Project</b>	<b>Aerospace Business Park</b>	<b>Whole Site</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Acquisition of land and assets</b> ( <i>inc legal fees &amp; agents</i> )		£1,324,183.19 ( <i>See Note 1 below</i> )	£17,248,399.18 ( <i>See Note 2 below</i> )	<b>£18,573,000</b>
<b>Airfield Operations/Site Management/Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>		£13,329,320.46 ( <i>See Note 3 below</i> )	£3,531,007.24	<b>£16,860,000</b>
<b>Site Development</b>	£217,704.99	£1,234,090.01	£2,158,829.79	<b>£3,611,000</b>
<b>Professional fees</b> ( <i>See Note 4 below</i> )	£2,485,504.64	£3,322,423.81	£1,838,464.51	<b>£7,619,000</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£2,676,210</b>	<b>£19,210,017</b>	<b>£24,776,701</b>	<b>£46,663,000</b>

**Notes:**

1. This element comprises of the acquisition of the airfield assets.
2. Includes acquisition of RAF St Athan from MoD (£8.3m) and land assembly in delivery of DTC and ABP (£9.2m) inclusive of fees and legal costs.
3. Includes Airfield running and maintenance costs of £7.08m and £5.3m for reconstruction of runway.
4. This comprises professional fees for the master planning and planning advice for the ABP, utility strategy, airfield related studies, CPO and legal cost, environmental survey, etc.

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** What action is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to ensure that the proper infrastructure exists in Mid Wales to facilitate the employment opportunities from wind energy development. (WAQ56911)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

We have been working with DECC, National Grid and distributors to discuss the specific requirements of grid infrastructure strengthening including employment opportunities.

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to ensure that companies who want to invest in renewable energy in Mid Wales are attracted to the area rather than take their business to other parts of the UK. (WAQ56912)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

I have put into place a more focused approach to the long term economic development of Wales, targeting six key sectors, including Energy and Environment. I am in the process of appointing a specialist panel of industry experts to advise on the best ways of achieving competitive advantage and securing investment across Wales in this high growth sector.

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** In light of the decision by Siemens to close its factory in Newtown, what discussions has the Minister had with the company. (WAQ56914)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

Officials are keeping in close contact with the company. A 90 day consultation period is now underway and the full range of assistance available to redundant staff will be discussed e.g. ReAct programme, Job Centre Plus once the result of the consultation is known.

**Veronica German (South Wales East):** When was the study of the economic impact of the Severn Tolls put out to tender. (WAQ56916)

**Veronica German (South Wales East):** What are the terms of reference for the economic impact study on the Severn Tolls that the Minister is commissioning. (WAQ56917)

**Veronica German (South Wales East):** Has the contract for the study on the economic impact of the Severn Tolls been awarded, and if so, when did this happen and who was successful. (WAQ56918)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

The contract has not yet been awarded. The project was advertised on 8 December 2010 on buy4wales to invite expressions of interest (EOI). The closing date for EOIs was 7 January. The project steering group is currently appraising the EOIs and invitations to tender will shortly be issued. It is intended to award the contract in March.

The terms of reference are represented by the project specification, which is as follows:

The Severn Crossings provide an important link in Wales' transport infrastructure. The responsibility for the Severn Crossings and the levying of tolls lie with the UK Government with the tolling regime for the Severn Crossings set out in the Severn Bridges Act 1992. The concession agreement for the Severn Crossings will end when the defined sum of just under £996 million (in 1989 prices) has been collected, subject to a maximum 30 year period. Current expectation is that this funding requirement will be met in 2017, at which point the operation of the Severn Crossings will be handed over to the UK Government. Given the strategic transport role of the M4 corridor, and the Severn Crossings, for south Wales, the potential impact of the Severn Crossings tolls on the Welsh economy has attracted much attention. To date, there exists very limited economic evidence upon which to fully understand the effects and distributional consequences of the Severn Crossings, the current tolling regime and of any economic and transport impacts that might result through either potential changes to the tolls or following the conclusion of the concession agreement.

This research study aims to conduct a detailed and rigorous economic assessment of the impact of the Severn Crossing tolls on the Welsh economy, examining the nature and magnitudes of the effects. The geographical focus of the study should be on the economic effects relating to Wales, particularly South Wales, though drawing suitable comparisons with the economic effects and development patterns of the greater Bristol area and relevant surrounding areas of Southern England.

The study requires that the full range of potential economic and transport effects arising from the Severn Crossings tolls on the Welsh economy be examined. A detailed baseline assessment of the economic

impact of the current tolling regime on the Severn Crossings, and an investigation of the potential economic, transport, and financial impacts of any changes to the tolling regime is required.

Use of relevant existing economic evidence and statistical information will need to be considered and, where appropriate, new data collected in order to generate the required empirical evidence. Other on-going and completed research on the Severn Crossings tolls will need to be considered.

***To ask the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing***

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** Does the Minister still believe that the Welsh Assembly Government can deliver on its renewable energy targets in Mid Wales. (WAQ56908)

***Answer issued on 19 January 2011***

There are no specific renewable energy targets in Mid Wales. Wales has doubled its renewable energy operating capacity since 2007 and currently produces approximately 3 Terra-watt hours of electricity from renewable sources. We have a further 5 Terra-watt hours either consented, under construction or in the planning system. If all of this became operational the original target would be exceeded more than twice over, and we would significantly exceed our share of the UK's 2020 renewables target.

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** Is the Minister satisfied that Welsh Assembly Government is doing all it can to support Councils to deliver on its TAN 8 policy. (WAQ56909)

***Answer issued on 19 January 2011***

I am satisfied that the Welsh Assembly Government has put in place an extensive support mechanism for local Councils to deliver renewable energy projects as set out in national planning policy (Planning Policy Wales) and guidance (Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy).

Over the past 18 months we have made changes to legislation, published practice guidance and leaflets, delivered training and provided support to local councils to facilitating the uptake of renewable energy at all scales. This includes:

Guidance

- A Renewable Energy Toolkit for Planners - to assist local planning authorities with assessing and identifying the opportunities for renewable energy in their area, including a case study of Pembrokeshire.
- Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development – a practice guide for planners to assist them in taking decisions on applications for a range of renewable and low carbon energy technologies.

Resources

- At the larger scale we have provided additional resources for local planning authorities who have had to respond to strategic renewable energy applications made under the Electricity Act/Planning Act 2008 for which they receive no planning fee income.
- We have introduced a pilot scheme to secure technical expertise for those local planning authorities determining applications involving innovative technologies with which officers may be less familiar. A number of councils have benefited from this scheme, including Carmarthenshire County Council who sought technical expertise to deal with a planning application for a large scale solar energy plant.

Removing the barriers

- In 2009 we made legislative changes to allow householders to install some types of microgeneration equipment (such as solar panels) on their property without making a planning application. This assists in facilitating the take up of microgeneration technologies and reduces the burden on local planning authorities.

- In 2010 we consulted further on extending permitted development rights for microgeneration technologies on domestic properties and introducing them for non-domestic properties. The consultation responses are currently being analysed and possible solutions to the issues raised are being investigated in conjunction with the other devolved administrations.

#### Training

- Following the publication of our Renewable Energy Toolkit for Planners we rolled out two one-day dissemination events in north and south Wales last autumn in which all local authorities were represented. This helps to up skill local authority officers in dealing with renewable energy.

#### Public

- Following the introduction of the feed-in tariff we published a suite of 10 leaflets covering a range of small scale renewable energy technologies to assist householders, communities and businesses who want to generate their own renewable energy. The leaflets providing information on what issues should be considered when installing these technologies, including ways to minimise any impacts. This complements our 'Improving Your Home – A Climate Change Guide' from 2008.

Further work will be carried out to consider the implementation of the EU Renewable Energy Directive as it falls on planning.

**Mark Isherwood (North Wales):** What are the Welsh Assembly Government's policies in relation to polystyrene waste being extracted from County Council general/residual waste bins by specialist companies which then results in the waste going to China for re-processing, rather than landfill sites. (WAQ56913)

#### *Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

The Assembly Government supports the source separation of as many materials as possible from waste produced by households and businesses. This includes the separation of polystyrene products such as yoghurt pots. A grant of £1mn has been provided in order that a facility based in Wales can sort mixed pots, tubs and trays, including separating the polystyrene component.

The Assembly Government prefers that recyclables are separated, sorted and collected before they enter the residual waste stream. One advantage of this approach is that clean polystyrene can be recycled in Wales and the UK rather than being exported to China. This means that materials discarded by householders are re-processed locally, supporting green jobs and retaining the value of the materials in the Welsh and UK economies.

**Mick Bates (Montgomeryshire):** What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to ensure that the planning system can support its priorities on renewable energy. (WAQ56915)

#### *Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

I am satisfied that the Welsh Assembly Government has put in place an extensive support mechanism for local Councils to deliver renewable energy projects as set out in national planning policy (Planning Policy Wales) and guidance (Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy).

Over the past 18 months we have made changes to legislation, published practice guidance and leaflets, delivered training and provided support to local councils to facilitating the uptake of renewable energy at all scales. This includes:

#### Guidance

- A Renewable Energy Toolkit for Planners - to assist local planning authorities with assessing and identifying the opportunities for renewable energy in their area, including a case study of Pembrokeshire.
- Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development – a practice guide for planners to assist them in taking decisions on applications for a range of renewable and low carbon energy technologies.

#### Resources

- At the larger scale we have provided additional resources for local planning authorities who have had to respond to strategic renewable energy applications made under the Electricity Act/Planning Act 2008 for which they receive no planning fee income.

- We have introduced a pilot scheme to secure technical expertise for those local planning authorities determining applications involving innovative technologies with which officers may be less familiar. A number of councils have benefited from this scheme, including Carmarthenshire County Council who sought technical expertise to deal with a planning application for a large scale solar energy plant.

Removing the barriers

- In 2009 we made legislative changes to allow householders to install some types of microgeneration equipment (such as solar panels) on their property without making a planning application. This assists in facilitating the take up of microgeneration technologies and reduces the burden on local planning authorities.

- In 2010 we consulted further on extending permitted development rights for microgeneration technologies on domestic properties and introducing them for non-domestic properties. The consultation responses are currently being analysed and possible solutions to the issues raised are being investigated in conjunction with the other devolved administrations.

Training

- Following the publication of our Renewable Energy Toolkit for Planners we rolled out two one-day dissemination events in north and south Wales last autumn in which all local authorities were represented. This helps to up skill local authority officers in dealing with renewable energy.

Public

- Following the introduction of the feed-in tariff we published a suite of 10 leaflets covering a range of small scale renewable energy technologies to assist householders, communities and businesses who want to generate their own renewable energy. The leaflets providing information on what issues should be considered when installing these technologies, including ways to minimise any impacts. This complements our 'Improving Your Home – A Climate Change Guide' from 2008.

Further work will be carried out to consider the implementation of the EU Renewable Energy Directive as it falls on planning.

**Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire):** How much, in total and percentage terms, does the Minister expect to save from the project involving closer working between Environment Agency Wales, Countryside Council of Wales and the Forestry Commission for Wales. (WAQ56922)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

We are considering options for future environmental delivery in order to deliver the eco-systems approach set out in 'A Living Wales'. Early indications suggest there could be significant long term efficiency savings which would be used to sustain current levels of service against planned budget reductions, and release money for front line investment. Exact savings will be refined in developing the proposals.

**Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central):** Will the Minister make a statement on what advice/guidance her department has issued to planning authorities regarding the determination of planning applications with specific reference to renewable solar energy projects on farmland. (WAQ56923)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

The Assembly Government's national planning policy on Planning for Renewable Energy is contained in Section 12.8 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 3, July 2010). The policy states that renewable energy projects should generally be supported by local planning authorities (LPAs) provided environmental impacts are avoided or minimised, and nationally and internationally designated areas are

not compromised. This is supported by advice in Technical Advice Note (TAN) 8: Planning for Renewable Energy.

In July 2010 the Assembly Government published Practice Guidance: Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development (2010) which provides guidance on what issues local planning authorities may consider when determining applicants for various renewable energy technologies in Wales. We have commissioned work to update this document to include specific guidance on planning applications for solar energy plants. The updated guidance will be republished in February 2010 and we will inform all Local Planning Authorities of this update once completed.

In addition, as part of the support framework for local planning authorities who are considering major renewable energy applications made under the Electricity Act/Planning Act, additional resources have been provided to Carmarthenshire County Council in dealing with a planning application for a large solar plant.

*To ask the Minister for Health and Social Services*

**Eleanor Burnham (North Wales):** What discussions has the Minister had with her officials and practitioners regarding the content of Mind Cymru's "Welsh Youth Consultation on Suicide and Help-Seeking Behaviours" in November 2010. (WAQ56907)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

There is no record of my having received this report as a Minister.

**Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire):** Will the Minister make a statement on the issuing of new uniforms to NHS nurses across Wales and the cost associated. (WAQ56919)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

Implementing an all-Wales uniform for nurses will cost a total of £ 1.4 million. A total of 54,468 nurses and midwives uniforms have been distributed to date and the total uniform roll-out across Wales is on target to be completed by the end of February 2011.

**Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central):** Will the Minister confirm whether there is a staff survey operating within the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust and, if so, when the next one is due to be published. (WAQ56924)

*Answer issued on 19 January 2011*

The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust is currently participating in the 2010/11 Staff Survey.