

Written Questions answered between 18 and 25 March 2004

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

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

Contents

2	Questions to the First Minister
4	Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport
11	Questions to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport
15	Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning
20	Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside
22	Questions to the Finance Minister
25	Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services
26	Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Questions to the First Minister

Freedom of Information (Publication of Correspondence)

Nick Bourne: Will the First Minister make a statement on freedom of information and his policy on publishing correspondence which is not of a commercially sensitive nature? (WAQ32978)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): The National Assembly's Code of Practice on Public Access to Information 2001 sets out the principles that underpin our approach to the promotion of open Government. The code takes into account the key features of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in advance of it coming fully into force in January 2005. We do not, as a matter of course, routinely publish correspondence, but any individual is able to make a request for access to a specific piece of, or an exchange of, correspondence.

The code sets out how requests for 'recorded' information held by the Assembly are to be dealt with. Correspondence is counted as 'recorded' information and, where requested, the specific information within the correspondence would need to be considered in light of the principles and exemptions of the code.

The code covers more than commercially sensitive information, for example personal privacy and confidentiality must be considered. An assessment is required to establish whether any other exemptions apply and whether, applying the tests in the code, the information should be disclosed. This process is carefully designed to ensure that the rights of all parties concerned are properly balanced. Where information is released to an applicant under the code, generally it is made available for others to access, should they wish to do so.

The Number of Civil Servants Working for the Welsh Assembly Government

Nick Bourne: Will the First Minister outline the number of civil servants working for the Welsh Assembly Government each year since he took office in 2000? (WAQ33167)

The First Minister: The Assembly average yearly staffing figures are:

1999-2000	2,577
2000-01	2,847
2001-02	3,213
2002-03	3,524
first six months of 2003-04	3,545

By far the most significant reasons for the increase have been the incorporation into the Assembly of functions previously carried out by external bodies and the delivery of new or expanded functions.

These figures:

- exclude the Presiding Office,
- include new functions which have been transferred into the Welsh Assembly Government from outside bodies such as the Welsh European Funding Office in April 2000, the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency in April 2001, the Care Standards Inspectorate in April 2002 and the Rent Officer Service in June 2003, and
- are expressed as full-time equivalents.

Costs and Destinations of Overseas Trips

Nick Bourne: Will the First Minister give details of the costs and destinations of overseas trips by Welsh Assembly Government Ministers, Deputy Ministers and officials since he took office? (WAQ33169)

The First Minister: Details of overseas visits are maintained centrally for the period from April 2000. Details of those visits for the period January to December 2001 were given in my composite answer to WAQ16002 to WAQ16010 on 26 February 2002. Those for the period January 2002 to September 2003 were given in my composite replies to WAQ29062 and WAQ29081 on 22 October 2003.

Set out below are details of those visits undertaken in the periods April to December 2000, and October 2003 to March 2004. As previously explained, early financial procedures did not facilitate the accurate separation of ministerial overseas travel and subsistence costs, hence the non-availability of cost figures for the period April to December 2000. The lists do not include visits to Brussels on official business.

April 2000 to December 2000

Minister	Visited	Date	Reason
Andrew Davies	Spain	3-4 Sept 2000	President of the TeleRegions network Casteillia La Mancha seminar
	Lyon, France	17 Dec 2000	TeleRegions conference
	Paris	9 March 2001	TeleRegions annual general meeting
Rhodri Morgan	Lyon, France	14 to 17 May 2000	Trade mission and launch of Wales week
	New South Wales, Australia	2 to 9 June 2000	Linked to trade missions
	Tokyo and Osaka, Japan	2 to 8 Sept 2000	Linked to trade missions
	Barcelona	23 to 24 Nov 2000	Congress of local and regional authorities Europe conference
Carwyn Jones	Paris	24 to 25 Oct 2000	SIAL food fair

October 2003 to March 2004

Cabinet	Visited	Date	Total Cost	Reason
Rhodri Morgan	Rome	16 to 17 Oct 2003	£1,600 (excluding hotel costs met by hosts)	EU ministerial meeting
	Australia	24 Oct to 5 Nov 2003	£13,885.50	Showcase Wales
	Brittany	15 to 16 Jan 2004	£2,250 (excluding hotel costs met by hosts)	Signature of memorandum of understanding
	South Africa	22 to 27 January 2004	£9,288.90	WalesTrade International mission and one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of battles of Isandlwana and Rourkes Drift
	Paris	1 to 2 Mar 2004	£1,181.85	St David's Day celebrations
Jane Hutt	Venice	14 to 15 Dec 2003	£2,291.81	Ministerial meeting for World Health Organisation regions for health network
	Sweden	29 to 30 Jan 2004	£1,305.65	Cross-party fact-finding trip on Swedish legislation on outlawing physical punishment of children
Carwyn Jones	Milan	4 to 5 Dec 2003	£1,859.48	Meeting of international network of regional governments for sustainable development
	Barcelona	7 to 8 Mar 2004	£851.58	Alimentaria food fair
	Republic of Ireland	15 Mar 2004	£766.99	Fact-finding trip on control programmes and associated measures to control bovine TB
Andrew Davies	Belgium	1 to 9 Nov 2003	£842.49	'Classic' design event

	Navarre	15 to 17 Feb 2004	£1,089.24	Discussion and viewing Navarre's renewable energy developments
	New York	25 Feb to 2 Mar 2004	£12,868	Opening of Wales international centre and St David's Day celebrations
Alun Pugh	Paris	1 to 2 Mar 2004	£217.30	St David's Day celebrations

Visits to the South Wales Central Electoral Region

Leanne Wood: Would the First Minister supply a breakdown by constituency for each Minister of figures given in answer to WAQ32564? (WAQ33215)

The First Minister: The figures are shown in the following table:

Minister	Rhondda	Cynon Valley	Pontypridd	Vale of Glamorgan	Cardiff West	Cardiff North	Cardiff Central	Cardiff South and Penarth
Rhodri Morgan	0	2	4	2	13	3	40	21
Sue Essex	1	0	0	1	0	1	4	6
Edwina Hart	4	0	0	6	5	2	22	4
Jane Hutt	1	0	8	13	11	14	36	22
Andrew Davies	4	1	2	8	1	1	28	5
Jane Davidson	7	0	16	1	5	6	49	17
Carwyn Jones	0	0	0	4	0	0	8	4
Alun Pugh	6	0	1	9	1	4	29	9

The Consequences of EU Enlargement

Nick Bourne: Is the Welsh Assembly Government conducting any exploration of the consequences of the EU enlargement for Wales? (WAQ33237)

The First Minister: The Welsh Assembly Government has always recognised that EU enlargement is likely to have implications for Wales across a range of interests, and has responded positively to the challenges and opportunities that an enlarged EU will bring. This includes the signing of the memorandum of understanding with Silesia, arrangements agreed between WalesTrade International and CzechTrade and continuing negotiations regarding a possible memorandum of understanding with Latvia.

Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

Car Parking at the Museum at St Fagans

Nick Bourne: What is the effect of the decision to charge for car parking at St Fagans museum upon the policy of free entrance for museums? (WAQ32966)

The Minister for Culture, the Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): None.

Charging for Car Parking at National Museums

Nick Bourne: Are there any proposals for charging for car parking at other national museums? (WAQ32967)

Alun Pugh: The National Museum and Galleries of Wales in Cathays Park, Cardiff, has charged for car parking since 1993. It has no current plans to introduce car parking charges at its other sites. However, the situation regarding the car park at the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea, which is due to open next year, is currently under review. I have no objections, in principle, to charging for car parking.

Visitors Travelling to the Museum at St Fagans by Public Transport

Nick Bourne: What assessment is being made of the number of visitors coming to St Fagans museum by public transport, and what percentage is this of the whole of the visitors to the museum? (WAQ32968)

Alun Pugh: The National Museums and Galleries of Wales has carried out research into the number of visitors to the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans over the past few years who have used public transport. Significant numbers of visitors use public transport. Around 40,000 visitors used public transport in 2003 and up to 75,000 in 2002.

The National Museums and Galleries of Wales is committed to sustainable development and is currently in discussion with Cardiff Bus and other transport operators with a view to enhancing public transport provision to the site.

Art Treasures on Display in Wales

Nick Bourne: How many art treasures held in Wales are on public display, and how many are not on display? (WAQ32971)

Alun Pugh: As of December 2003, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales held 45,423 works of art. Of those, 3,597 were on display at NMGW or elsewhere, and 41,826 were in store. Up to 32,283 of the latter are watercolours, prints or drawings, and are not suitable for long-term display.

Non-national museums and galleries change displays to encourage repeat visits. This ensures that sections of collections can be seen in the form of a rolling programme of public displays and the percentage of items on display at any one time will vary.

The National Library of Wales's collection of over 60,000 topographic paintings and prints, 15,000 portrait paintings and drawings and 835,000 photographic images can normally be seen free of charge by members of the public holding a reader's ticket. Several thousand images, including 2,000 images of framed works of art, can be seen from a PC in digital form on the library's website.

Free Admission to Museums in Wales

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning the policy of free admission to museums in Wales? (WAQ33001)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Assembly Government has provided additional funding to enable the National Museums and Galleries of Wales to offer free admission to all visitors at all of its sites in Wales since 1 April 2001.

The policy has been a resounding success, with visitor figures rising by 87 per cent in the first year. This momentum has been maintained with the figures for the second year showing an increase of 67 per cent over the same period in 2000-01, the last year of charging. Figures for April to October this year show a

rise of 58 per cent over the same period in 2000-01. Since 1 April 2003, there have been over 1.2 million visits to national museum sites in Wales.

Events Strategy for Wales (Amount Paid to Consultants)

Jenny Randerson: How much was paid to consultants engaged to develop an events strategy for Wales? (WAQ33006)

Alun Pugh: The total cost of engaging consultants to produce a report to inform the development of a national events strategy was £98,003.

Middleton—the National Botanic Garden of Wales (Effect of Closure on Jobs)

Nick Bourne: What assessment has been made on the effect on jobs in Carmarthenshire of the closure of the national botanic garden of Wales? (WAQ33154)

Alun Pugh: I understand that 55 jobs were lost during recent redundancies at the garden. There are 22 people still employed at the garden. Over the year to January 2004, the overall unemployment claimant count in Carmarthenshire fell by 350. Claimants accounted for 2.4 per cent of the working age population in January 2004, which is lower than the Welsh national average of 2.6 per cent. When the Conservatives were voted out of office in May 1997, 4.6 per cent of those of working age in Carmarthenshire were claiming Jobseekers Allowance.

The Future of the National Botanic Garden (Carmarthenshire County Council)

Nick Bourne: What consultations has the Minister had with Carmarthenshire County Council with regard to the future of the national botanic garden of Wales? (WAQ33155)

Alun Pugh: I and my officials are in regular contact with members and officers of Carmarthenshire County Council. My last personal contact was by telephone on 12 March.

The Future of the National Botanic Garden (Millennium Commission)

Nick Bourne: What discussions has the Minister had with the Millennium Commission with regard to the future of the national botanic garden of Wales? (WAQ33156)

Alun Pugh: My officials and I are in regular contact with the Millennium Commission. My last personal contact with the commission was on 10 March.

The Future of the National Botanic Garden

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister had any round table meetings with Carmarthenshire County Council, the Millennium Commission, the trustees, and outside interests, with regard to the future of the national botanic garden of Wales? (WAQ33157)

Alun Pugh: We remain in regular contact with the National Botanic Garden of Wales and all stakeholders with an interest in helping to secure a future for the garden. My officials met the general manager of the garden on 5 March. They also met the Millennium Commission and Carmarthenshire County Council on 9 March.

The Future of the National Botanic Garden

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister had any discussions with either the management of Kew gardens or the management of the national botanic gardens of Scotland with regard to the future of the national botanic garden of Wales? (WAQ33158)

Alun Pugh: Unlike Middleton—the National Botanic Garden of Wales, which is independent of Government, the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh are non-departmental public bodies, neither of which are able to provide any financial assistance, which is ultimately the priority for the garden.

Brecon Museum (Financial Assistance)

Nick Bourne: What financial assistance does the Government for Wales, or any Assembly sponsored public body, give to Brecon museum? (WAQ33159)

Alun Pugh: As a registered non-national museum, the Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery in Brecon accesses Welsh Assembly Government funding through the Council for Museums in Wales, an Assembly-funded body. Brecknock museum is one of the three pilot venues for the ‘Cyfoeth Cymru Gyfan— Sharing Treasures’ scheme. It has received funding of £35,750 in 2003-04 for infrastructure improvements, which will bring environmental and security facilities at Brecknock museum up to the standards required to accept loans from the national collection.

The Promotion of the Radnorshire Museum

Nick Bourne: Does the Welsh Assembly Government, or any ASPB for which the Minister is responsible, provide any financial assistance with regard to the promotion of the Radnorshire museum? (WAQ33161)

Alun Pugh: As a registered non-national museum, the Radnorshire Museum accesses Welsh Assembly Government funding through the Council for Museums in Wales, an Assembly-funded body. I understand that, as the Radnorshire museum has not had a full-time curator for some years, it has not made any recent substantial bids for funding from the council. However, it was provided with £400 in 2000-01 for research into a travelling exhibition, £623 in 2002-03 for an information and communications technology fund and £2,492 in 2003-04 for conservation and display purposes. The Council of Museums in Wales does offer grants towards the costs of marketing projects, but Radnorshire museum has not bid for this funding in recent years.

The Auto Palace in Llandrindod Wells

Nick Bourne: What is the Welsh Assembly Government’s position with regard to the preservation of the Auto Palace in Llandrindod Wells? (WAQ33162)

Alun Pugh: The building is grade II* listed and any alterations that affect its special character will require listed building consent from the local authority. The Assembly has provided a grant for repairs to conserve the historic fabric and the conditions of grant are continuing to be monitored.

The Promotion of Blaenavon as a Book Town

Nick Bourne: Is any financial assistance provided by the Welsh Assembly Government towards the promotion of Blaenavon as a book town? (WAQ33164)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Books Council, which receives funding from the Welsh Assembly Government, has made contact with the bookshops in Blaenavon and informed them of what books council services are

available to them. I am not aware of any direct financial assistance from the Welsh Assembly Government towards promoting Blaenavon as a book town.

Childhood Obesity

Laura Anne Jones: Would the Minister make a statement on the link between a lack of physical activity and rising childhood obesity? (WAQ33190)

Alun Pugh: I am aware that the new Welsh health survey is likely to reveal a similar trend in childhood obesity levels in Wales to those identified in England. My colleague, the Minister for Health and Social Services, is better placed to provide you with details of the relevant medical evidence base that links obesity to a lack of physical activity.

I am aware of the health benefits that a physically active lifestyle and a healthy balanced diet produce in terms of general wellbeing and in terms of the prevention of a range of illnesses. In particular, I am acutely aware that physical activity and diet are recognised as key factors in the prevention of obesity. A balanced combination of energy intake in the form of good nutrition, and energy output in terms of physical activity, form the medically recommended basis for healthy and active lifestyles.

Taking action to prevent and reduce obesity and related illnesses by promoting and encouraging good nutrition and a more physically active lifestyle is high on this Government's agenda. 'Health Challenge Wales' provides a national focus and profile for better health. It is a key aim of 'Food and Well Being in Wales', the national nutrition strategy for Wales, to develop initiatives to prevent and manage overweight and obesity. Action to increase physical activity among the population and maximise the benefit that sport, physical activity and active recreation can deliver in creating a healthier nation will be an overarching aim of the strategic policy document and action plan that will flow from the Government's 'Climbing Higher' strategy this summer.

Cardiff's Fiftieth Anniversary as the Capital

Nick Bourne: Would the Minister make a statement on plans to celebrate Cardiff's fiftieth anniversary as the capital in 2005? (WAQ33191)

Alun Pugh: The Assembly has offered to support a significant event as part of the celebrations for Cardiff's fiftieth anniversary as the capital of Wales, which is a matter for Cardiff County Council. We await a proposal from the council for such an event.

The Museum of Welsh Life at St Fagans

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning his last meeting with managers of the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans? (WAQ33193)

Alun Pugh: I meet the president of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales formally twice a year and additional meetings are held more often if necessary. These meetings cover issues that affect all of national museum sites.

The last biannual meeting was in December last year, and an additional meeting took place in February this year.

The Millennium Stadium (Major European Cup Final)

Owen John Thomas: What further discussions has the Minister had with the relevant parties to bring a major European cup final to the Millennium Stadium? (WAQ33197)

Alun Pugh: I have had discussions with the Football Association of Wales on a number of issues, including the possibility of bringing major international football events to Cardiff, after the FA Cup final moves back to Wembley Stadium. The FAW will now need to speak with the Millennium Stadium about this, and I will await the outcome of those discussions.

Women's Football in Wales

Peter Black: Would the Minister make a statement on women's football in Wales? (WAQ33198)

Alun Pugh: I am pleased to say that women's and girls' football is one of our fastest growing sports in Wales. The Sports Council for Wales continues to work closely with the FAW trust to develop more opportunities for women and girls in order to increase participation and improve skill levels. This work is being carried out as a result of the recommendations contained in the report prepared by the football forum, which were supported by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Following on from the football forum's report, the FAW trust is working to a set of strategic targets. Its most recent report notes that there are nearly 2,000 registered girls playing football in Wales. Around 130 new girls' football teams and six new football leagues have been established and over 50 additional festival structures have been set up. These activities are geared towards forming more formal league structures through the support of the FAW area associations.

The Welsh Language Version of the Bible (Printing Overseas)

Nick Bourne: Could the Minister explain the decision of the Welsh Books Council to print the Welsh language version of the bible in South Korea rather than Wales? (WAQ33210)

Alun Pugh: The Welsh Books Council did not decide to print the bible in South Korea. The Swindon based Bible Society made that decision. Market solutions, as promoted by the Conservatives, do not always produce desirable results.

The Urban Cultural Programme

Jenny Randerson: Does the urban cultural programme, announced by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on 3 March 2004, cover Wales? (WAQ33211)

Alun Pugh: Yes.

The Urban Cultural Programme (Discussions with the UK Minister)

Jenny Randerson: What discussions has the Minister had with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport regarding the setting up of the urban cultural programme? (WAQ33212)

Alun Pugh: I have not had direct discussions with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport regarding the setting up of this programme. I welcome this Millennium Commission initiative, which will build on the Cultural Capital of Europe competition.

The Urban Cultural Programme (The Arts Council of Wales)

Jenny Randerson: Has the Arts Council of Wales contributed any money towards the urban cultural programme? (WAQ33213)

Alun Pugh: No.

The Urban Cultural Programme (Funding for Cities in Wales)

Jenny Randerson: How many cities in Wales are eligible to bid for funding from the urban cultural programme? (WAQ33214)

Alun Pugh: Applications for Millennium Commission funding must come from a consortium that must include a local authority. That authority must have a population of at least 120,000 of which 60,000 must be in a town or city within the area. In Wales, Cardiff, Swansea and Newport are eligible. The minimum grant will be £500,000 and not more than 50 per cent of the costs of a programme will be funded. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have secured the remaining funding from other partners.

The Ceredigion Museum

Nick Bourne: What help does the Ceredigion Museum receive from the Welsh Assembly Government or any ASPB? (WAQ33241)

Alun Pugh: As a registered non-national museum, the Ceredigion Museum accesses Welsh Assembly Government funding through the Council of Museums in Wales, an Assembly-funded body.

The Council of Museums in Wales provided Ceredigion Museum with grants totalling £3,669 in 2000-01, £1,290 in 2001-02, £17,230 in 2002-03 and £2,901 in 2003-04. The grants covered items such as educational and audience development activities, cataloguing photographic collections, ICT funding and the storage of costume collections.

The Art Centre in Aberystwyth

Nick Bourne: Does the art centre in Aberystwyth receive any assistance from the Welsh Assembly Government or any ASPB? (WAQ33242)

Alun Pugh: Yes. In 2003-04 the Arts Council of Wales awarded Aberystwyth arts centre a revenue grant of £387,366.

Measures to Encourage Walking in Wales

Nick Bourne: What measures are in place to encourage walking in Wales? (WAQ33243)

Alun Pugh: My colleague, Andrew Davies, published a walking and cycling strategy for Wales in December 2003. One of the main aims of the strategy is to maximise the opportunities afforded by walking and to develop an integrated approach to enable the growth of this sustainable form of transport. The Assembly Government is providing funding through its various grant schemes, such as the transport grant, including Safe Routes to Schools, the rural trunk road initiative, the local regeneration fund and the inequalities in health fund, for projects that implement and promote schemes for walking. Despite the bitter opposition from the Conservatives, this Government will open up large areas of Welsh mountains and uplands to public access.

Free Swimming for Youngsters in Local Authority Pools

Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of youngsters who benefited in: a) Cardiff, and b) the Vale of Glamorgan, from last summer's free swimming for youngsters in local authority pools? (WAQ33271)

Alun Pugh: Of the 66,064 juvenile swims recorded in participating pools in Cardiff last summer, over 57,314 or 87 per cent were free swims. The total number of juvenile swims increased by 47.2 per cent, from 44,869 in 2002 to 66,064 in 2003.

In the Vale of Glamorgan, nearly 29,000 free juvenile swims were provided at the three pools that participated in the Welsh Assembly Government pilot scheme. The local authority recorded an increase in juvenile swims of 24 per cent or 5,604, from 23,148 in 2002 to 28,752 in 2003.

Free Swimming for Older People

Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister make a statement on which local authorities in Wales are expected to pilot free swimming for older people? (WAQ33272)

Alun Pugh: I have invited all 22 local authorities to participate in the free swimming pilot scheme for older people. The details of the pilot scheme are currently being worked up by the free swimming working party, which is jointly led by Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh Local Government Association officials. I will announce exactly where and when the pilot scheme will be delivered in due course.

The Free Mountain Weather Forecasting Service

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement regarding the free mountain weather forecasting service operating in the Brecon Beacons? (WAQ33336)

Alun Pugh: Mountain weather Wales was introduced as a pilot scheme last October and has been a major success. It covers both Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons and has received nearly 100,000 hits on the Met Office's website. This high level of interest shows how valuable the service has been in terms of helping to ensure that people enjoy visiting these mountain regions safely.

Questions to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport

Promoting Job Creation in Powys

Nick Bourne: What measures are being taken to promote job creation in the a) Ystradgynlais, b) Llandrindod Wells, c) Knighton, d) Rhayader and e) Brecon areas of Powys? (WAQ32956)

The Minister for Economic Development and Transport (Andrew Davies): 'A Winning Wales' and 'Wales: A Better Country' set out the Assembly Government's policies and measures, which are creating jobs throughout Wales, including the areas of Powys that you mention.

Traffic and Road Safety in Crickhowell

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister publish any assessment regarding the traffic and road safety in Crickhowell? (WAQ32990)

Andrew Davies: A range of traffic management and traffic calming works were completed in March 2001. Since then, over the 1.25 km of the 30 mph speed limit that covers the built-up area of the town, there have been five reportable accidents. According to the police reports, one of these involved an inebriated pedestrian walking in front of a slow moving vehicle, and another involved a stationary, waiting motorcyclist being reversed into by a lorry. The others all involved misjudged right-turn manoeuvres, which are fairly common in built-up areas. All of these accidents were classified as 'slight'. Although we can never be complacent, given that the A40 trunk road through Crickhowell carries over 10,000 vehicles per day, this cannot be considered a bad accident record.

The Alco-Lock

Nick Bourne: Has he had any discussions with his counterpart at Westminster about the introduction of the alco-lock, which prevents drivers who have been drinking from starting their car? (WAQ32992)

Andrew Davies: No. Following the results of the consultation undertaken in 1998 'Combating Drink Driving: Next Steps', the Government decided that it needed to monitor experience elsewhere over a longer timescale on the effectiveness of ignition interlocks before considering the introduction of legislation in the UK.

Pension Payments for the Former Workers of Allied Steel and Wire

Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the First Minister had with his parliamentary colleagues in Westminster to push for retrospective pension payments for the former workers of Allied Steel and Wire? (WAQ33003)

Andrew Davies: I refer you to the answer that I gave to WAQ32641.

The Opening of the Wales International Centres in San Francisco and Tokyo

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on the opening of the Wales international centres in San Francisco and Tokyo? (WAQ33174)

Andrew Davies: I am pleased to say that with effect from 1 March, Wales has a significantly enhanced presence in Tokyo and San Francisco through the appointment of WalesTrade International staff in those cities. The co-location of the WTI and the Welsh Development Agency presence will add considerably to Wales's trade and investment activities in these regions.

The Wales International Centres (Set up and Running Costs)

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister give details of the location set up costs and the running costs of the Wales international centres? (WAQ33175)

Andrew Davies: The Wales international centre initiative involves the co-location of a new WalesTrade International presence overseas with existing Welsh Development Agency presence. This has been achieved so far in three locations, details of the estimated set-up and annual running costs of which are as follows: New York, £252,000, including refundable rent deposit of £93,000, and £262,500 respectively, San Francisco, £5,000 and £95,500 respectively, Tokyo, £5,000 and £110,000 respectively. Only New York involves new premises, which is reflected in the costs. WalesTrade International also has a long-standing presence alongside the WDA in Chicago, which pre-dates the initiative, the annual running costs of which are some £53,000.

The Brithdir Junction on the A487

Lisa Francis: Has the Minister received any representations regarding safety at the Brithdir junction on the A487? (WAQ33221)

Andrew Davies: I am not aware of having received any representations regarding safety at the Brithdir road junction with the A487 at Brynhoffnant.

As you will know, Brynhoffnant was the site of a scheme within the Assembly's town and village initiative programme that was completed in June 2003. Works included:

- the imposition of a 40 mph speed limit which came into force on 27 August 2003
- the provision of village gateway signing, incorporating the 40 mph sign
- the provision of highway lighting, and

- enhanced road markings—ladderhatch markings where road width allowed for such markings.

The Brithdir Junction on the A487

Lisa Francis: Are there any plans to improve the junction at Brithdir on the A487? (WAQ33222)

Andrew Davies: There are currently no plans to improve the junction of the Brithdir road and the A487 at Brynhoffnant.

The Centre for Alternative Technology

Lisa Francis: Does the Welsh Assembly Government, or any ASPB, give assistance to the Centre for Alternative Technology near Machynlleth? (WAQ33223)

Andrew Davies: The Centre for Alternative Technology has received the following assistance from the Assembly and Assembly sponsored public bodies:

Awarding Body	Award	Purpose of Grant	Date of Award
Assembly Government (aggregates levy sustainability fund for Wales)	£15,000 (2003-04) £215,000 (2004-05)	WISE@CAT – Welsh Institute for Sustainable Education project, involving a new research and education complex and development of new products and techniques to limit the use of primary aggregates in the construction industry.	March 2003
Education and Learning Wales (mid-Wales office)	£300,000	Improvements to the existing educational facilities and development of the WISE@CAT project, which is ongoing to date.	April 2002
WDA	£5,000	Grant to support attendance at 2002 BBC <i>Gardener's World</i> show under the rural recovery plan.	February 2003
WDA	£5,000	To support attendance at 2003 BBC <i>Gardener's World</i> show under the rural recovery plan.	September 2003
WDA	£6,000	To assist 'Carbon Gym' ecological education event for children.	2002
WDA Food Directorate	£5,875	Funding to exhibit at a food fair.	September 2002
WDA Food Directorate	£5,874	Funding to exhibit at a food fair.	February 2003
WDA Food Directorate	£6,680	Funding to exhibit at a food fair.	March 2004
WDA	£3,000	Opening of a new environmental information centre on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the CAT's opening.	September 2000
WDA	£2,500	Environmental goods and services grant towards inventors to take advantage of increased capacity in the CAT's renewable energy grid.	March 2000
WDA	£10,000	Environmental goods and services grant to refurbish and upgrade connections for the off-site wind turbine.	December 2002
Wales Tourist Board	£30,840	Single grant for specific tourism-related project—expansion to include new displays and facilities, including those on the water-balance cliff railway.	March 2000

Road Works on the A487

Lisa Francis: How long will the road works between the Dyfi Bridge and Machynlleth, and the junction to Llanwrin on the A487, take? (WAQ33224)

Andrew Davies: The works at this location, known as Ffridd Bends, started on 26 January 2004 and is scheduled to last for 30 weeks.

The Junction with the A470 at Felinfach

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister had any representations regarding the junction at Felinfach with the A470? (WAQ33225)

Andrew Davies: Representations have been regularly received over the seven years since the improvement at Felinfach was completed asking for the installation of lighting at the junction.

This response should be read in conjunction with the associated responses to WAQ33227 and WAQ33228.

The Crossroads from Llanfilo and Llyswen

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister had any correspondence regarding the crossroads from Llanfilo and Llyswen with the A470 near Llanfilo? (WAQ33226)

Andrew Davies: The crossroads in question, more normally known as the Pontybat crossroads, after the adjacent farm name, has been the subject of numerous pieces of correspondence over many years, all asking for the junction to be improved.

This response should be read in conjunction with the associated responses to WAQ33227 and WAQ33228.

Safety Assessments (Junctions of the A470)

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister conduct safety assessments with regard to the junctions of the A470 at Felinfach and the A470 crossroads near Llanfilo? (WAQ33227)

Andrew Davies: With regard to the junction at Felinfach, independent road safety audits were carried out into the design of the A470 improvement scheme both before and after the scheme's construction seven years ago. Findings that the scheme design was appropriate have been borne out by the absence of any recorded injury accidents at the junction since that time.

At Pontybat, although we cannot be complacent, given the nature of the junction, the relatively high traffic flows and the high proportion of vehicles that are turning through 90 degrees at it, its current accident record does not stand out as being bad. Even if we were to create a completely different form of junction such as a roundabout or a traffic-light-controlled junction, being realistic we would still expect to get at least the number of accidents currently experienced. It is, therefore, difficult to see a means of improving the junction that will actually be of significant road safety benefit. However we will continue to monitor the situation, and should a pattern of accidents develop that can be practically addressed, appropriate action will be taken.

This response should be read in conjunction with the associated responses to WAQ33225, WAQ33226 and WAQ33228.

Accidents on the A470 (Felinfach and Crossroads Near Llanfilo)

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister publish any statistics that his department has with regard to accidents at the A470 with Felinfach and the A470 crossroads near Llanfilo? (WAQ33228)

Andrew Davies: In the seven years since the completion of the A470 improvement, there have been no recorded injury accidents at the Felinfach junction.

At Pontybat the picture is not quite as good. There have, regrettably, been fatal accidents in the past. However, over the years, we have undertaken a number of minor improvements at the junction, which

have been mainly signing and lining improvements. Over the last five years, the accident record for the junction has been:

- 2003—two accidents: 1 slight and 1 serious, both were injudicious right turns from the Llyswen direction.
- 2002—no accidents.
- 2001—1 slight accident, a right turn from through road.
- 2000—1 slight accident, overtaking on through route.
- 1999—1 slight accident, no details.

This response should be read in conjunction with the associated responses to WAQ33225, WAQ33226 and WAQ33227.

Half-Price Bus Travel for 16 to 18-Year-Olds

Lorraine Barrett: What progress has been made by the Welsh Assembly Government in developing half-price bus travel for 16 to 18-year-olds in Cardiff South and Penarth? (WAQ33277)

Andrew Davies: Preparatory work is underway for a scheme that would apply throughout Wales, and I will receive proposals from officials by the end of June.

20 mph Zones in Cardiff South and Penarth

Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister make a statement on 20 mph zones in Cardiff South and Penarth? (WAQ33278)

Andrew Davies: The introduction of 20 mph zones in Cardiff South and Penarth is the responsibility of the relevant local authorities—Cardiff County Council and the Vale of Glamorgan County Council. However, I understand that there are four existing 20 mph zones in your constituency—Ball Road, Llanrumney, Muirton Road, Splott, Adelaide Street, Butetown and Albert Road, Penarth.

The Safe Routes to School Scheme

Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister make a statement on the Safe Routes to School scheme in Cardiff South and Penarth? (WAQ33279)

Andrew Davies: The Welsh Assembly Government has funded Safe Routes to School schemes in Cardiff South and Penarth. These projects are providing infrastructure that will allow more children to walk and cycle safely to Llanrumney High School, Cardiff, Evenlode Primary School, Stanwell Comprehensive School and Victoria Primary School, Penarth.

Questions to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Veterinary Courses in Wales

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister had any discussion with the University of Wales regarding plans to provide veterinary courses in Wales? (WAQ33230)

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): I am aware that both the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in conjunction with the University of Wales College of Medicine, and the University of Wales, Bangor, each have expressed a desire to set up a veterinary college in Wales. However, neither institution has approached me directly on the issue. I would add that I have made it crystal clear that the priorities for the higher education sector in the short to medium term are those of reconfiguration and widening access. Funding is currently being directed at these priorities.

The Benefit to Wales of Providing Veterinary Courses

Nick Bourne: Has an assessment been made of the benefit to Wales of providing veterinary courses in Wales? (WAQ33231)

Jane Davidson: I have determined that my funding priorities for the higher education sector are those of reconfiguration and widening access. These will provide the greatest returns for Wales both in terms of economic and social benefits for the longer term.

There has been no assessment of the benefits to Wales of providing veterinary courses. To provide such a course would be very cost-intensive. However, the House of Commons' Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has recently published a report on vets and veterinary services in Great Britain. Government as a whole is considering this issue and a consultation document on the veterinary profession has just been issued.

The Open University (Increase in Fees)

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister made representations regarding the Open University increasing its fees? (WAQ33232)

Jane Davidson: The Open University is an autonomous body, which is currently not funded by the National Assembly. I have had no discussions with the Open University with regard to the level of fees it charges or about any proposals to increase the level of those fees.

Number of Students from Cardiff South and Penarth at Welsh Universities

Lorraine Barrett: How many students from the constituency of Cardiff South and Penarth are currently studying at Welsh universities? (WAQ33274)

Jane Davidson: The estimated numbers of students from the Cardiff South and Penarth constituency studying at Welsh higher education institutions in the academic year 2002-03 are detailed in the following table:

	Estimated HE enrolments by mode, 2002-03 (a)		
	Full-time and sandwich	Part-time	Total
Postgraduate	150	270	420
Undergraduate	860	765	1,625

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency student record.

(a) Enrolments at December 1—figures have been rounded to the nearest five.

Note: enrolments have been allocated to constituencies using postcodes. The postcodes for over 500 student enrolments from the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan unitary authorities were unknown or incomplete. A proportion of these has been allocated to the Cardiff South and Penarth constituency and included in the figures above, based on the data for those with complete postcodes.

Free Breakfasts for Primary School Pupils

Lorraine Barrett: What progress has been made in providing free breakfasts for primary school pupils in Cardiff South and Penarth? (WAQ33275)

Jane Davidson: The primary school free breakfast initiative will be introduced incrementally on a pilot basis starting in the Communities First areas of a number of local authorities from September 2004. Officials have written to directors of education asking whether their LEAs wish to participate in the first stage of the pilot. All responses received have been positive. All local authorities will be informed shortly whether they are to be included in the first phase of the pilot.

Improving School Buildings in Cardiff South and Penarth

Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister make a statement on improving school buildings in Cardiff South and Penarth? (WAQ33276)

Lorraine Barrett: What action is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to improve school buildings in Cardiff South and Penarth? (WAQ33507)

Jane Davidson: The Cardiff South and Penarth constituency straddles the local authorities of the City and County of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council. Like all local authorities, they receive Assembly support for investment in school buildings in two main ways. General capital funding is made available through the annual capital settlement. For 2003-04, and again for 2004-05, that represents £54.939 million for education at the all-Wales level. However, this funding is unhypothecated and authorities are free to use it for any capital purpose. Local authorities in Wales also receive funding that can only be used for education capital purposes through the school buildings improvement grant programme, which provides annual allocations to all authorities on a formula basis. In addition, in the period 2005 to 2010, every authority in Wales will receive a lump sum of £9 million.

Decisions about which individual schools are invested in and whether through annual capital allocations or under the school buildings improvement grant are for each local authority to take in light of local needs and priorities. Local authorities are expected to have asset management plans in place by 1 April 2004. These will provide a comprehensive overview of the state of school buildings in each authority for the first time.

The Pilot Programme for providing Free School Breakfasts

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement about the development of the pilot programme for providing free school breakfasts in Wales? (WAQ33508)

Jane Davidson: The primary school free breakfast initiative will be introduced incrementally on a pilot basis starting in the Communities First areas of a number of local authorities from September 2004. Officials have written to directors of education, asking whether their local education authority wishes to participate in the first stage of the pilot scheme. All responses received have been positive. The local education authorities will be informed shortly whether they are to be included in the first phase of the pilot scheme.

The internal project board meets on a monthly basis and discussions are well underway regarding the roll-out of the pilot, including the content of the healthy breakfast, costings, procurement, monitoring and evaluation. To help inform this work, information about existing breakfast provision for children of primary school age is being gathered and visits to examine current practice are underway.

Officials have also made contact with other key stakeholders, including the Welsh Local Government Association and the Local Authority Catering Association. A series of stakeholder workshops are planned for May following which an external reference group will formally be established.

The Dragon International Film Studios

Janice Gregory: What discussions are underway to ensure that the local workforce in south Wales is equipped with the skills that will be required by the Dragon International Studios when it begins operating in the Llanharan area? (WAQ33509)

Jane Davidson: Skillset Cymru, the sector skills council for the audio-visual industry in Wales has been in discussion with the appropriate unions and the managing director of Dragon International Studios to discuss workforce recruitment, the availability of skilled workers and potential training programmes.

Dragon International Studios will provide Skillset Cymru with a list of permanent and future employment posts, specifying job opportunities, timescales and the degree of experience/qualifications required, within the next few weeks. This will enable Skillset Cymru to work in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government, ELWa, WDA and local colleges, universities and training providers to explore what skills are available and the training needed. This work will be supported by the development of a workforce database, which will link Dragon Studios to job seekers in the media industry in Wales.

Speech and Language Development

Lynne Neagle: What action has the Minister taken to promote speech and language development in 0 to three-year-olds nursery or early years education in Wales? (WAQ33511)

Jane Davidson: Meeting the special needs of the child in the early years is a key objective for the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales, especially in relation to early years and early years action plus.

Also, as part of a national strategy, the Basic Skills Agency has worked with early years and Sure Start partnerships, health visitors, speech and language therapists and playgroup organisations to develop early language programmes. These are designed for use by parents of 0 to three-year-olds and include a training package for early years workers and parenting support staff. Programmes have also been developed to illustrate to parents how to stimulate the language and literacy of their babies and young children. Furthermore, in the foundation phase, which will cover the age range three to seven, emphasis will be placed on developing children's speaking and listening skills to set firm foundations for future developments.

We have recently consulted on the future of speech and language services in Wales for children and young people aged 0 to 19. A joint consultation document, 'Working Together', was issued by myself and Jane Hutt in July 2003, which received a favourable response. We will be responding to all the recommendations by making a joint response to our respective Committees in the summer.

The Estimated Costings for School Breakfasts

David Davies: Will the Minister give an update on the estimated costings for school breakfasts? (WAQ33513)

Jane Davidson: An internal project board is considering a whole range of issues relating to the primary school breakfast initiative and one of its key tasks will be to provide detailed costings for this programme. The proposed pilot study will provide further information on how many children are likely to take school breakfasts when the scheme is rolled out across Wales. This is the key to our future planning.

The Finance Minister has already announced that up to £1.5 million will be available in 2004-05 from end-year flexibility to cover the anticipated costs of the pilot scheme. As indicated, detailed costings are being developed for the entire programme and these will feed into our spending review.

Primary Schools within South Wales East

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning primary schools within South Wales East? (WAQ33515) [R]

Jane Davidson: Responsibility for primary schools rests with their governing bodies and the local education authorities that maintain them. Local education authority responsibility includes the planning of school places.

Funding Higher Education

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister update us on her plans for funding higher education? (WAQ33516)

Jane Davidson: My priorities for the sector were set out in 'Reaching Higher' and these remain as reconfiguration and widening access. Therefore, the additional £8 million secured in 2003-04 and £10 million in 2004-05 is directed at those priorities, which will allow the sector to flourish and compete successfully. Funding from 2005-06 is subject to the outcome of the current spending review, but the supplementary budget, to be debated in Plenary on 24 March, proposes a total increase of almost £14 million to the 2005-06 indicative baseline for higher education.

Small-sized Rural Schools in North Wales

Brynle Williams: Does the Minister have any plans to close any small-sized rural schools in north Wales? (WAQ33519)

Jane Davidson: Responsibility for reviewing the provision of school places, and bringing forward reorganisation proposals, rests with local education authorities. I determine proposals in cases where there are statutory objections.

I am not aware of any current proposals from local education authorities in north Wales to close small or rural schools.

The Physical Education and School Sports Initiative

Sandy Mewies: Will the Minister make a statement on the physical education and school sports initiative? (WAQ33521)

Jane Davidson: The Assembly's action plan has set ambitious targets to improve the range and quality of opportunities for young people to engage in PE and school sport. This work is being taken forward, primarily, through the establishment of PE and school sport development centres in each local authority area, with funding from the Assembly and support from the Sports Council for Wales. The development centres draw together schools and local partners with the emphasis on sharing of staff expertise, facilities and the development of good practice. Thirty development centres are already in place across Wales and it is planned that by March 2005 a further 14 will be established.

This initiative complements the £48 million being made available by the new opportunities fund over four years to improve facilities for sport in schools, targeting the building of new, and refurbishment of existing, facilities for schools and wider community use. It also works in harness with the healthy and active lifestyles framework for action with firm linkages established with the network of school co-ordinators put in place as part of the healthy schools initiative. An initial report compiled by Estyn concluded that the initiative is already having a positive impact on the standard of PE and sport in schools involved in the development centres. A further £1.5 million will be made available in 2004-05 to support this work.

This is an excellent example of how initiatives can be drawn together at the local level to drive change and significantly improve opportunities for young people in primary and secondary schools to engage in PE and sport.

Free School Transport

Owen John Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on free school transport? (WAQ33524)

Jane Davidson: Local education authorities must provide free school transport for pupils under the age of eight who live beyond two miles from the nearest suitable school and for pupils over eight who live

beyond three miles. Some authorities operate more generous policies in terms of the walking distances. Most make provision for free transport to denominational schools and Welsh-medium schools where pupils live beyond the statutory distances, even though these may not be the nearest schools.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

The Chardon LL Feeding Studies

Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey: Will the Minister give an assurance that no milk or meat from the cattle involved in the Chardon LL feeding studies at the University of Reading has entered the food chain? (WAQ33247)

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): I am advised by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs that no milk produced from the dairy cattle during the Chardon LL feeding studies was used for human consumption. My officials are seeking information regarding the possible entry of meat into the food chain, but given the restrictions on the sale of meat from cattle over 30 months, consider this unlikely.

The Chardon LL Cattle Feeding Studies

Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey: Will the Minister confirm what results he has obtained from the Chardon LL cattle feeding studies which were completed at the University of Reading centre for dairy research in 2002? (WAQ33248)

Carwyn Jones: The purpose of the research funded by Bayer was to study dairy cattle feeding on Chardon LL T25 maize. The research has now been completed and the researchers intend to submit their study to a peer-reviewed journal for publication. Both Bayer and the University of Reading have confirmed that the study does not reveal any adverse effects of T25 maize on the health of ruminants.

The Accessibility of Welsh Rivers to Canoeists

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the accessibility of Welsh rivers to canoeists? (WAQ33249)

Carwyn Jones: The Assembly Government is committed to promoting water-borne activities and sports. At the sport, physical activity and active recreation summit held in January, it was announced that £6.5 million of new opportunities fund money would be invested in improving the synergy between sport, physical activity, active recreation and our natural environment. The new opportunities fund is currently developing a suitable programme and will be consulting stakeholders on how best to target that funding. Access to rivers is, though, a complex issue, as in many cases the permissions of relevant land and fishery owners must be sought.

Accessibility to Rivers (Representatives of Canoeists)

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: What recent discussions has he had with representatives of canoeists regarding accessibility to rivers? (WAQ33250)

Carwyn Jones: I have not had any recent discussions with representatives of canoeists regarding accessibility to rivers.

Radon Levels

David Davies: How are radon levels being monitored in Wales? (WAQ33261)

Carwyn Jones: Since 1995, the National Radiological Protection Board has worked with the Welsh Office/Welsh Assembly Government to identify areas of Wales with elevated indoor radon levels and individual dwellings that are affected.

As part of this work, the National Radiological Protection Board manage a programme of free testing and advice to all householders within 5 km grid squares, where there is a high probability—greater than 10 per cent—of dwellings exceeding the action level of 200 becquerels per cubic metre. The National Radiological Protection Board also provide the same safe, simple and confidential test to measure levels of radon in the homes to all householders throughout Wales, at a current cost of £36.19. Where radon levels above the action level are detected, the householder is offered advice on remedial measures to reduce the risk.

To encourage householders in high-risk areas to have radon levels measured, and to encourage them to take remedial action where recommended, the Welsh Assembly Government is starting a new pilot programme in conjunction with local authorities. This pilot programme will run in Flintshire. The success of this pilot will inform development of further programmes with other local authorities.

Levels of Radon in Wales and in Monmouthshire

David Davies: What are the levels of radon in Wales and in Monmouthshire? (WAQ33262)

Carwyn Jones: Current information on radon levels in Wales is published in the National Radiological Protection Board report ‘Radon in Dwellings in Wales: Atlas and 1998 Review’ (ref NRPB-R303). This is based on a survey undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board on behalf of the Welsh Office. It identified areas at risk by comparison with the UK Government’s action level of 200 becquerels per cubic metre for radon levels in air. An assessment of risk is provided for 5 km grid squares for Wales and for Monmouthshire.

Glufosinate Ammonium Herbicide Review

Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey: Could the Minister confirm whether he has received a copy of the results of the glufosinate ammonium herbicide review undertaken by the Swedish herbicide authorities on behalf of the European Union? (WAQ33287)

Carwyn Jones: No. The Swedish authorities forwarded a copy of their draft assessment report on the EU review of glufosinate ammonium to the Pesticides Safety Directorate in December 2003. The directorate is the lead authority for England and Wales on the regulation of plant protection products. An initial meeting of EU member states to discuss the review has already taken place and further meetings are due to take place this summer. The directorate will be advising Assembly officials in due course.

Cattle Feeding Studies Involving Chardon LL Fodder Maize

Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey: Will the Minister state when he became aware that cattle feeding studies involving Chardon LL fodder maize had been requested by the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment and the Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs? (WAQ33288)

Carwyn Jones: Assembly Government officials were aware of an informal request made by the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment and the Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs to view the research from the cattle feeding studies in December 2002. The interest was expressed in Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment’s response to concerns raised from the public hearing on Chardon LL T25 maize.

The Farm-scale Trials

Alun Ffred Jones: What discussions has the Minister had with his colleagues in Westminster on the Environmental Audit Committee, regarding the farm-scale trials? (WAQ33327)

Carwyn Jones: I have regular discussions with UK Minister for Environment and Agri-Environment and House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee member, Elliot Morley MP, on a wide range of issues, including the farm-scale evaluations.

Food Co-operatives

Lorraine Barrett: What action is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to develop food co-operatives in Wales? (WAQ33328) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Health and Social Services.*

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): I refer you to my written Cabinet statement on food co-operatives and the nutrition strategy which was issued on 11 March 2004.

Unitary Development Plan (Gwent)

Michael German: Can any local authority in Gwent change the Gwent statutory development plan before its unitary development plan is adopted? (WAQ33537)

Carwyn Jones: There is no power for a local planning authority to alter or replace the statutory development plan in force in its area prior to the adoption of its unitary development plan. Upon adoption, the unitary development plan will become the adopted development plan for the purpose of section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Existing structure and local plans will cease to have effect for the area covered by that unitary development plan.

Unitary Development Plan (Compliance)

Michael German: Does a local authority have to comply with the standards described in its unitary development plan or can it waive considerations when approving planning applications? (WAQ33538)

Carwyn Jones: Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that, in making planning decisions, regard should be paid to the adopted development plan—in most areas this is a local plan, rather than a UDP—and the decision made in accordance with that plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. Applications not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be approved unless material planning considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Questions to the Finance Minister

Framework Contracts

Alun Cairns: What guidance has the Assembly Government issued to local authorities to use framework contracts? (WAQ33133)

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): The Welsh Assembly Government has issued no guidance to local authorities on the use of framework contracts.

I can confirm that the local government procurement support unit, part-funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, provides advice to local authorities on general procurement issues, and is planning to provide advice on supplies and service framework agreements as part of a set of documents entitled 'Modern Procurement Practice in Local Government'.

Assembly Furniture Provided for Homeworking

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister explain in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* contract document the stipulation that furniture will be provided for homeworking? (WAQ33143)

Sue Essex: Homeworking is part of the family-friendly arrangements made available for all staff by the Assembly as a responsible employer and a number of people work from home for all, or for part, of the week. This is seen as a positive equal opportunities and diversity initiative. The Assembly, as employer, is responsible for the health and safety of these individuals and any furniture supplied for this purpose has to comply with health and safety regulations and remains the property of the Assembly.

The Amount of Furniture for each Assembly Building

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister set out by location and contract amount approximately the amount of furniture for each Assembly building? (WAQ33145)

Sue Essex: New furniture is expected to be required, as part of the location strategy, for the proposed new offices in Merthyr Tydfil, mid and north Wales and for the new debating Chamber. Requirements for these new buildings are still being developed. No specific sums have been identified for buildings on the existing estate. The value of work commissioned under the contract will depend on case-by-case decisions on the basis of business cases and judgments on spending priorities.

Assembly Furniture

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister set out the reasons for a need for furniture other than for the new Assembly building, as set out in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* document? (WAQ33146)

Sue Essex: This is a routine renewal of an existing call-off contract which provides for, among other things, the supply of new and replacement furniture and space planning services for the overall estate.

Cost of Assembly Furniture Provided for Homeworking

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister set out the cost of furniture to be provided for home working? (WAQ33147)

Sue Essex: No specific amount of money has been identified. The total contract value quoted in the *Official Journal of the European Union* advertisement is a best estimate of likely demand throughout the range of requirements, over a three to five-year period.

Assembly Furniture Procurement

Nick Bourne: Who decided on the content of the *Official Journal of the European Communities* contract document, and what consultation was there concerning the need for the furniture as set out in this document? (WAQ33148)

Sue Essex: As for any organisation of this size, there is a periodic need for general furniture provision, as well as specific needs associated with new accommodation, such as the proposed new office at Merthyr Tydfil and the new debating Chamber. Extensive consultation has been carried out internally to establish potential requirements under the contract.

Public Services for the Disabled in Rural Communities

Laura Anne Jones: How is this Assembly Government working to improve public services for the disabled in rural communities? (WAQ33180)

Sue Essex: The Welsh Assembly Government's policy framework for local government is based on local authorities being responsive to the needs of their communities. It is also incumbent on all local authorities to fulfil their statutory duties under all legislation linked to disability equality.

There is also a range of initiatives in place, or in development, aimed directly at supporting disabled people. For example, equity of access for all children and young people, including disabled children and their families, is the central feature of the Assembly Government's national service framework for children, young people and maternity services that will be the subject of consultation later this year. This framework also has a number of key actions that address directly the issues of rurality. The Assembly Government is also working towards delivering its manifesto commitment to provide free home care for disabled people.

The Welsh Assembly Government's scheme guaranteeing free travel for elderly and disabled people on local bus services is hugely successful, and there is now no need for pass holders to worry about the cost of visiting friends or relatives, health or social facilities, or simply getting out and about. In addition, we will provide some £8.8 million to local authorities in 2004-05 under the local transport services grant scheme to help them boost the number and range of subsidised bus services, and to support community transport projects.

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Owen John Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the comprehensive performance assessment? (WAQ33181)

Sue Essex: The comprehensive performance assessment is the model used by the Government in England to assess local authority performance. The Wales programme for improvement is the model used in Wales both to provide an agreed assessment of performance and to drive forward improvement.

Local Government Funding

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on local government funding? (WAQ33182)

Sue Essex: Local government will receive over £3.1 billion to fund key services from the Welsh Assembly Government in 2004-05 through the local government revenue settlement. This represents an increase of 5.2 per cent or £155 million on 2003-04 after adjusting for transfers. In addition, they will receive £50 million through additional non-hypothecated funding.

In addition to this, there are a wide range of grants that will provide additional funding to address key areas of provision including carers, schools and waste management. Current estimates indicate that authorities will receive over £500 million in hypothecated funding in 2004-05.

Empowering Local Communities

John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on progress to empower local communities in local government in Wales? (WAQ33186)

Sue Essex: Local authorities are all developing overarching community strategies for their area, in partnership with other organisations. The Welsh Assembly Government's guidance on preparing community strategies emphasises the importance of genuine community engagement and the same is true

for supporting strategies, such as those for children and young people. We will evaluate the first strategies and consider what would help local partnerships to involve local communities still further.

The Welsh Assembly Government is also developing its response to the Aberystwyth study of community and town councils, which contains several recommendations aimed at enabling those local councils to play a more active role in local communities.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

The Cost of Litigation to the Health Service

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister set out, case by case, the cost of litigation to the health service in Wales since 1999? (WAQ33233)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): This information is not reported to the Assembly on a case-by-case basis. However, the defence legal fees and other administrative costs for the health service in Wales since 1999 are as follows:

1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
£2.671 million	£2.031 million	£3.029 million	£4.356 million	£8.385 million

Effect of the Reduction of Junior Doctors' Hours

Nick Bourne: Has the Minister made an assessment of the affect on the health service in Wales of the reduction of hours of junior doctors, and if so will she publish that assessment? (WAQ33234)

Jane Hutt: Since the New Deal was launched in June 1991, with its central aim of improving the quality of both patient care and medical training by reducing the long hours of work of junior doctors, there have been significant changes in ways of working and the way in which services are delivered. This programme of change will continue as part of the process of implementing the European working time directive alongside the other elements of the modernisation agenda.

18-Month Hospital Waits

Jonathan Morgan: Can the Minister eradicate 18-month hospital waits in Wales? (WAQ33244)

Jane Hutt: As you will be aware, I am determined to reduce the number of people experiencing long waits in Wales. I announced, in November 2003, the development of the second offer scheme, which will begin on 1 April 2004. This will guarantee every patient in a Wales a second offer of treatment so that they will wait no longer than 18 months for surgery. Further, I announced in Health and Social Services Committee on 14 January, an additional £5 million to be used prior to 31 March to make a significant impact on those currently waiting over 18 months. By the time the first waiting list statistics of 2004-05 are published at the end of May—the end of April figures—all potential long-waiting patients will have received a second offer, though they may not have had their surgery.

The Proposed Reduction by £1 of Prescription Charges

Lorraine Barrett: How many people in Cardiff South and Penarth are expected to benefit from the proposed reduction of £1 in prescription charges from 1 October 2004? (WAQ33267)

Jane Hutt: We do not hold information on the number of people who currently pay prescription charges. However, it is clear that this reduction will be a very welcome measure for a significant number of people across Wales.

Scrapping Home-care are Charges for Disabled People

Lorraine Barrett: Can the Minister provide an update on scrapping home-care charges for disabled people? (WAQ33268)

Jane Hutt: As I outlined in response to OAQ32243 on 25 February 2004 and at the Health and Social Services Committee meeting on 3 March 2004, invitations have been issued to convene a working group which will consider detailed implementation issues. The group includes provider, local authority and broad service user representation and is due to meet for the first time towards the end of this month. I have indicated that the group will then meet on a further three occasions over the next six months.

Services for Lupus Patients in Wales

Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on services for Lupus patients in Wales? (WAQ33270)

Kirsty Williams: What plans does the Minister have to develop specialist clinics for Lupus patients in Wales? (WAQ33280)

Jane Hutt: Local health boards are responsible for the provision of local services, which would include those for the treatment of Lupus if appropriate. In addition, the health, social care and wellbeing plans currently being consulted on provide a programme of action based upon a comprehensive assessment of local needs. Service developments will be clearly outlined within the plans of each local health board.

The Undergraduate Diploma in Social Work (Bursaries)

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on how eligible students who will be starting, or are already studying for an undergraduate diploma in social work will be able to apply for the bursaries announced on 30 September 2003? (WAQ33324)

Jane Hutt: The new scheme will be run by the Care Council for Wales. It is currently preparing documentation to support the introduction of the scheme.

The Undergraduate Diploma in Social Work (Bursary Scheme)

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on when the bursary scheme for students starting or already studying for an undergraduate diploma in social work, announced on 30 September 2003, will be operational? (WAQ33325)

Jane Hutt: The Care Council for Wales is preparing documentation and publicity to support the new scheme and will work closely with colleges and other partners to ensure that the scheme becomes operational in an orderly manner.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

‘Iaith Pawb’

Owen John Thomas: Ers cyflwyno ‘Iaith Pawb’, pa gamau y mae’r Gweinidog wedi’u cymryd i gynyddu’r defnydd economaidd, cymdeithasol a diwylliannol o’r iaith ar lefel gymunedol? (WAQ30890) [W] *Trosghwyddwyd i’w ateb gan y Gweinidog dros Ddiwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chwaraeon.*

Ateb terfynol yn dilyn yr ateb dros dro a roddwyd ar 29 Rhagfyr 2003.

Y Gweinidog dros Ddiwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chwaraeon (Alun Pugh): Un elfen allweddol o 'Iaith Pawb' yw pwyslais ar gynyddu'r defnydd o'r iaith Gymraeg ym mhob agwedd ar fywyd yng Nghymru. Ystyrir mai Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg yw un o'r partneriaid allweddol yn y gwaith hwn ac mae wedi derbyn £16 miliwn yn ychwanegol dros y tair blynedd nesaf er mwyn cynyddu'i waith yn rhai o'r meysydd allweddol. Ar lefel gymunedol, bydd y mentrau iaith a'r cynlluniau gweithredu lleol yn derbyn cyllid ychwanegol gwerth dros £3 miliwn.

Bellach y mae 25 o fentrau iaith ym mhob cwr o Gymru ac y mae wyth cynllun gweithredu iaith wedi'u rhoi ar waith gyda mwy yn cael eu lansio yn y dyfodol. Mae gan y mentrau rôl hanfodol i'w chwarae wrth godi proffil yr iaith Gymraeg mewn cymunedau ar lefel gymdeithasol, diwylliannol ac economaidd.

'Iaith Pawb'

Owen John Thomas: Since the introduction of 'Iaith Pawb', what steps has the Minister taken to increase the economic, social and cultural use of the language at community level? (WAQ30890) [W]
Transferred for answer by the Minister for Culture, the Welsh Language and Sport

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 29 December 2003.

The Minister for Culture, the Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): One of the key elements of 'Iaith Pawb' is an emphasis on increasing the use of the Welsh language in all aspects of life in Wales. The Welsh Language Board is regarded as a key partner in this and has received an additional £16 million over the next three years to allow it to step up its work in key areas. At a community level, the *mentrau iaith* and local action plans will receive additional spending of over £3 million.

There are now 25 language initiatives in all parts of Wales and eight language action plans in operation. More will be launched in the future. These initiatives play a vital role in raising the profile of the Welsh language in communities at a social, cultural and economic level.

Crime-fighting Fund

Lorraine Barrett: Will the Minister make a statement on how the constituency of Cardiff South and Penarth is benefiting from the Welsh Assembly Government's crime-fighting fund? (WAQ33266)

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): The constituency of Cardiff South and Penarth is benefiting from the drug and alcohol action fund, the safer communities fund, the domestic violence initiatives budget and funding for pilot projects to tackle disaffection in schools, all of which are part of the crime-fighting fund.

Further Post Office Closures

Laura Anne Jones: Would the Minister make a statement on further post office closures in Wales? (WAQ33329)

Edwina Hart: Decisions about individual closures under the urban network re-invention programme are undertaken by Post Office Ltd. In order to seek clarification on the criteria that are used under urban network re-invention to select the branches that are to close, I have recently written to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Community Development Financial Institution

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to establishing a community development financial institution for Wales? (WAQ33330)

Edwina Hart: I am currently considering the proposals for establishing a community development finance institution for Wales, as part of the Assembly Government's social enterprise action plan.

Grants for Boys' and Girls' Clubs

Brynle Williams: Does the Minister have any plans to give grants to boys' and girls' clubs in Wales to assist in their work in communities across Wales? (WAQ33488)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government already funds the Boys' and Girls' Club of Wales for the work that it does in Welsh communities. It currently receives £35,000 in 2003-04, under the scheme of grants to national voluntary youth organisations, to support the delivery of good youth work across Wales. A further grant of £37,100 has been allocated for 2004-05. On individual communities, Clydach Vale boys' and girls' club and Penygraig boys' and girls' club are receiving £48,525 and £15,000 respectively in 2003-04 under our community facilities and activities programme.