

Written Questions answered between 25 May and 8 June 2006

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

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

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Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport

Janet Ryder: What support, either through coaching schemes or grants and financial assistance, is available for those cyclists who wish to pursue road racing? (WAQ46916)

The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh): Our Sports Council for Wales is providing £178,000 this year to Welsh Cycling to support its talent team and the Commonwealth development programmes, which includes road racing as an important endurance component.

At grass-roots level nearly £26,000 is being made available, through the coaching plan for Wales, to support our talented young riders. In addition Welsh Cycling is continuing to promote the 'Go Ride' scheme within primary schools in Wales as a means of developing links with road cycling clubs.

Eleanor Burnham: Why did the Welsh Assembly Government bid to the House of Commons for a Welsh language schemes regulator Bill in March 2005 but did not bid for one this year? (WAQ46968)

Alun Pugh: Bids for primary legislation for any year are made in accordance with the relevant Assembly resolution, which is adopted in March of each year. That practice was followed in each of 2005 and 2006.

The Assembly Government intends to introduce the necessary legislative changes for the establishment of office of dyfarnydd by using the extra powers set out in the Government of Wales Bill. It is no longer necessary therefore to bid for primary legislation in Westminster in order to establish the office of dyfarnydd.

Janet Ryder: Can the Minister confirm how people can access, and who can access, the £26,000 available through the coaching plan for Wales? (WAQ47073)

Alun Pugh: Those sports that are committed to implementing the UK coaching certificate can bid to the Sports Council for Wales for funding from the Welsh Assembly Government exchequer funded coaching plan for Wales programme. To date 22 sports are committed to implementing the UKCC in Wales and have received funding appropriate to their needs.

Questions to the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how private and public enterprise in Wales will be represented at the business energy forum? (WAQ46928)

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): Andrew Davies: The business energy forum has developed from the UK Government's major energy users group, which is a high level collection of key stakeholders. Welsh industry was represented and we are pressing to ensure this continues to be the case.

It is intended that the business energy forum will be jointly chaired by the Confederation of British Industry and Department of Trade and Industry and will include National Grid, the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, the Engineering Employers Federation, the energy intensive users group and other key industry bodies.

Lisa Francis: What is the marketing budget set aside for tourism for the financial year 2006-07? (WAQ46938)

Andrew Davies: The tourism marketing budget for 2006-07 is £10.3 million.

Lisa Francis: What budgets exist for the regional tourism partnerships post-April 2007? (WAQ46939)

Andrew Davies: This year's funding has been held at £3.5 million. Any future funding will depend on the outcome of the independent review of the regional tourism partnerships.

Lisa Francis: When precisely does the Minister intend to undertake a review of the roles and responsibilities of the regional tourism partnerships? (WAQ46940)

Andrew Davies: It is intended that the independent review will go out to tender before the summer. The findings of the

review are expected before Christmas 2006.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister give an update on the new INTERREG programme in relation to tourism in Wales? (WAQ46941)

Andrew Davies: My officials are continuing to discuss funding priorities for the new cross-border Ireland-Wales programme with the Irish authorities and the Welsh territorial co-operation workstream group.

The importance of tourism in Wales is recognised and the expectation is that collaboration in the tourism sector will be integrated into the new programme.

Carl Sargeant: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to ensure that Wales's most disadvantaged communities benefit from technological advances? (WAQ46954)

Andrew Davies: Various initiatives and activities have been undertaken by the Assembly Government aimed at increasing the use of information and communications technologies in communities throughout Wales. The Assembly Government's Communities@One initiative is now operational in Communities First areas across Wales. Here, community brokers are working with community and voluntary groups to help them identify their digital inclusion priorities. Groups then have the opportunity to apply, in conjunction with the broker, to a grant fund to support these priorities. The initiative is administered by the Wales Co-operative Centre on behalf of the Assembly Government.

ICT also plays an important role as a cross-cutting theme within European structural funds. The aim is to improve opportunities and economic activity by providing and improving ICT skills within disadvantaged communities throughout Wales. My Broadband Wales programme, launched in 2002, aims to provide and build on an infrastructure that will underpin ICT skills gained through projects such as those funded through the European structural fund programme.

To date the Broadband Wales programme has funded the life-long learning network, which delivers broadband connectivity to the 22 local authorities in Wales. The programme has also provided £10 million funding to local authorities, allowing them to provide access to this core network for schools, libraries and ICT learning centres across the country.

My Broadband Wales programme also manages the regional innovative broadband support project which aims to provide a first generation (512 kbps and 2 Mbps downstream) speed broadband services to those who cannot currently get access. The regional innovative broadband support project will allow citizens and businesses in Wales, including those in the most disadvantaged communities, access to an infrastructure providing first generation speed broadband services which will support and enable the Welsh economy to thrive and prosper competitively.

Further activities of the Broadband Wales programme can be found on the Broadband Wales website www.wales.gov.uk/broadband.

Mark Isherwood: Will the Minister make a statement on the future funding for tourism and the perceived threat of cuts,

specifically the funding for marketing and section 4 grant aid? (WAQ46963)

Andrew Davies: The tourism marketing budget for 2006-07 is £10.3 million.

The budget for section 4 grant aid for 2006-07 is £3.5 million. Section 4 grant support has in recent years been boosted by significant EU funds and there remains the possibility of further funding from the next structural programme.

Within the UK section 4 is unique to Wales and we plan to continue to run this effective grant scheme. With the grant scheme's incorporation into Invest Wales there may be the potential for tourism projects to access a wider capital development resource.

Mark Isherwood: Will the Minister outline the timescale involved in the review of regional tourism partnerships? (WAQ46964)

Andrew Davies: It is intended that the independent review will go out to tender before the summer. The findings of the review are expected before Christmas 2006.

Mark Isherwood: Will the Minister make a statement on the progress of inviting applications for the INTERREG programme? (WAQ46965)

Andrew Davies: The INTERREG IIIA programme recently held a restricted call for applications in the rural development and diversification measure (priority 1, measure 2) which opened in March 2006 and closed on 12 May 2006. Applications will be considered in due course.

Carl Sargeant: What is the timescale and legislative process for the creation of the A494 extension? (WAQ46967)

Andrew Davies: In June 2005 Alfred McAlpine Ltd were appointed to take the A494 Drome Corner to Ewloe scheme forward through the preparation process. Later this summer draft Orders will be published and a public exhibition will be held, where full details of the scheme will be available.

Officials from Transport Wales, together with representatives of the contractor and his designer, will be available to explain the proposals. Those affected by the scheme will have the opportunity to put questions. There will then be a period during which interested or affected persons may object to, or support, the scheme.

If objections cannot be resolved a public local inquiry will be held before an independent inspector before a decision is made whether or not to make the Orders. If an inquiry is necessary this will be held early next year and, should the Orders be made as drafted, construction could commence by autumn 2007.

Ann Jones: What is the Minister doing to improve the provision for cyclists at railway stations and on trains around Wales? (WAQ46976)

Andrew Davies: The Assembly Government will continue to encourage all train operating companies to provide facilities at stations which will help facilitate bike and rail journeys. We will also encourage train operating companies to carry bikes on trains whenever possible.

The existing franchise agreement states that bikes can be taken on Arriva Trains Wales's fleet. This would be dependent on the time, route and rolling stock. The Welsh Assembly Government is keen to encourage people to use more sustainable forms of transport. Cycling is one part of our draft Wales transport strategy, to be launched for consultation this summer.

Ann Jones: What powers does the Minister have to issue minimum standards to railway franchises and Network Rail to improve provision for bicycles on trains and at railway stations in Wales in order that bicycle and rail transport can be integrated and promoted to provide a seamless and environmentally sound 'doorstep to destination' alternative to car travel in Wales? (WAQ46977)

Andrew Davies: I do not have powers to set minimum standards for particular operators on improving provision for cyclists. However we do encourage all train operating companies to provide facilities at railway stations and trains throughout Wales.

Ann Jones: What is the Minister's best estimate of the contribution of cycle tourism to the Welsh economy? (WAQ46978)

Andrew Davies: Based on people visiting Wales with cycling as their main purpose during 2001-03 average expenditure was estimated at £21 million per annum.

Ann Jones: What discussions have the Minister and his officials had with Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales on (a) the funding of and (b) the likely timetable for the installation of enhanced CCTV at railway stations in north Wales? (WAQ46980)

Andrew Davies: There are 213 stations in Wales that are leased by Network Rail to Arriva Trains Wales. It is Arriva Trains Wales which are responsible for managing and operating these stations. Eighty-five of the 213 Welsh stations now have CCTV. I invested £1.75 million for CCTV to be installed at 11 of the railway stations across north Wales: Bangor, Conwy, Llandudno Junction, Llandudno Town, Colwyn Bay, Abergele and Pensarn, Rhyl, Prestatyn, Flint, Shotton (high and low levels). The project started in August 2005 and continues on target for completion by the end of August 2006. The following stations are 100 per cent complete with the installation of CCTV: Holyhead, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno Junction, Llandudno Town, Prestatyn, Conwy, Shotton High, Chirk and Rhyl.

Ann Jones: How many road traffic accidents in 2005 resulted in the death of children of school age in (a) Wales and (b) Denbighshire? (WAQ46981)

Andrew Davies: Personal injury road accident data are not currently available for 2005. 2005 data are due to be published on 29 June 2006.

In 2004, however, there were (a) eight fatal accidents in Wales involving nine deaths of children aged between four and 16 inclusive. There were (b) no accidents of this type in Denbighshire.

The statistics refer to personal injury accidents on public roads reported to the police and forwarded to the National Assembly for Wales. Figures for deaths refer to people killed immediately or who died within 30 days of the accident.

Ann Jones: What action is the Minister taking to increase the numbers of people in work aged 50 years and over in the Vale of Clwyd constituency? (WAQ46982)

Andrew Davies: The Assembly Government is co-ordinating a range of initiatives including the New Deal 50 plus programme, which through additional jobseeker support helps people into work; the age positive strategy, which demonstrates to employers the benefits of mixed-age workforce and potential, which provides pre-start up support through Prime-Cymru for potential entrepreneurs aged 50 plus.

Ann Jones: What is the Minister's assessment of the (a) economic and (b) social implications of the easing or removing of Sunday trading restrictions? (WAQ47015)

Andrew Davies: Sunday trading is not a devolved matter and I have made no such assessment. However, the Department of Trade and Industry is currently reviewing Sunday trading laws and has taken evidence which is currently being assessed. As part of this process an economic impact study was commissioned for England and Wales, combined, to examine the effect of relaxing the Sunday trading laws. The study estimated that the net benefits to the economy of England and Wales would be some £20 billion over a 20-year period.

Ann Jones: What estimate has the Minister made of the potential for job creation in the green technologies sector in Wales, and will make a statement? (WAQ47027)

Andrew Davies: It is calculated that, as at January 2004, some 12,500 people were employed in the green technologies sector in Wales. This includes such sub-sectors as water and wastewater treatment, air pollution and energy management and renewable energy. The Wales employment forecast by 2010 is 18,100, with potential for further growth being linked to targets in waste management recycling and renewable energy as well as green procurement within the public sector.

Ann Jones: What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that all children in Wales have the opportunity to undertake the cycle proficiency training scheme and test? (WAQ47028)

Andrew Davies: Local authorities are responsible for providing cycle training, including staging cycle proficiency tests. I fully support cycle training as it provides a valuable contribution to my road safety strategy.

Nick Bourne: Has the Welsh Assembly Government provided any financial assistance to npower for the development of wind farms at Rhyl Flats and Gwynt-y-Mor off the north Wales coast, and, if so, will he provide details? (WAQ47031)

Andrew Davies: The Welsh Assembly Government has not provided any financial assistance to npower renewables for the proposed Gwynt-y-Mor or Rhyl Flats offshore wind projects. However, £313,000 was provided to First Hydro Renewables Ltd through a European Regional Development Fund grant to test the feasibility of establishing an offshore windfarm at Rhyl Flats.

Support for offshore renewables is available through the Department of Trade and Industry's capital grants scheme.

Ann Jones: How many road traffic accidents involving illegally ridden mechanically propelled mini-motorbikes occurred in Wales in the last year for which figures are available? (WAQ47037)

Andrew Davies: The Welsh Assembly Government road accident database, which holds personal injury road accident data from 1979 onwards, does not hold identifiable data on accidents and any resultant casualties involving illegally ridden mechanically propelled mini-motorbikes.

Ann Jones: What discussions has the Minister had with the UK Government regarding putting measures in place to prevent the a) sale to and b) use by children aged under 16 years of mechanically propelled mini-motorbikes in Wales? (WAQ47038)

Andrew Davies: This matter has not been devolved. Responsibility rests with the Department for Trade and Industry and the Department for Transport. The Department for Transport is in the process of revising the Highway Code. Draft proposals include the prohibition of most types of mini motorcycles on roads, pavements, footpaths and bridleways.

Christine Chapman: What are the criteria applied in the Welsh Assembly Government's assessment of the value added to the Welsh economy of supporting businesses? (WAQ47059)

Andrew Davies: For regional selective assistance, which is the main instrument of support for larger business in Wales, two tests are applied. For each proposed investment, officials ascertain the Net Present Value to the economy and make an assessment of the Gross Value Added per employee. For applications for grant over £2 million a fuller economic test of the value to the UK economy is made by economists. A quality assessment is also undertaken of each application.

For Assembly Investment Grant, which is only available to small and medium-sized enterprises for support up to £50,000, a quality assessment is undertaken.

Christine Chapman: What information is held on the number of registered companies in Cynon Valley that are a) above the VAT registration threshold, b) below the VAT registration threshold? (WAQ47060)

Andrew Davies: According to the inter-departmental business register maintained by the Office for National Statistics, there are around 380 companies that are based in the Cynon Valley constituency area. Around 290 of these are registered for VAT, and around 90 are not.

The coverage of the IDBR is not complete in respect of all businesses, but is considered to have a high coverage in respect of companies.

Christine Chapman: What assessment has been made of the respective value to the Welsh economy of: a) supporting businesses with high growth potential through the Knowledge Bank for Business, b) assisting ‘lifestyle’ companies that are below the VAT registration threshold? (WAQ47061)

Andrew Davies: Providing support to businesses of all kinds can yield economic benefits. The existence and scale of any benefits will depend on the extent of the market failure being addressed and on the scope for cost-effective Government action. The main aim of Assembly Government support is to invest where the impact on the Welsh economy will be greatest, helping to create and sustain new and better jobs. There is a place for the support of both larger and smaller businesses, therefore intensity of the investment and support is dependant on the returns provided to Wales—rather than simply on the size of business.

Christine Chapman: How many companies in Cynon Valley are being supported under the High growth programme, which is being delivered by Entrepreneur Action? (WAQ47062)

Andrew Davies: Figures are not available at constituency levels. However, in Rhondda Cynon Taf, three companies are currently on the high growth programme. This compares with a total of 37 companies on the programme throughout Wales.

Christine Chapman: Will the Minister give the locations of the 50 businesses identified for work with the Knowledge Bank for Businesses, including the number based in Cynon Valley? (WAQ47063)

Andrew Davies: A list of the names and locations of the first group of companies identified to work with Knowledge Bank for Business was annexed to my report to the Economic Development and Transport Committee on 20 October 2005. The report is available on the National Assembly for Wales internet site through the following link:

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/assemblydata/N000000000000000000000000035998.pdf>

None of the companies listed are based in Cynon Valley. However, following the publication of revised eligibility criteria in the new year, a growing number of potential Knowledge Bank for Business companies have been referred to the Knowledge Bank for Business team. Two are based in Cynon Valley. My officials are engaged with these and other potential companies at present.

Alun Ffred Jones: How much direct foreign investment has there been in Wales in each of the last 10 years, broken down by sector, and what that sum was as a percentage of the total direct foreign investment into (a) the United Kingdom and (b) the European Union? (WAQ47072)

Andrew Davies: I provide UK and Wales figures from 1995-96 to 2004-05 and European figures from 1997-98 (when robust data began to be collected) to 2004-05. The UK and Wales figures are sourced from UK Trade and Investment and exclude 2005-06 because results will not be announced until the summer. The European figures are sourced from Ernst and Young and capture total jobs. Capital investment figures are excluded from the table because UKTI, while capturing the data, does not publicly release the information. Projects, until 1998, were recorded on a standard industrial classification basis rather than sectorally and, to ensure consistency of approach, I have provided global figures.

The databases do not correlate precisely but they do provide for the identification of trends. The UK is the No. 1 location for foreign direct investment into Europe and Wales, with 3 per cent of the UK population and 0.65 per cent of the enlarged Europe, has consistently punched above its weight, although we do need to do more.

I expect, with the establishment of the newly formed International Business Wales, which brings trade and investment together into a cohesive unit, our performance against both functions to improve further in the years ahead.

Year	Geography	Projects	Total Jobs
1995-96	Wales	53	9,031
	UK	497	98,464

Wales's share of projects was 10.66 per cent and 9.17 per cent of jobs.

1996-97	Wales	45	12,653
	UK	497	98,339

Wales's share of projects was 9 per cent and 12.86 per cent of jobs.

1997-98	Wales	55	7,455
	UK	631	129,333
	Europe	2,683	272,209

Wales's share of UK projects was 8.71 per cent and 2 per cent of European and 5.76 per cent of UK jobs and 2.73 per cent of European.

1998-99	Wales	48	7,387
	UK	670	120,740

	Europe	2,305	178,825
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Wales's share of UK projects was 7.16 per cent and 2 per cent of European and 6.1 per cent of UK jobs and 4.1 per cent of European.

1999-2000	Wales	47	7,797
	UK	800	135,952
	Europe	2,111	159,201

Wales's share of UK projects was 5.87 per cent and 2.22 per cent of European and 5.73 per cent of UK jobs and 4.89 per cent of European.

2000-01	Wales	39	6,353
	UK	869	123,779
	Europe	2,087	222,532

Wales's share of UK projects was 4.48 per cent and 1.86 per cent of European and 5.1 per cent of UK jobs and 2.85 per cent of European.

2001-02	Wales	61	7,317
	UK	764	57,888
	Europe	2129	185,318

Wales's share of UK projects was 7.98 per cent and 2.86 per cent of European and 12.6 per cent of UK jobs and 3.94 per cent of European.

2002-03	Wales	60	7,779
	UK	709	54,311
	Europe	1,871	156,088

Wales's share of UK projects was 8.46 per cent and 3.2 per cent of European and 14.3 per cent of UK jobs and 4.98 per cent of European.

2003-04	Wales	67	8,131
	UK	811	59,217
	Europe	1,856	195,594

Wales's share of UK projects was 8.26 per cent and 3.6 per cent of European and 13.7 per cent of UK jobs and 4.15 per cent of European.

2004-05	Wales	56	3,854
	UK	1,066	75,043
	Europe	2,856	203,563

Wales's share of UK projects was 5.25 per cent and 1.96 per cent of European and 5.13 per cent of UK jobs and 1.89 per cent of European.

Michael German: What consideration has the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks given to supporting Scarborough Development Group in its planning appeal against the decision by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council on 4 November 2005 to turn down its Mwyndy Cross application? (WAQ47083)

Andrew Davies: An appeal has been submitted by the Scarborough Development Group and the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks has received the appropriate formal notice. DEIN has not been asked to provide any specific support but will be briefed about progress. The appellants will have available, as evidence, documents which supported the original application and the former Welsh Development Agency property strategy, which provides general support to the provision of a number of high-quality business parks to meet gaps in the market. The strategy followed a review of demand and existing supply undertaken by consultants on behalf of the former WDA. DEIN propose to take forward the monitoring of demand on a regular basis.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on enterprise start-ups in South Wales East? (WAQ47087)

Andrew Davies: Support for enterprise start-ups in South Wales East is delivered through two main programmes: general support for business, and the high growth programme.

In south-east Wales, resources totalling £3,245,000 have been specifically allocated through the general support for business programme for 2006-07 to assist new entrepreneurs to set up businesses, through the following organisations: Business in Focus, Coda Business Management, Entrepreneur Action, Newport and Gwent Enterprise, Tredegar Development Trust, and Venture Wales.

The high growth programme is aimed at those new businesses that will achieve a turnover of £1,000,000 within three years of starting trading and operates across all Wales delivered by Entrepreneur Action.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh Assembly Government funding for manufacturing companies in South Wales East? (WAQ47088)

Andrew Davies: Manufacturing is a core part of the Welsh economy, providing around 14 per cent of jobs, and, at over 19 per cent, making the greatest contribution of any sector in Wales to gross value added.

Regional selective assistance is the main grant provider for the manufacturing sector. Since the inception of the Welsh Assembly Government in 1999, some 441 offers worth £321 million have been made in the south-east region to manufacturing companies. These are expected to create and safeguard some 29,000 jobs and lever in £1.5 billion in capital expenditure.

A recent success is the Quinn Barlo radiator plant at Newport, which is in the process of creating 460 jobs and investing £133 million at the site.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the progress of Welsh Labour's top 10 manifesto commitment to establish a knowledge bank in Wales? (WAQ47089)

Andrew Davies: I launched the Knowledge Bank for Business on a pathfinding basis in September 2005. The aim of KB4B is to work with individual high-growth companies in Wales to develop tailored business support solutions to help them grow more rapidly. The KB4B team is positively engaged with a group of around 80 confirmed and potential clients across Wales at present. Officials are working closely with stakeholders in the public and private sectors to build on existing synergies, and further develop the client offering to ensure that it is fit for purpose and continues to meet business expectations. A review of this new initiative will take place at the end of its pathfinding year.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on 'Achieving our Potential 2006-13'? (WAQ47090)

Andrew Davies: 'Achieving Our Potential' was launched by the First Minister in March 2000. A mid-term review found that good progress had been made on implementing the action plan through a range of partnership-based initiatives. The review was informed by a futures exercise undertaken by Henley and a UK Tourism Summit, together with an extensive consultation exercise. The review has resulted in a refreshed strategy which will cover the period 2006 to 2013 to align with the new structural funds programme. The revised strategy is supported by a new action plan designed to address the strategic challenges facing the industry.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the relief of congestion caused by vehicles passing through the centre of small towns in Wales? (WAQ47091)

Andrew Davies: Details of major schemes for reducing the impact of congestion on the trunk road network are provided in the trunk road forward programme 2002 and 2004 supplement. A further £0.5 million is spent annually mitigating the adverse effects of traffic on local communities in accordance with the rural town and village Initiative.

Jonathan Morgan: What innovative measures is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to safeguard manufacturing jobs in Wales? (WAQ47092)

Andrew Davies: The Welsh Assembly Government is supporting an extensive range of programmes specifically designed to assist Welsh manufacturers face increasingly global pressures. Key initiatives include Technium, Manufacturing Advisory Service Wales, Design Wales, the centres of excellence programme, SMART Cymru, Wales Innovation Relay Centre, the Wales Innovators Network, the technology collaboration programme, and the refocused regional selective assistance scheme.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the local supplier development project in Wales? (WAQ47093)

Andrew Davies: The local supplier development project is a pan-Wales European-funded project which aims to help businesses create effective inter-trading relationships and to provide practical assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises in winning both private and public sector contracts.

This is provided by a team of 10 regional supplier champions who provide businesses with one to one support, arrange events such as how to tender workshops, and meet the buyers events, e.g. a business speed networking evening recently held at Prestatyn attracted 40 SMEs, and an 'opening doors' road show event is being held at OpTIC, St Asaph on the 16 June 2006: and to assist the businesses to register on the website www.contractshop.co.uk

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on economic development targets in south-east Wales? (WAQ47094)

Andrew Davies: Our approach, set out in 'Wales: A Vibrant Economy', is to track progress in the Welsh economy through a range of economic indicators. Since 1999, in south-east Wales the working-age employment rate has increased by 1.9 percentage points, to stand at 70.6 per cent, and rates of economic inactivity and unemployment have both fallen, by 0.5 and 2.0 percentage points respectively, to stand at 25.2 per cent and 5.5 per cent. Such figures help demonstrate the effectiveness of the Welsh Assembly Government's policies to date.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on the promotion of tourism in north Wales? (WAQ47095)

Andrew Davies: North Wales is a key tourism area for Wales. This is reflected in VisitWales marketing materials and in the current UK market 'Go Welsh' television advertisement which concentrates on north Wales. The Assembly Government is also providing Tourism Partnership North Wales with just over £1.1 million this year to promote and develop tourism in the area.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on community association projects in Wales? (WAQ47096)

Andrew Davies: I am providing £3 million over three years for 15 demonstration projects testing a range of ways to improve accessibility for severely disabled people on community transport. Funded projects include Welsh Border Community Transport in Flintshire, North Denbighshire Dial a Ride, and Conwy Community Transport. The Community Transport Association is managing the scheme on my behalf. The association will monitor the performance of each project throughout and disseminate all emerging findings to its members and to the wider voluntary and community transport sectors.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on planned improvements to the mid Wales transport infrastructure? (WAQ47097)

Andrew Davies: Starting with our trunk roads, we have a wide range of improvements planned, the largest of which are listed in our trunk roads forward programme. We have a number of smaller but still significant schemes being actively pursued, such as at Glandyfi on the A487 and at Llansantffraed on the A40.

We continue to invest in new and enhanced vehicles and services as part of our strategy for a high-quality network of longer distance bus services, branded TrawsCambria.

With regard to rail, we are continuing to improve rail links, by supporting a number of services through mid Wales and eliminating unsafe crossings on the Cambrian line.

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning discussions held with BT on how their upgrade of phone lines across the UK will be implemented in Wales? (WAQ47098)

Andrew Davies: By summer 2005 BT Wholesale had upgraded the majority of telephone exchanges throughout Wales as part of its UK-wide broadband upgrade programme to offer DSL capability. The regional innovative broadband support project, part of my Broadband Wales programme, will ensure that the remaining unviable exchanges in Wales are upgraded to offer DSL technology. The rollout timetable of unviable telephone exchange enablement ready for service dates are published on the Broadband Wales website, www.wales.gov.uk/broadband. Since all exchanges will be DSL-enabled by the end of 2006 this means that they will be included in BT wholesale's DSL max roll-out programme where broadband speeds up to 8 Mbps will be available.

In respect of BT's 21CN project I can confirm that Wales will be the first region in the UK to be migrated onto BT's next generation network, when 350,000 customers in Cardiff and the surrounding area will have their phone services upgraded from around the end of 2006 onwards. BT's next generation network represents a major investment by the company that will put their customers and Wales at the forefront of innovation in communications worldwide.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the amount of transport grant paid to councils in south Wales since 1999? (WAQ47099)

Andrew Davies: We have allocated over £500 million of transport grant resources to local authorities in south Wales during 1999-2000 to 2006-07.

Owen John Thomas: What initiatives does the Welsh Assembly Government have to encourage entrepreneurship? (WAQ47100)

Andrew Davies: The entrepreneurship action plan has successfully encouraged entrepreneurship by supporting almost 6,000 new business starts each year. This includes groups under-represented in business such as women, Welsh speakers and ethnic minorities, as well as social enterprises. Other programmes include support for graduate entrepreneurship through the knowledge exploitation fund, and encouraging business growth through the general business service. Access to finance has been facilitated by Finance Wales.

Owen John Thomas: What was the Welsh Assembly Government's response to a recent request from Arriva Trains Wales for additional funding to increase its rolling stock? (WAQ47101)

Andrew Davies: I have received a number of proposals for additional rolling stock from Arriva Trains Wales to meet future demand. I have asked for more detail on the proposals and am currently awaiting the responses.

Eleanor Burnham: What discussions has the Minister had with his Westminster counterparts regarding nuclear power? (WAQ47102)

Andrew Davies: I have discussed a range of issues relating to the nuclear industry with UK Government Ministers, particularly the extension of the operational life of Wylfa nuclear power station on Anglesey. The Welsh Assembly Government's position remains that, given the large amount of proposed new generation capacity, there is no requirement for new nuclear build in Wales.

Glyn Davies: What is the anticipated lifespan of the badger-proof fencing put up alongside the highway at the recently completed improvement works on the Esgairdraenllwyn bends on the A483 in Montgomeryshire? (WAQ47123)

Andrew Davies: The badger-and-otter-proof fence is expected to last for 15 years before renewal is needed.

Glyn Davies: What was the cost of the badger-proof fencing put up alongside the highway at the recently completed improvement works on the Esgairdraenllwyn bends on the A483 in Montgomeryshire? (WAQ47124)

Andrew Davies: The badger-and-otter-proof fencing cost approximately £35,000.

Glyn Davies: What were the actual costs for the recently completed improvement works on the Esgairdraenllwyn bends on the A483 in Montgomeryshire? (WAQ47125)

Andrew Davies: Against a tender price of £1.76 million, the final account cost of the scheme was £2.1 million.

The additional costs were mainly incurred in:

additional earthworks and drainage to earthworks required due to unforeseen ground conditions,

additional geotechnical monitoring instruments to ensure that slopes remain stable.

Glyn Davies: What was the budgeted cost for the recently completed improvement works on the Esgairdraenllwyn bends on the A483 in Montgomeryshire? (WAQ47126)

Andrew Davies: The successful tender price for the works was £1.76 million.

Michael German: What is your department doing in wake of job losses at the Printpac in Cwmbran? (WAQ47137)

Andrew Davies: Team Wales has offered confidential advice to former staff regarding benefits, training, employment and self-employment opportunities.

As part of this process, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning's ReACT programme will be made available and will provide opportunities for the former staff to retrain as well as provide incentives for local employers to provide alternative, sustainable employment.

Questions to the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Owen John Thomas: Pa gamau yw'r Gweinidog yn eu cymryd i sicrhau cyflenwad digonol o athrawon rhugl eu Cymraeg er mwyn creu Cymru ddwyieithog? (WAQ46894) [W]

Y Gweinidog dros Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau (Jane Davidson): Cyheoddais ar 29 Mawrth fwrriadau Llywodraeth y Cynulliad ar gyfer newid hyfforddiant cychwynnol i athrawon. Yr oedd fy mhapur yn argymhell llunio cynllun newid ar gyfer hyfforddiant cychwynnol i athrawon i gwmpasu'r cyfnod byr i ganolig ac i ymdrin â nifer o feysydd, gan gynnwys y ffactorau sy'n effeithio ar yr hyfforddiant cychwynnol i athrawon a ddarperir trwy'r Gymraeg.

Yn y cynllun newid tymor byr ar gyfer 2006-07, yr wyf wedi dweud y caiff arolwg manylach ei gynnal o'r hyn sy'n effeithio ar hyfforddiant cychwynnol i athrawon cyfrwng Cymraeg ac y byddwn yn edrych ar y cyflenwad o athrawon cyfrwng Cymraeg a'r galw ac ar gynhyrchu dulliau modelu cadarn i'n helpu i gynllunio'n well.

Owen John Thomas: What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that there is an adequate supply of teachers who are fluent Welsh-speakers? (WAQ46894) [W]

Jane Davidson: I announced on 29 March how the Welsh Assembly Government intends to take forward changes in initial teacher training provision. My paper set out an ITT change plan covering the short to medium term which aims to tackle a number of principal issues, including exploring issues affecting Welsh-medium ITT provision.

In the short-term 2006-07 ITT change plan I have said that there will be a more specific review of the issues surrounding Welsh medium ITT provision, to look at future supply and demand issues for Welsh medium teachers and the production of robust modelling methods to assist with better planning

William Graham: What advice does the Minister's department give to parliamentary, Assembly, European and local election candidates in Wales removing their children from school during term time for campaigning purposes? (WAQ46921)

Jane Davidson: National Assembly for Wales Guidance Circular 3/99 'Pupil Support and Social Inclusion' contains advice and guidance on school attendance.

Where a pupil of compulsory school age is absent from school during term time, it must be recorded whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent from school, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted by the school as satisfactory justification for absence.

Only schools, and not parents, can authorise an absence, and schools must consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable before doing so.

Authorised absences includes absences for public performances and employment (licensed by the local authority), approved absences for family bereavements, on days set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/pupil belongs and special occasions.

Absences for special occasions should be considered carefully by schools and only authorised in exceptional circumstances. Schools should consider the nature of the event, its frequency, whether advance notice was given, and the pupil's overall attendance pattern.

William Graham: What consideration has the Minister given to implementing a policy in Wales similar to that of the music manifesto in England? (WAQ46930)

Jane Davidson: None at present. The Assembly Government made funding of £17 million available to support the development of local education authority music services through the music development fund between 1999 and 2005. This funding was transferred into the revenue settlement for 2005-6 in accordance with the Assembly grant protocol. It is the responsibility of local authorities to consider what support they should provide for music.

Peter Black: What additional resources have been made available to assist schools to prepare for changes in the national curriculum and in particular with changes in the science curriculum in the next academic year? (WAQ46952)

Jane Davidson: There are no changes to the national curriculum in the forthcoming year, with the exception of science at key stage 4. From September 2006, as part of Learning Pathways, schools will be able to choose from a wider range of

science qualifications, including more vocational options, to ensure that learners will have a greater choice over what they do. The Qualification, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales had previously published and disseminated guidance to schools to help manage these changes, which have been broadly welcomed by all. No additional resources are necessary as these changes will be introduced as part of the normal cycle of qualifications development. In line with past practice when there have been major changes to curriculum requirements and assessment arrangements, I shall be considering how some Better Schools Fund resources might be made available to support schools with the implementation of these changes in due course.

Janet Ryder: Following the transfer of responsibility from the Department for Education and Skills to the Minister, a) how does the Minister intend to redraw guidelines for the assessment of students with a disability to ensure students will be assessed through the medium of Welsh if they so wish, and b) what assessment has the Minister made of the need to develop suitable material and suitably qualified staff to enable assessment of students with a disability in Welsh? (WAQ46958)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Language Act 1993 requires that the Welsh and English languages should be treated equally in relation to the provision of services to the public in Wales. In their dealings with children and their parents all statutory bodies must fulfil any requirements imposed on them by the Act, and adhere to the policies contained in their Welsh language schemes and Welsh education schemes. This is further reinforced by 'Iaith Pawb', our national action plan for a bilingual Wales (2003), which acknowledges the right of pupils and parents of pupils with additional learning needs to receive educational provision in the language of their choice.

LEAs must have regard to meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs in accordance with parental preference for Welsh-medium or English-medium education and educational support provision. Parents who wish their children to receive their education through the medium of Welsh have the right to express their preference under the Education Act 1996. LEAs and Governing Bodies are under a duty to have regard to any preference expressed by parents. When assessing a child's needs it is appropriate to assess the child in the preferred language of either English or Welsh, and steps should be taken to ensure that all those involved in this process are made aware of the pupil's language needs.

The SEN Code of Practice gives clear guidance on provision and services which should be available in the Welsh language or bilingually. Statutory advice from the Welsh Language Board has been provided to local education authorities to this effect.

In 2002 the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Language Board jointly commissioned the University of Wales, Bangor to conduct extensive research into Welsh-medium and bilingual education for children and young people with additional learning needs. The results of this research was published in the report 'Acknowledging Need', which sets out a number of recommendations to improve Welsh-medium and bilingual education for children and young people.

Part 1 of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee policy review of SEN, which considered early identification and intervention, recommends that we publish a timetable for implementing the recommendations of the 'Acknowledging Need' report. The action plan to take forward the recommendations of 'Acknowledging Need' has now been produced and published on www.learning.wales.gov.uk.

For the period 2003-05 the Welsh Assembly Government has provided a total of £16,000 to Swansea local education authority for the translation of the all-Wales reading test and the production of a corpus of Welsh-medium texts (launched in February 2005). We are currently funding further work by the all-Wales reading group in adapting the

reading tests for use by partially sighted pupils. These materials are available to all local education authorities in Wales.

In September 2005 a Welsh language adviser was seconded to the Assembly for a term to undertake a scoping exercise of all available bilingual SEN resources across Wales. It is hoped that materials will now be made available to teachers and support staff through the National Grid for Learning website to enable teachers and practitioners to share resources.

Finally, we have recently made available £90,000 over three years for the development of Welsh specific resources by the School of Psychology at the University of Wales, Bangor. This is ground-breaking work in the development of Welsh language assessment tests in speech, language and verbal reasoning skills which are language specific not merely a translation of English materials.

Nick Bourne: How much of the Welsh Assembly Government's £5.1 million fund for special school pilot projects, 'unlocking the potential of special schools', is allocated for Powys over the next three years? (WAQ46959)

Jane Davidson: We have allocated £241,222 to Powys LEA over the three years from September 2006 for this initiative.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh Assembly Government funding for foundation schools in Wales? (WAQ46960)

Jane Davidson: Foundation schools receive their delegated budgets from their local authorities in the same way as other maintained schools. Funding for capital investment is also provided by the local authority.

Delegated budgets for all maintained schools (community, local authority, voluntary controlled, and foundation) are derived from application of the local authority's funding formula for schools. Authorities are required to consult their school budget forum on the formula.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on how funds from the raising attainment and individual standards in education in Wales programme are distributed to schools in Wales? (WAQ46961)

Jane Davidson: I want to ensure that the RAISE programme targets schools with the highest level of deprivation and that funding is sufficiently focused to ensure that all those in receipt of grant receive funding at a level sufficient to make a real impact. Schools with more than 50 pupils of compulsory school age on roll and a proportion of those pupils eligible for free school meals in excess of 20 per cent will therefore receive a grant allocation.

Schools with fewer than 50 pupils have been omitted from the grant allocation. By definition these schools will have relatively small numbers of pupils with free school meals entitlement: and they are also eligible to benefit from the small and rural schools grant that the Assembly provides to local authorities.

We have only used pupils of compulsory school age in calculation of RAISE allocations. Children are excluded if they were not of compulsory school age on 31 August 2004 (when looking at January 2005 pupil level annual school census data). The reason we use this is that some LEAs have nursery schools, some schools have nursery classes and some

LEAs have different arrangement for pupils entering reception classes. To use all ages would be unfair to some schools according to their LEA policy and practice. LEAs also have different policies regarding free school meal entitlement for under-fives, in one LEA they may be eligible to claim but in another not.

We have used free schools meals data as a measure of disadvantage as it is available at a pupil level allowing us to direct resource at the pupils who need it. There is a strong link between achievement and the level of entitlement to free school meals: as the level of FSM entitlement in a school increases, the level of achievement decreases (Assembly statistical bulletin 20/2006). FSM are also used as a proxy for disadvantage by both Estyn and Ofsted.

Schools with over 20 per cent FSM are the schools facing the greatest incidence of pupil disadvantage. Limiting grant to these schools both ensures that it is targeted where it is most needed and that individual schools have sufficient resource to tackle the link between disadvantage and under-performance.

For secondary schools we have based FSM calculations on a three-year average of PLASC data (2003/04/05 PLASC) to take account of fluctuations in eligibility and pupil numbers. For primary and special schools we have based FSM calculations on January 2005 PLASC data (three-year data is not available for all of these schools). PLASC 2005 is the most recent complete and validated data set available.

Once the PLASC 2006 dataset is complete and validated, we will identify any additional schools which as a result meet the RAISE eligibility criteria and notify them, via their LEA of a RAISE allocation. We have held back £300,000 from the amount of £14.4 million identified for distribution to schools to assist in meeting the cost of funding these additional schools.

Having identified those schools eligible for RAISE according to the above criteria grant has been allocated on the basis that each eligible school receives a 'floor' allocation (primary schools—£10,000, special schools—£15,000, secondary schools—£25,000)

Primary and special schools then receive a further amount of grant based on numbers of FSM pupils on roll at January 2005.

Secondary schools receive a further amount based on FSM pupils on roll (2003/04/05) weighted as follows.

FSM 40 per cent or above—FSM pupils x 2

FSM 30 per cent to 39.99 per cent—FSM pupils x 1.5

FSM 20 per cent to 29.99 per cent—FSM pupils x 1

These weightings reflect the fact that the problems faced by schools with very high FSM, in terms of proportion of pupils, are significantly greater than for those with lower proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Grant will be paid via local authorities but with specified amounts for each eligible school.

The table attached as annex A to this response provides summary information of the number of schools, by sector in each LEA receiving RAISE funding along with a summary total for each LEA area.

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
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Anglesey	171,487	125,046	18,042	314,575	13	2	1	16
Gwynedd	133,206	0	16,183	149,389	10	0	1	11
Conwy	215,682	61,366	19,394	296,442	16	1	1	18
Denbighshire	72,813	53,703	36,675	163,191	5	1	2	8
Flintshire	232,019	53,920	18,718	304,656	17	1	1	19
Wrexham	244,384	109,213	19,563	373,160	18	2	1	21
Powys	87,659	0	32,619	120,279	7	0	2	9
Ceredigion	88,758	53,630	0	142,388	7	1	0	8
Pembrokeshire	227,342	89,129	16,690	333,161	16	1	1	18
Carmarthenshire	393,028	265,276	16,267	674,571	30	4	1	35
Swansea	675,231	868,043	17,450	1,560,725	44	8	1	53
Neath Port Talbot	528,371	395,290	19,985	943,646	38	5	1	44
Bridgend	418,038	209,982	40,308	668,329	30	3	2	35
Vale	143,569	0	33,295	176,864	9	0	2	11
RCT	941,449	1,036,309	55,984	2,033,742	66	11	3	80
Merthyr	282,352	271,762	19,309	573,423	19	3	1	23
Caerphilly	569,013	392,455	17,281	978,749	38	6	1	45
Blaenau Gwent	325,871	338,210	16,774	680,855	22	5	1	28
Torfaen	293,252	136,072	0	429,324	19	2	0	21
Monmouthshire	67,152	0	20,323	87,475	5	0	1	6
Newport	467,746	485,498	16,774	970,018	28	4	1	33
Cardiff	883,185	1,154,518	87,336	2,125,039	53	11	5	69
WALES	7,461,606	6,099,422	538,972	14,100,000	510	71	30	611

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on why Brynmawr Foundation School, Blaenau Gwent, is currently not one of the schools from the area set to benefit from the RAISE programme? (WAQ46962)

Jane Davidson: To be eligible for RAISE funding a school must meet the published criteria. Secondary schools must have a free school meal entitlement average over three years in excess of 20 per cent. Data has been drawn from school PLASC returns for 2003/04/05 to generate FSM averages. Brynmawr School has a three-year average of 12.7 per cent and, therefore, does not qualify for RAISE funding.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how many Universities in Wales received higher education innovation fund awards during January to May 2006? (WAQ46973)

Jane Davidson: The higher education innovation fund is administered by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and is available only to higher education institutions in England.

In Wales the Third Mission Fund is administered by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. All HEIs in Wales benefit from this Fund, which is set at £5.1 million for 2006-07 and increases to £6.1 million next financial year. The fund complements the support provided by the Welsh Assembly Government's knowledge exploitation fund.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the Assembly Government's policy in relation to the education of Welsh children in boarding schools? (WAQ46998)

Jane Davidson: Boarding schools represent one of a range of options that parents and local authorities may use to provide education to children and young people. As with all schools the Welsh Assembly Government remains committed to ensuring that they provide education of a sufficient standard and that they have positive environments and are safe for children and young people to attend. The commencement of provisions in the Education Act 2002 and introduction of new regulations have brought all independent boarding schools into Estyn's regular inspection cycle similar to that for maintained schools and has increased the level of inspection. Boarding schools are also subject to inspection by the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales and the Assembly Government continues to improve the level of coordination between all parties involved in inspection through the refinement of protocols.

I am also concerned that boarding schools should be used appropriately for children looked after by local authorities or for those with complex learning needs. The Assembly Government has set up a stakeholder group to look at all aspects of the provision of education and training for looked after children and aspects of the appropriateness of placements will figure highly in their discussions. The Assembly Government is developing an inclusion policy and performance framework for Wales, which will meet the needs of all children and young people with additional educational needs.

Ann Jones: What steps is the Minister taking to improve education provision and support for looked-after children and vulnerable adults in Wales? (WAQ46999)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government has established a task group (stakeholder group) made up of key internal and external stakeholders to inform the development of a programme of work designed to promote the educational achievement of look after children and care leavers. The work programme will be informed by existing

developments in other parts of the UK and good practice going on within Wales and will focus on improving the educational attainment of looked after children and supporting more children to continue with education employment and training beyond the age of 16. The group will, in particular, consider how the new duty under the Children Act 2004 for local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children can be used to strengthen the authority's corporate parenting responsibilities on this aspect.

New funding of £1 million for 2006-07 and 2007-08 has been made available by the Welsh Assembly Government Cabinet for the purpose of supporting the education of looked-after children. Each local authority will receive a share of £1 million to support the learning of looked after pupils. The funding is intended to enable authorities to support these children and young people – particularly those in years 10 and 11 – so as to enable them to move on to further and higher education or to work-based learning.

All local young people's partnerships set up under the 'Extending Entitlement Direction and Guidance are required to produce a five-year rolling strategy which includes the YPP's proposals for 'Keeping in Touch' with young people. They are required to work proactively to reduce the numbers of young people in their area who are Neither in education employment or training by keeping in touch with them and providing support. They have to establish systems at a local level which make timely, supportive interventions, helpful to and valued by young people rather than anything more heavy-handed.

Research has been commissioned into establishing a common baseline for counting and developing knowledge on harder to reach young people and their access to entitlements. This research has recently been completed and is currently being considered by officials.

The second young offenders learning project seeks to improve the education and training provision, which is available for all young people aged 11 to 25 in and from Wales who are known to youth offending teams or otherwise clients of the criminal justice system. This is within the context of current Welsh Assembly Government policies applicable to such young people.

Our strategy for basic literacy and numeracy skills, 'Words Talk, Numbers Count', provides a comprehensive and all-age approach to raise these skills. In addition to the valuable work undertaken in early years and in schools, vulnerable young people and adults will be assisted through support projects for offenders and ex-offenders, speakers of other languages, groups at risk of social exclusion and for young people. Our made-in-Wales employer pledge scheme supports adults in the workplace who have poor basic skills.

Ann Jones: What requirements there are for new school buildings in Wales (a) to use renewable sources of energy and (b) to maximise energy efficiency? (WAQ47000)

Jane Davidson: All new school buildings have to conform with the current building regulations and Building Research Establishment environmental assessment method standards for schools have been promulgated to local authorities.

Ann Jones: What consideration has the Minister given to requiring all new school buildings in Wales to be fitted with automatic fire sprinklers? (WAQ47001) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration.*

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): We are exploring the issues with key stakeholders,

through the auspices of both the Fire and Rescue Service Advisory Committee and the Community Fire Safety Committee. The latter having tasked the joint arson group for Wales to develop an all-Wales arson strategy, which will include recommendations on school sprinklers.

JAG's initial report is expected in September, for consideration by the Community Fire Safety Committee.

Ann Jones: What is the average pupil/teacher ratio in primary schools in (a) Denbighshire, (b) the North Wales Region and (c) Wales in each year since 2001? (WAQ47002)

Jane Davidson: The pupil-teacher ratio for primary schools in Denbighshire, the North Wales Region and Wales is shown in the following table:

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Denbighshire	23.3	22.3	22.2	21.4	21.5
North Wales Region (a)	21.3	20.9	20.8
Wales	21.5	21.0	20.6	20.7	20.7

(a) The north Wales region includes the following constituencies: Ynys Môn, Caernarfon, Conwy, Clwyd West, Vale of Clwyd, Delyn, Alyn and Deeside, Wrexham and Clwyd South. Data for years prior to 2003 are not currently available.

Ann Jones: How much was spent per head on education for pupils aged (a) five to 10, (b) 11 to 15 and (c) 16 years and over in (i) Denbighshire and (ii) Wales in each year since 2001? (WAQ47003)

Jane Davidson: The available information is given in the table below. Expenditure information is not available by age range.

Ann Jones: What percentage of Welsh children in care in each local authority are receiving education in (a) state run, and (b) independent boarding schools? (WAQ47025)

Jane Davidson: Figures are available centrally only for the total number of children whose placement is in a residential school. No breakdown is available centrally as to whether placements are in state run or independent schools. The figures are shown in the table below:

Local authority expenditure on education, per pupil (a)

		£
	Denbighshire	Wales

	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
2001-02	2,439	3,058	2,797	3,400
2002-03	2,658	3,262	2,924	3,520
2003-04	2,896	3,502	3,214	3,872
2004-05	3,143	3,770	3,421	4,057

Source: Revenue outturn forms

(a) Includes SEN provisions within primary and secondary but excludes special schools expenditure. Pupil numbers are full-time equivalents taken from the January census for each year adjusted to be on a financial year basis. Excludes central service.

Owen John Thomas: Pa gamau y mae'r Gweinidog yn eu cymryd i sicrhau bod yr awdurdodau addysg lleol sydd â'r potensial mwyaf i dyfu yn cynnal arolygon o'r galw am addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg ymysg rhieni sydd â phlant o dan dair blwydd oed, er mwyn helpu i baratoi cynlluniau cadarn a thryloyw i ddod ag ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg o fewn cyrraedd pawb? (WAQ47029) [W]

Jane Davidson: Mae'r cynlluniau addysg sengl yn cael eu cyhoeddi ar hyn o bryd ar gyfer ymgynghori. Byddant yn cael eu harchwilio'n ofalus a bydd Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru yn ymateb i bob un ohonynt. Erbyn hyn mae nifer o awdurdodau wedi nodi eu bod yn bwriadu cynnal arolygon. Byddwn yn annog awdurdodau perthnasol nad ydynt yn bwriadu gwneud hynny i gynnal arolygon. Lle mae'r awdurdodau addysg lleol yn bwriadu ymestyn y ddarpariaeth cyfrwng Cymraeg, gall yr arolygon lywio'r broses ymgynghori drwy roi tystiolaeth i bartïon â diddordeb fod angen ymestyn y ddarpariaeth.

Owen John Thomas: What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the local education authorities with the greatest potential for growth undertake surveys of the demand for Welsh-medium education amongst parents of children under the age of three in order to assist in the preparation of robust and transparent plans to bring Welsh medium schools within everyone's reach? (WAQ47029) [W]

Jane Davidson: Single education plans are currently being published for consultation. These are being scrutinised and the Welsh Assembly Government will respond to each one. A number of authorities have so far indicated that surveys are planned. We will urge relevant authorities to undertake surveys where there appears to be no current intention to do so. Where LEAs intend to expand Welsh-medium provision, surveys have the potential to inform the consultation process by providing interested parties with evidence that such an expansion is necessary.

Lisa Francis: Why are exceptionally gifted 15-year-old students who go to sixth form a year early not entitled to education maintenance allowances like their peers in further education? (WAQ47081)

Jane Davidson: The eligibility criteria for those young people studying at sixth forms in schools or at further education colleges are identical. The education maintenance Allowance scheme provides an incentive, for those who have reached compulsory school leaving age, to remain in education. It is designed to encourage all those eligible 16 to 18-year-olds to make the best of the learning opportunity irrespective of their ability.

Lisa Francis: In light of current Government initiatives to encourage healthy eating on the part of children, what action does the Minister intend to take to stop the sales of fast foods by mobile vendors both on school premises and at the school gates during lunch hours? (WAQ47086)

Jane Davidson: The presence of mobile vendors on school premises is a matter for the headteacher and governing body of a school. I expect them to take account of the need to promote healthy eating when considering approval or reviewing existing permissions.

I have made clear my intention to set nutritional standards for all food available on school premises throughout the whole school day, under the provisions of the Education and Inspection Bill. I would expect those to apply to food provided by mobile vendors operating on school premises.

Where mobile vendors operate outside school premises, this is a matter for the local authority to consider in applying trading and highways requirements, though schools also have a role in terms of permitting pupils to leave school premises during the school day.

Glyn Davies: Is the Minister able to suggest to Powys County Council access to any other sources of capital funding for schools in this or subsequent years? (WAQ47119)

Glyn Davies: Will the Minister guarantee to make up the reduction of £1.573 million in school buildings improvement grants allocated to Powys County Council in 2006-07 and 2007-08 in 2008-09 and 2009-10? (WAQ47120)

Glyn Davies: Why did the Minister decide in February 2006 to reduce the allocation of funding for school buildings improvement by £1,573,000 to Powys County Council over the years 2006-07 and 2007-08? (WAQ47121)

Glyn Davies: What indicative amounts of school buildings improvement grant were given to Powys County Council in 2003 by the Minister for each of the years to 2010? (WAQ47122)

Jane Davidson: Capital investment in schools is the responsibility of local authorities. They are able to use annual capital allocations—general capital funding—provided by the Assembly Government on an unhypothecated basis, capital receipts and prudential borrowing. It is essential that every authority allocates appropriate amounts of its own resources for capital investment in schools to ensure that the objective of ensuring all school buildings are in good condition and fit for purpose is achieved.

In addition, the Assembly Government provides authorities with school buildings improvement grant, which is ring-fenced for school buildings. SBIG grant was increased to £74.685 million in 2005-06. It continues at this level in 2006-07 and is set to do so until at least 2010. The increase in 2005-06 and beyond reflects the decision to allocate each local authority a lump sum of £9 million for larger projects in the period 2005 to 2010 in addition to an annual formula share.

The first tranche of £9 million SBIG funding was allocated to those authorities able to undertake projects in 2005-06 and 2006-07. Powys County Council had approval of £2.9 million in 2005-06 and £4.2 million in 2006-07, for Penmaes Special School and Maesydderwen High School.

For 2006-07 and 2007-08 the need to accommodate higher than expected expenditure on £9 million shares schemes has reduced the amount available for formula shares. All authorities were advised by letter in March 2005 that there would be a reduced amount available for formula SBIG for 2006-07 and 2007-08: and that they should plan accordingly.

The eventual outcome was a requirement of £54 million in 2006-07 for £9 million shares schemes. That, together with nearly £3 million allocated for regional special educational needs facilities, left £17.9 million available for formula SBIG. A similar amount is likely to be available in 2007-08. However the continuing SBIG funding of £74.685 million until 2010 and the reduced call on it for £9 million shares schemes in 2008-09 and 2009-10 mean that formula SBIG allocations will be significantly higher for those years and in effect the reductions for 2006-07 and 2007-08 will be reinstated. The exact amounts for individual authorities in each of those years will depend on the exact timing of remaining expenditure on £9 million shares schemes and the amount required for regional SEN facilities.

No indicative amounts of school buildings improvement grant are provided to individual local authorities for forward years. However authorities are aware of the overall level of available funding and of the formula used to distribute it. Authorities are therefore encouraged to plan against the projected levels—taking account also of the use of their own resources. The need to manage both the large project allocations and formula shares within the overall total has complicated matters but it should be possible for 2007-08 and beyond to give authorities an earlier and firmer picture of likely SBIG formula allocations against which they can plan than proved possible for 2006-07.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Laura Anne Jones: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to secure price increases for Welsh dairy farmers? (WAQ46956)

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): The milk price level received by producers is not within the Assembly Government's direct control. It is driven by commercial and market factors.

The Assembly Government's strategy is to add value to milk in Wales by developing products, which compete on quality, not on price and which are effectively branded.

Ann Jones: When does the Minister anticipate the rights of way provisions (clauses 67 to 71) in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 will be commenced in Wales? (WAQ46992)

Carwyn Jones: I expect the above provisions to come into force before the end of 2006. However, section 67, which restricts applications for new byways open to all traffic based on historic evidence, will be retrospective to the 19 May 2005 i.e. the date the legislation was introduced to Parliament.

Ann Jones: How many miles of 'restricted byway' does the Minister anticipate will be created in Wales as a

consequence of the commencement of the rights of way provisions (clauses 67 to 71) in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act? (WAQ46993)

Carwyn Jones: I understand there is a network of around 1,000 miles of restricted byways across Wales. The term 'restricted byway' replaced the term roads used as public paths in Wales on 11 May 2006 under provisions contained in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The provisions of sections 61 to 67 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 only relate to restricted byways in so far as they will prevent them from being upgraded to byways open to all traffic (with rights for motor vehicles) on the basis of historical use by non-motorised vehicles.

Ann Jones: What steps is the Minister taking to reduce Welsh food miles and their contribution to carbon dioxide emissions in Wales? (WAQ46994)

Carwyn Jones: Following the merger of the former WDA Food Directorate into my department, we are focusing on the promotion of local food as a way of reducing food miles and contributing to sustainability.

This is being done through encouraging the public sector to purchase more local produce: promoting True Taste Wales food and drink award-winning produce to consumers across Wales: funding food and drink festivals across Wales to promote local produce, and working with supermarkets in their local sourcing initiatives.

This work is all carried out within the European state aid framework.

Ann Jones: How many municipal incinerators does the Minister expect to be commissioned in Wales in the next five years? (WAQ46995)

Carwyn Jones: The Assembly Government does not support the incineration of municipal waste without energy recovery. The Wales waste strategy recognises that energy from waste has a role to play as part of a balanced waste management system which also emphasises waste minimisation, recycling and composting. Energy from waste, which can include incineration, can replace landfill for the disposal of residual waste. The actual number, type and timing of any facilities will depend on the outcome of discussions between Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities.

Ann Jones: What plans does the Minister have to improve access for canoeists to the rivers of Wales? (WAQ46996)

Carwyn Jones: At my request, Environment Agency Wales, in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales and the Sports Council for Wales, are developing a new strategic plan for better public access to our rivers and lakes. This co-ordinated approach should assist in developing a sustainable solution to improving access to water for canoeists. In parallel a number of pilot access agreements are being developed which, if successful, may be replicated in other parts of Wales.

Ann Jones: What was the largest single farmer subsidy, including EU subsidy, paid to a farmer in Vale Clwyd constituency in (a) 2004 and (b) 2005? (WAQ46997)

Carwyn Jones: We are unable to identify individual payments to farmers in the Vale of Clwyd constituency area as the information is stored on a county basis. Currently, the largest amount of subsidies paid to an individual farmer in Clwyd relating to the 2005 single farm payment scheme is £146,592.18. However, we are still issuing 2005 scheme year payments and until this process is complete this figure may change.

You will be aware that we recently published details of the 2005 subsidy payments. The question relating to disclosure of 2004 subsidy payment however, involves complex legal issues. These are the subject of ongoing discussions with the information commissioner's office. My current view is that it would be unlawful for the Welsh Assembly Government to make this information publicly available. I would nevertheless expect the level of payments made to individuals in 2004 to be very similar to the level of payments made to individuals in 2005.

Ann Jones: What estimate has the Minister made of the contribution of migrant workers to the Welsh rural economy in 2005? (WAQ47020)

Ann Jones: How many migrant workers worked on British farms in 2005, and how many he estimates there will be in 2006? (WAQ47019)

Ann Jones: What is the Minister's best estimate of the number of farmers in Wales whose profitability is dependent on migrant labour? (WAQ47018)

Carwyn Jones: In relation to your first and third questions, the information is not available in the format requested. At a UK level, the best data source is the Home Office worker registration scheme which shows that there were some 345,000 registrations between 1 May 2004 and 31 December 2005.

In terms of economic contribution, the accession monitoring report produced by the Department of Work and Pensions in February 2006 stated that only 2 per cent of registrations had been made in Wales and that a very small proportion of these (around 245 individuals) had indicated employment in the agriculture sector.

On your second question, this is a GB matter and therefore falls to the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Kirsty Williams: What progress has the Welsh Assembly Government made on its commitment to extending open access to coastal areas following its 'Wales: A Better Country' policy document, published in September 2003? (WAQ47033)

Carwyn Jones: CCW has undertaken a scoping study to identify the options available to extend public access to the coast. I am currently considering their advice and I anticipate an announcement being made on our preferred way forward in Wales during June.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government is encouraging efficiency savings among Welsh farmers? (WAQ47070)

Carwyn Jones: Farming Connect continues to help Welsh farmers to adapt their businesses to increase efficiency and adopt new, more sustainable business practices. Two of its key themes are promoting business efficiency and safeguarding the environment.

The provision of a free farm business development plan enables farmers to review their business performance and develop options to ensure future viability. They can also access specialist technical advice covering a wide range of topics. Machinery rings can help to reduce fixed costs on farms and benchmarking programmes allow them to calculate unit costs of production and understand how to reduce costs. Sector specific development centres and demonstration farms enable farmers to co-ordinate technology transfer, obtain market information and experience practical examples of best practice.

Linked to the provision of an FBDP is the opportunity to obtain specialist environmental advice and for farms to undertake an environmental opportunities review. The environmental strategy for Farming Connect launched in 2003 provides a strategic approach for the delivery of environmental services under the Farming Connect umbrella. The principles of sustainable development are at the heart of this strategy, which is geared to delivering environmental improvements in terms of creating a richer and greater variety of wildlife in Wales. This also offers farmers the chance to generate income, reduce costs and improve the viability of their businesses.

Glyn Davies: How many cases of BSE were found in Wales in each of the last five years and how many have been found so far in 2006? (WAQ47118)

Carwyn Jones: The number of cases in Wales, in each of the last five years, where BSE has been confirmed, is as follows:

2001	109
2002	123
2003	89
2004	43
2005	26
2006	4 (up to March 31)

Questions to the Finance Minister

Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the Minister had with Cardiff County Council regarding its policies in relation to parking? (WAQ46910) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks.*

The Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (Andrew Davies): None. This is a local authority matter.

Peter Black: What recent discussions has the Minister held regarding the Lyons review on local government funding? (WAQ46911)

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I have not had any recent discussions with Sir Michael Lyons but, along with other members of the Local Government and Public Services Committee, I will be meeting him in London on 8 June. In March of this year I made a formal submission to the Lyons Inquiry on behalf of the Assembly Government and a copy of the submission is on the Assembly Government's website.

Lisa Francis: Are employees of Gwynedd County Council ineligible to be community councillors? (WAQ46932)

Sue Essex: Employees of a county council are eligible to become members of a community council provided they are not disqualified on other grounds.

Lisa Francis: Is it obligatory for community councillors in Gwynedd to declare and register their interests? (WAQ46933)

Sue Essex: The code of conduct, introduced under part III of the Local Government Act 2000, places a personal responsibility on members and co-opted members of relevant authorities in Wales, including community and town councils, to consider whether they have a 'personal interest' in a matter, such that the existence and nature of the interest should be disclosed. The code sets out a range of circumstances in which members must consider themselves to have a personal interest and the action—namely, speaking but not voting or withdrawing altogether—that must be taken by a member unless granted a dispensation by the local standards committee. A member may seek advice from the relevant monitoring officer and must have regard to any advice from the standards committee, but the decision concerning declaration is ultimately theirs. Personal interests, including pecuniary interests, must be disclosed at the commencement of the discussion of the matter that gives rise to the interest, or when the interest becomes apparent. There is no obligation on members to record interests in advance. Disclosed interests must be recorded in a register maintained for the purpose.

Lisa Francis: Is there a maximum distance a community councillor can live or work away from the area they represent? (WAQ46934)

Sue Essex: To be eligible for membership of a community council, a person must be either a resident or an elector within the community, work or operate a business in the community in question, or live within three miles of the community boundary.

Lisa Francis: Are community councils in Gwynedd allowed to co-opt representatives onto the council without advertising that a vacancy exists? (WAQ46935)

Sue Essex: Where a casual vacancy occurs in a community council, an election to fill the vacancy shall be held if, within fourteen days after public notice of the vacancy has been given, notice in writing of a request for such an election has been given to the clerk to the council. The request must be signed by ten electors from the community.

If no such request is received, the community council shall, as soon as is practicable, co-opt a person to fill the vacancy. This can only take place if the vacancy has previously been advertised.

Mark Isherwood: Will the Minister make a statement on public access to the Llandudno Junction Welsh Assembly Government building restaurant? (WAQ46966)

Sue Essex: As you will be aware, I was delighted to announce last week the chosen design for the Llandudno Junction office. Work will now be taken forward to develop these designs to planning application stage and that will include consideration of public and corporate facilities in the office. Part of this work will be determining the catering facilities that will be included in the office and public access to them.

Glyn Davies: What is the estimated cost of building work on the new Assembly Government office in Llandudno Junction and what was the estimated cost when the new office was first proposed? (WAQ46971)

Sue Essex: As soon as the final contract price is known I will report to committee.

Ann Jones: What steps is the Minister taking to improve litter collection on the A55? (WAQ46979) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks*

Andrew Davies: Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 code of practice on litter and refuse, unitary authorities are responsible for the cleaning and sweeping of all purpose trunk roads. The exception to this is the section of A55 between Glan Conwy and Llanddulas for which the Assembly Government is responsible, where the North Wales Trunk Road Agency carries out reasonable litter clearance to ensure litter does not affect road safety.

Ann Jones: What powers do Welsh local authorities have to tackle the irresponsible use of mini-motorbikes? (WAQ47035)

Sue Essex: Under sections 79 and 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, a local authority may classify a mini-motorbike with a loud engine noise as a statutory nuisance and serve an abatement notice on the vehicle's owner.

Ann Jones: How many noise notices have been served due to noise levels caused by mini-motorbikes in each local authority in Wales over each of the last five years? (WAQ47036) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside*

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): Local authorities in Wales are not required to submit returns on abatement notices served under section 80 of the Environment Protection Act 1990, therefore this information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health does collect information from local authorities on their management of noise nuisance. Information is provided on a voluntary basis and, for 2004-05, from the 88 per cent of Welsh local authorities that responded, a total of 444 abatement notices were served, eight of which were for vehicles, machinery and equipment in streets.

Further details of the information the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health compiles on noise nuisance can be found at:

http://www.cieh.org/library/Knowledge/Environmental_protection/CIEH_annual_noise_complaint_statistics.pdf

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on council tax rises? (WAQ47068)

Sue Essex: This year's average band D increase of 4.5 per cent is the second lowest increase since the introduction of council tax and, at £962, is 25 per cent lower than the average band D council tax in England.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister make a statement on the diagnosis and treatment of Pompe disease in Wales? (WAQ46922)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Brian Gibbons): Pompe disease (glycogenosis 1) is one of the glycogen storage disorders that have a birth prevalence of 6.8 per 100,000 births: about 1 or 2 per year in Wales.

A UK review of people with inherited metabolic diseases is being considered as part of improving commissioning by Health Commission Wales, and standards for care of children with metabolic disorders will be developed.

Patients are assessed by the joint service between University Hospital Wales run by Dr Graham Shortland in partnership with Royal Manchester Children's Hospital. Dr Ed Wraith from Manchester attends a regular joint clinic in Cardiff.

Alun Cairns: What drugs have been licensed and approved to treat Pompe disease? (WAQ46923)

Brian Gibbons: Alglucosidase alpha (Myozyme®) has recently been licensed for long-term enzyme replacement therapy in patients with a confirmed diagnosis of Pompe disease (acid α -glucosidase deficiency). It is the first treatment available to patients with this disease.

The all-Wales medicines strategy group will be appraising the drug in September 2006.

Alun Cairns: What Funding is available to treat Pompe disease? (WAQ46924)

Brian Gibbons: Funding is through commissioning of specialised paediatric services by Health Commission Wales.

The all-Wales medicines strategy group is assessing Mucozyme, the enzyme replacement therapy for Pompe disease in either September or November/December (depending on scheduling of other drug assessments). I will then make a final decision on funding treatment.

Alun Cairns: What relationship does the Welsh Assembly Government have with the National Specialist Commissioning Advisory Group (NSCAG)? (WAQ46925)

Brian Gibbons: In line with a pre-1991 England and Wales agreement, the National Specialist Commissioning Advisory Group (NSCAG) commissions a number of very specialised health services, such as liver, heart and lung transplantation, on behalf of Wales and other parts of the UK. It also commissions a number of specialised services for England. NSCAG commissioning decisions for England also help inform Health Commission Wales's decisions for specialised services, which it commissions from English providers. Consequently, officials from Health Commission Wales and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer have observer status at NSCAG meetings.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on how the views of the nursing profession were sought in the production of the 'Designed to Deliver' document for mid and west Wales? (WAQ46926)

Brian Gibbons: The document was drawn up by a project team with a wide membership drawn from NHS organisations in the mid and west Wales region. Contributions to the development of the proposals were sought from a range of stakeholders, including nurses, through a number of stakeholder events held in early January. Nurses were also invited to the regional launch event held on 5 April. The current consultation presents options for consideration, and alternative proposals are welcome. The consultation response period has been extended to allow organisations such as the Royal College of Nursing and Unison more time to develop their responses. The consultation process has been taken forward by the boards of the 12 NHS organisations in the region and each board has a nurse executive director.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister list measures he has taken for the assimilation of primary care health service workers under Agency for Change? (WAQ46927)

Brian Gibbons: "Agenda for Change" is a key driver in modernising healthcare services. It applies to all staff employed in NHS Wales. Independent contractors within primary care are not obliged to adopt "Agenda for Change". However, it is recognised as a fair pay system incorporating a robust job evaluation process that ensures equal pay for work of equal value. It also supports the motivation and retention of staff, flexibility and the emergence of new roles, and staff training and development. As such, we commend the package to primary care contractors as best HR practice.

To support the implementation of "Agenda for Change" in primary care, we have established a task and finish group, which, to date, has:

provided awareness raising sessions to primary care audiences across Wales

established a pilot scheme in a GP practice to assess the practical implications of ‘‘Agenda for Change’’

provided training to GP practice staff to establish them as ‘job matchers’ under ‘‘Agenda for Change’’

established a subscription type service where practices can enlist the help of the ‘‘Agenda for Change’’ team from the NHS Wales Business Services Centre to undertake the implementation for them

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding of the drugs and therapeutic bulletin (DTB) in Wales? (WAQ46929)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government provides funding for the drug and therapeutics bulletin in Wales.

Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the implications for commissioning hospital treatments for patients from Wales, and the Government’s policies for hospital waiting times, following the ruling at the European Court of Justice regarding the case of Watts v Bedford PCT? (WAQ46931)

Brian Gibbons: The ruling is a clarification of the entitlements of patients who face ‘undue delay’ in accessing hospital treatment in the UK to seek that hospital treatment abroad at NHS expense.

We need to understand the full implications of the court’s judgement before we make any changes to the systems operated by the NHS, although it is clear that there will need to be a change in procedures so that patients are aware of the criteria used to assess whether they are facing ‘undue delay’.

The Government will work with the NHS to develop detailed guidance to local healthcare commissioners on managing all requests for treatment overseas.

Lisa Francis: How many multiple sclerosis patients in Wales have been informed there is no funding available for them to receive the disease modifying therapy drug a) Copaxone b) Betaferon c) Avonex d) Rebif? (WAQ46942)

Lisa Francis: How many multiple sclerosis patients in mid and west Wales have been informed there is no funding available for them to receive the disease modifying therapy drugs? (WAQ46943)

Lisa Francis: How many multiple sclerosis patients in Wales are currently waiting for the disease modifying therapy drug a) Copaxone b) Betaferon c) Avonex d) Rebif? (WAQ46951)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not held centrally.

Lisa Francis: When did Health Commission Wales rule that no new MS patients could receive disease modifying therapy drugs? (WAQ46944)

Brian Gibbons: The National Commissioning Advisory Board confirmed in October 2005 that a further review of access to the MS risk sharing scheme across Wales should be undertaken before any further investment by Health Commission Wales could be made.

Lisa Francis: Does the Minister have any plans to make further funding available for disease modifying therapies for multiple sclerosis patients? (WAQ46945)

Lisa Francis: Would the Minister make a statement on the postcode lottery in drugs for multiple sclerosis patients in Wales? (WAQ46946)

Lisa Francis: Does the Minister have any plans to rectify the ‘absence of additional funding’ which he states is responsible for MS patients in Wales being unable to access the disease modifying therapy drugs they need? (WAQ46950)

Brian Gibbons: I issued a written Cabinet statement on the issues of prescribing disease modifying therapies for patients with multiple sclerosis on 19 May. This outlines the Assembly Government’s plans and I refer the Assembly Member to that response.

Lisa Francis: Would the Minister explain why his Government has reneged on the agreement made with the health departments in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to provide disease modifying therapy drugs to all multiple sclerosis patients who need them? (WAQ46947)

Lisa Francis: When did the Minister become aware that his Government had broken an agreement with the health departments in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to provide disease modifying therapy drugs to all MS patients who need them? (WAQ46948)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government continues to support the provision of disease modifying therapies and has not reneged on its agreement with other health departments to implement the MS risk sharing scheme in Wales. It was envisaged that there would be a review of the operation of the scheme after a period of time. My officials and I are aware that there are difficulties at present in providing disease modifying therapies to patients with multiple sclerosis and plans are being taken forward to help resolve the situation as outlined in the written Cabinet statement which I issued on 19 May and to which I refer the Assembly Member.

Lisa Francis: What advice does the Minister give to multiple sclerosis patients currently unable to obtain disease modifying therapy drugs? (WAQ46949)

Brian Gibbons: I cannot offer individual advice to patients with MS as this would be a matter for clinical judgement and dialogue between the patient and his/her neurological consultant.

I refer the Assembly Member to the written Cabinet statement on the issues of prescribing disease modifying therapies for patients with multiple sclerosis which I issued on 19 May.

Elin Jones: Will the Minister outline of there is a population figure on which a district general hospital should ideally be based, on what basis and by who has this figure been agreed and is there a different basis for assessing a rural district general hospital? (WAQ46957)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government has been given authoritative advice that the current model of NHS services in Wales—with district general hospitals (DGHs) providing a full range of services—is no longer sustainable. The 2003 review of health and social care, commissioned by the Cabinet and advised by Derek Wanless, identified ‘unsustainable pressure on the acute sector’, that is hospitals, due to ‘ever-increasing demands’ and problems that are ‘deep-rooted and long-standing, going back well before the start of the Assembly’. It said a solution required ‘a break with the patterns of the past’. In response to this, the NHS across Wales has been analysing the local situation and preparing proposals to create a service that is sustainable, and can meet the needs of the twenty-first century. At present, we have 19 major or acute specialist hospitals in Wales serving a population of less than 3 million.

With developments in medical technology and procedures, there are now more treatments available, along with specialised medicines and surgical procedures. We know that a general hospital must have a population of at least 300,000 in order to maintain safe and effective services. Several authoritative publications recommend the 300,000 population figure as the most effective level for planning. For instance, the recent report of the Royal College of Surgeons called ‘Delivering High-quality Surgical Services for the Future a consultation document from the Royal College of Surgeons Reconfiguration Working Party Report’ comments on page 28 ‘there needs to be, in the first instance, strategically planned reorganisations so that where feasible, smaller hospitals are able to merge, or work together in networks, to achieve a catchment population of at least 300,000’.

Lynne Neagle: Will the Minister provide an update on the advice given to GPs on the use of antidepressants following the recent Seroxat developments? (WAQ46969)

Brian Gibbons: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) issued advice to all health professionals on the 10 May 2006 to remind healthcare professionals of the current advice (previously issued in December 2004) that patients taking Seroxat, particularly young adults, should be carefully monitored during treatment for any worsening of symptoms or suicidal behaviour. This letter was issued in response to new analyses of paroxetine (Seroxat) in clinical trials that were conducted as part of a review by the United States’s Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The MHRA is carefully examining these new analyses.

The MHRA continually monitors the safety of Seroxat and will issue advice as new data comes to light.

The advice issued to healthcare professionals can be viewed on the MHRA website: www.mhra.gov.uk

Lynne Neagle: Will the Minister make a statement on the provision of ‘talking therapies’ for people with mild to moderate depression in Wales? (WAQ46970)

Brian Gibbons: The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has issued a clinical guideline on the management of depression in primary and secondary care. This recommends for people with mild to moderate depression psychological treatments which are specifically focused on depression such as problem-solving therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy or counselling can be as effective as drug treatments and may be offered as treatment options.

Whilst counselling services are already provided in many GP surgeries, included in the Service and Financial Framework (SAFF) for 2006-07 is a target that all GP practices should have access to psychological services either within or available to the primary care base. This should be within a maximum wait of 12 weeks.

Jenny Randerson: What preparatory information have you so far supplied to pharmacists and practitioners in preparation for the implementation of the legislation currently going through parliament which changes procedures for the prescription of controlled drugs? (WAQ46972)

Brian Gibbons: None: guidance has been produced by the Department of Health and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain on the principles of the impending changes. My officials are discussing with English colleagues the precise timetable for implementation in Wales and liaising with the Welsh Executive of the RSPGB on the need for additional guidance.

Eleanor Burnham: What is the number of placements (by local health board area) for Welsh mental health patients currently in out of area, and also out of Wales placements, in specialist mental health units of a) non-secure: b) low security c) medium security and d) high security status, and what is the cost for each LHB and LHB area? (WAQ46974)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not centrally held in the format that you have requested. The cost of preparing the required data would be disproportionate and the Assembly's advisory limit on cost would be exceeded. However, detailed information on patients with a mental illness resident in Welsh hospitals showing unitary authority of residence is published annually in the psychiatric census bulletin. The latest available data as at 31 March 2005 is available in the public domain at: http://new.wales.gov.uk/legacy_en/keypubstatisticsforwalesheadline/content/health/2005/hdw200510111-e.htm (table 7, statistical bulletin 64/2005)

Ann Jones: How many general practitioners were there in NHS Wales in (a) 1997 and (b) 2005? (WAQ46983)

Brian Gibbons: The figures are at 30 September. There were 1,779 general medical practitioners in Wales in 1997. The number rose to 1,849 by 2005.

Ann Jones: What plans does the Minister have to improve treatment for sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis? (WAQ46984)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government is taking steps to address the management of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) and my officials are continuing to follow research developments,

including those being taken forward by the Medical Research Council. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has also been commissioned to develop clinical guidelines for the diagnosis and management of CFS and ME.

We are committed to an evidence based approach to the management of CFS and ME as well as other chronic conditions and are developing an integrated chronic disease framework which will help to deliver an effective and consistent approach to managing chronic conditions across Wales.

Ann Jones: How many front-line staff there were in NHS Wales in (a) 1997 and (b) 2005? (WAQ46985)

Brian Gibbons: Centrally we do not categorise staff as front line or otherwise. Staff are categorised by occupation code. The majority of medical and dental, and nursing and midwifery staff would have direct patient contact, as would the healthcare support workers.

	1997 (wte)*	2005 (wte)
Medical and Dental	3,530.0	4,859.4
Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors	23,417.7	28,152.2
Health Care Assistants	1,321.1	2,603.6
Ambulance	1,243.3	1,394.4
Scientific, Therapeutic and Technical staff	6,718.9	9,698.5

* Whole time equivalent

Notes

Of the scientific, therapeutic and technical staff, there would be a proportion that would not have direct patient contact i. e. those who work in laboratories.

A proportion of staff categorised as administration, management and clerical staff also have direct patient contact.

Information on the number of staff employed by the NHS in Wales is published to the StatsWales website at http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/intro_eng/index.htm

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on his policy on the provision of and funding for spares and replacements for communication aids? (WAQ46986)

Brian Gibbons: It is for local health boards, through their local arrangements, to provide funding to NHS Trusts for patient communication aids. In particular, Trusts provide patients with replacement digital hearing aids and also arrange for the repair of damaged aids where appropriate.

Ann Jones: What percentage of staff in each NHS trust have completed the transition over to “Agenda for Change” and when does the Minister anticipate all NHS staff in Wales to have done so? (WAQ46987)

Brian Gibbons: Figures of the % employees considered, matched or evaluated, approved, and in receipt of pay are listed below:-

Employees	With a Job that has been Considered	Successfully Matched or Evaluated	With an Approved Outcome	In Receipt of Pay
Bro Morgannwg	68.20%	67.70%	54.00%	45.40%
LHBs except Powys (BSC)	78.50%	61.60%	6.00%	6.00%
Cardiff & Vale	97.40%	84.60%	44.90%	26.60%
Carmarthenshire	76.00%	76.00%	33.70%	33.70%
Ceredigion & Mid Wales	100.00%	97.70%	94.20%	88.90%
Conwy & Denbighshire	95.90%	88.70%	71.20%	24.00%
Gwent Healthcare	97.30%	92.10%	76.20%	58.30%
North East Wales	89.90%	86.20%	73.60%	17.60%
North Glamorgan	100.00%	99.20%	97.00%	89.40%
North West Wales	74.70%	74.70%	74.70%	65.90%
Pembrokeshire & Derwen	85.60%	85.60%	56.20%	56.20%
Pontypridd & Rhondda	75.10%	75.10%	42.00%	42.00%
Powys LHB	94.90%	87.50%	69.90%	52.50%
Swansea	99.50%	98.30%	85.70%	37.40%
Velindre	100.00%	68.00%	13.90%	13.90%
Welsh Ambulance Services	80.90%	75.70%	4.10%	4.10%
All Wales	89.90%	84.20%	60.50%	41.70%

It is anticipated that the transition to “Agenda for Change” will approach completion by the end of the year.

Ann Jones: What assessment has the Minister made of the impact of “Agenda for Change” on (a) community nurses and (b) community nursing posts? (WAQ46988)

Brian Gibbons: Community nurses are being matched or evaluated to new pay bands within ‘Agenda for Change’ which will generally give them increased salaries in the longer term as ‘Agenda for Change’ pay bands are wider than Whitley scales. They will also benefit from increased annual leave entitlements after five and 10 years’ service. With the introduction of the knowledge and skills framework, personal development plans will identify development needs

specific to their area of work and this in turn should support changes to community nursing services.

Ann Jones: What discussions has the Minister had in respect of the implications of funding changes in England for Welsh children requiring treatment at Alder Hey Children's hospital? (WAQ46989)

Brian Gibbons: I have not had any discussions in respect of the implications of funding changes in England for Welsh children requiring treatment at Alder Hey Children's Hospital. My officials have had regular discussions with officials from the Department of Health regarding the financial impact on Welsh commissioners from the introduction of the 'payment by results' national tariff in England.

An exercise undertaken by Welsh commissioners and some English providers in 2005 did not succeed in fully quantifying the financial impact on Wales, mainly due to changes to the scope and structure of the English tariff issued by the Department of Health after the exercise was completed. As a consequence, agreement has been reached with the Department of Health that Welsh commissioners will continue in 2006-07 to pay for activity undertaken by English hospitals at locally agreed prices, rather than at the English national tariff rate.

I do not expect these management arrangements to affect the level and quality of treatment services provided by Alder Hey and other English hospitals to Welsh patients.

Ann Jones: How many (a) children and (b) adults are (i) obese and (ii) overweight when measured by body mass index, according to the most recent health survey figures? (WAQ46990)

Ann Jones: What is the Minister's most recent estimate of how many children in Vale of Clwyd constituency are obese? (WAQ46991)

Brian Gibbons: According to the Welsh Health Survey 2003-04, 18 per cent of adults (aged 16 and over) were classified as obese and a further 36 per cent as overweight, based on body mass index calculated from self-reported height and weight. The Survey report provides further details and definitions (see chapter 4, section 4.7 and table 4.9): http://new.wales.gov.uk/legacy_en/keypubstatisticsforwales/content/publication/health/2005/hs2003-04/hs2003-04.htm

While the survey did not collect information on children who were obese or overweight, information from the health behaviour in school-aged children (HBSC) study on the percentage of young people who are overweight or obese was given in answer to WAQ46683 on 13 April 2006.

Ann Jones: What plans does the Assembly Government have to issue guidance on home birth maternity services? (WAQ47004)

Brian Gibbons: 'Delivering the Future in Wales. A Framework for Realising the Potential of Midwives in Wales', published in 2002, set a 10 per cent target for home birth to be achieved by the end of 2007. To support achieving this target each NHS trust has a lead midwife responsible for developing local plans for increasing the home birth rates.

The all-Wales home birth steering group, made up of leads for each trust have:

developed guidelines for support and training of student and qualified midwives and worked with education providers to seek support in the training and development of midwives and student midwives

developed an all Wales information leaflet available to all who are interested in considering birth at home

researched units across the UK that have achieved high home birth rates

reviewed organisational structures to develop sustainable models that would increase home birth rates

set targets for year on year increase in home birth

audited progress and shared this nationally.

The Chief Nursing Officer for Wales has supported the development of the Nursing and Midwifery Council's circular on place of birth, published in March 2006. This explains the current regulatory framework within which midwives practise and stresses that midwives are expected to:

offer evidence based, accessible information to women

- respect a woman's choice
- support women in their choice
- be competent in caring for women having normal births

Ann Jones: What percentage of births took place in the mother's home in each year since 2003, broken down by LHB: and what the ratio of midwives to birth was for home births in each case? (WAQ47005)

Brian Gibbons: Information on the percentage of births that took place in the mother's home by local health board area is given in the following table. Midwives are employed by NHS Trusts and figures cannot, therefore, be provided by LHB areas. At 30 September 2003 there were 1,163.9 whole-time equivalent registered midwives employed by the NHS in Wales, an overall ratio of 1.4 midwives per home birth. In 2004 there were 1,200.0 midwives, a ratio of 1.2.

Percentage of all births that took place at home

	2003	2004
Isle of Anglesey	1.6	3.3
Gwynedd	3.7	2.9
Conwy	1.6	3.1

Denbighshire	2.3	1.9
Flintshire	0.8	1.3
Wrexham	1.8	1.1
Powys	6.6	7.7
Ceredigion	4.4	3.2
Pembrokeshire	3.7	3.8
Carmarthenshire	6.7	5.1
Swansea	1.8	3.1
Neath Port Talbot	2.3	4.0
Bridgend	3.4	6.0
The Vale of Glamorgan	2.9	3.6
Cardiff	2.0	2.0
Rhondda Cynon Taff	2.0	2.4
Merthyr Tydfil	0.8	1.7
Caerphilly	2.3	2.0
Blaenau Gwent	4.0	3.9
Torfaen	2.0	1.9
Monmouthshire	3.3	4.3
Newport	1.6	1.6
Wales	2.7	3.0

Source: Office for National statistics

Ann Jones: What steps the Assembly Government is taking to improve childhood vaccination take up for families living in the most deprived communities in Wales? (WAQ47006)

Brian Gibbons: Deprivation is known from research to be one of the factors associated with lower uptake of childhood immunisations.

Current NHS provision which addresses this issue includes the universal invitation call and recall system in Wales, which refers those who miss two immunisation appointments without reason to the named health visitor. The Welsh Assembly Government included these arrangements as markers of good practice in its national service framework for children, young people and maternity services in Wales document published in September 2005. Other current NHS measures include:

a named health visitor for each child, whose efforts to follow up defaulters in deprived communities will be increased in proportion to the need.

practice nurses and other primary care staff who will similarly direct more resources to delivering immunisations to those most in need.

trusts serving communities which historically have a very low uptake of immunisation, such as travellers, have specialist health visitors working with those communities

In addition to this daily detailed NHS clinical work with families, the Assembly has funded the national public health service this year to map immunisation uptake in Wales. This will allow uptake in geographical areas to be mapped against deprivation so allowing local pockets of poor uptake to be better defined. The data will also allow the overall performance of NHS Wales in achieving a good immunisation uptake in deprived areas to be assessed with more accuracy.

Ann Jones: How many children in each local authority in Wales are waiting to be placed with foster parents? (WAQ47007)

Brian Gibbons: Information on the number of children in each local authority in Wales waiting to be placed with foster carers is not available.

The following is the number of approved foster parents per local authority as at 31 March 2005 and the number of places specified in respect of those approvals.

	Approved foster parents on register	Places specified in respect of these approvals
	Number	Number
Isle of Anglesey	38	66
Gwynedd	74	122
Conwy	72	111
Denbighshire	73	146
Flintshire	87	150
Wrexham	96	139
Powys	60	132
Ceredigion	41	88
Pembrokeshire	39	74
Carmarthenshire	93	156
Swansea	138	296
Neath Port Talbot	127	235
Bridgend	109	187
The Vale of Glamorgan	77	137
Cardiff	157	266

Rhondda Cynon Taf	121	203
Merthyr Tydfil	69	150
Caerphilly	95	169
Blaenau Gwent	56	75
Torfaen	84	130
Monmouthshire	37	71
Newport	148	267
Wales	1,891	3,370

Ann Jones: How many people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease there were in (a) Wales and (b) Denbighshire in each of the last five years: and will the Minister make a statement? (WAQ47008)

Ann Jones: What percentage of people in (a) Wales and (b) Denbighshire diagnosed with Parkinson's disease have access to a specialist nurse: and will the Minister make a statement? (WAQ47009)

Ann Jones: What percentage of people in (a) Denbighshire, and (b) Wales who have Parkinson's disease were referred to a specialist nurse within six months of diagnosis in the latest year for which figures are available: and if he will make a statement? (WAQ47017)

Brian Gibbons: With regard to parts (a) and (b) of your questions, this information is not held centrally.

Local Health Boards are responsible for commissioning services for Parkinson's disease across Wales. Neurological Services in North Wales are divided between the Walton Centre, Liverpool and outreach clinics in Ysbyty Gwynedd, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Wrexham.

Ann Jones: What was the revenue budget for health services in Denbighshire in (a) 1997 and (b) 2005? (WAQ47010)

Brian Gibbons: Denbighshire did not have a discrete revenue budget in 1997, as health services for its population were commissioned by the former North Wales Health Authority. The final revenue resource limit budget for Denbighshire local health board for 2005-06 is £135.179 million. This does not include the budget for commissioning specialist health services, which is held by Health Commission Wales, but is not identified by local health board area.

Ann Jones: How many (a) hospital doctors, (b) nurses, (c) general practitioners and (d) other health service staff were employed in Denbighshire in (i) 1997, (ii) 1999 and (iii) 2005? (WAQ47011)

Brian Gibbons: Information on the numbers and whole-time equivalents of hospital doctors, hospital and community nurses and other directly employed NHS staff is collected on the basis of employing organisation. Data for Conwy and Denbighshire NHS Trust (which did not exist prior to 1 April 1999) for 1999 and 2005 can be found on the StatsWales website:

<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/reportFolders.aspx> (Health and Care folder: Staffing: Summary Information)

Data for general practitioners and practice nurses was first available at a local Health Board level as at 30 September 2000. This data can also be found on our StatsWales website:

<http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/reportFolders.aspx> (Health and Care folder: General Medical Services)

Ann Jones: What guidance has the Minister issued on the fitting of emergency vehicles with satellite navigation systems: and what percentage of the Welsh Ambulance fleet is fitted with such devices? (WAQ47012)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government has not issued guidance on the fitting of emergency vehicles with satellite navigation systems, as this is an operational matter and the responsibility of the Welsh Ambulance Trust. Information relating to the percentage of the Welsh Ambulance fleet fitted with such systems is not held centrally and is available from the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust.

Jonathan Morgan: Does the Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust own the legal title to the freehold of the Whitchurch Hospital site? (WAQ47032)

Brian Gibbons: Yes.

Helen Mary Jones: Further to the Minister's response to (WAQ46770): will the Minister detail in which LHB areas the 23 dentists that did not sign up to the new dental contract were located, and how did that reflect in the locations of the 65,000 lost places? (WAQ47034)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not centrally held. My officials are currently collating and corroborating this data in order for me to present a paper to note detailing the take up of the new dental contract at the next meeting of the Health and Social Services Committee on 15 June.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister detail for each NHS Trust the number DXA scanners, and how this number compares with any recommendations the Welsh Assembly Government is aware of regarding the optimal number of DXA scanner according to population size? (WAQ47043)

Brian Gibbons: We have 9 dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA) units in Wales:

2 in Cardiff

2 in Gwent Healthcare

2 in Swansea

1 in Ceredigion

1 in Pontypridd & Rhondda

1 in Bro Morgannwg

Assuming a population of approximately 3 million, this gives a ratio of 3.0 units/million of the population.

A new scanner is soon to be installed in North West Wales and this will increase the figure to 3.33 scanners per million population.

On 4 February 2005, the National Osteoporosis Society published details of DXA provision in strategic health authorities in England. For a population of approximately 50 million, there were 158 NHS DXA units across England. This gives a ratio of 3.16 units/million of population.

The availability of dual energy DXA varies markedly in strategic health authorities and in different countries. There is little information to indicate the optimal requirements for this technology according to population size.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister detail each NHS trust and each LHB the current provision of lead clinicians for osteoporosis, and what plans does he have to increase provision? (WAQ47044)

Brian Gibbons: The Welsh Assembly Government does not collect data centrally on specialities at this level of detail.

Jonathan Morgan: How many NHS dentists are there in Wales? (WAQ47045)

Brian Gibbons: The number of dentists providing a level of care under NHS arrangements at September 2005 stood at 1070. This number has steadily increased year by year and compares favourably with 975 when the National Assembly was established (figure at 30 June 1999).

Jonathan Morgan: How many non-medical staff are currently employed by NHS Wales and will the Minister give an annual breakdown of this figure dating back to 1999? (WAQ47047)

Brian Gibbons: This information can be obtained from the StatsWales website at: <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx> (Health and Care Folder: Staffing)

Jonathan Morgan: How many patients have a) taken up the 'second offer of treatment' to date, b) rejected the 'second

offer of treatment' and c) can the Minister provide a précis on the reasons given by patients for rejecting those offers of treatment? (WAQ47048)

Brian Gibbons: Since the second offer scheme began in April 2004 26,051 patients have been made a second offer of treatment. Of these:

a) 12,280 patients have accepted the second offer

9,030 have declined the second offer

443 were undecided on whether to accept or decline

2,409 were deemed to be ineligible for referral

1,889 were non contactable.

b) 865 patients declined after being assessed making a total number of decliners of 9,895.

c) Below is a breakdown of the reasons for declining a second offer for each of the three years since the scheme commenced.

i) 2004-05.

8,082 patients declined a second offer of treatment between April 2004 and March 2005 for the following reasons:

Did not want to transfer	2,595
Declined after Assessment	804
Social reasons	685
Receiving provider was unfamiliar	491
No longer required treatment	422
Did not wish to travel	335
Patient choice	191
Wanted to remain with the same consultant	121
Transport	113
Too old / Not well	43

Removed / Deferred	40
Reason unknown	1,337
Other reasons	905
Total	8,082

ii) 2005-06

1,668 patients declined a second offer of treatment between April 2005 and March 2006 for the following reasons:

Reason unknown.	1,233
Patient choice reasons	332
Declined after Assessment	61
Social reasons	27
Decided to remain with the same trust	11
Other reasons	4
Total	1,668

iii) 2006-07

145 patients declined a second offer of treatment in April 2006 for the following reasons.

Reason unknown	135
Patient choice reasons	9
Social reasons	1
Total	145

(Source: Second Offer Commissioning Team)

Jonathan Morgan: Does everyone in Wales have access to an NHS dentist? (WAQ47049)

Brian Gibbons: At 31 March 2006, 48 per cent of the population of Wales were registered with a dentist for the provision of NHS dental care. This figure excludes a number of the 206,637 additional NHS places created under the personal dental services pilot schemes which have yet to come on stream as pilots develop. The figure also does not include those patients who chose to be treated privately and those who chose not to register with a dentist.

From 1 April the concept of needing to register with a practice disappeared. Patients can still expect to see their regular dentist, and this will not prevent dentists keeping lists of regular patients or providing ongoing treatment and care. Registration was introduced in 1990 as a way of measuring how much dentists should be paid for providing NHS dental services. This system is no longer relevant and also does not fit with the new NICE guidelines on recall.

Jonathan Morgan: How many patients who live in Wales in each year since 1999 have required haemodialysis sessions outside the EU? (WAQ47050)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not centrally held.

Jonathan Morgan: How much capital and revenue funding is being allocated through health commissions Wales to establish the new transplant unit at UHW? (WAQ47051)

Brian Gibbons: At this stage no capital funding has been allocated to this scheme because none has been requested and no business case has been presented to the Welsh Assembly Government. Should a business case be received and be supported with appropriate revenue allocations then it will receive due consideration. Health Commission Wales is responsible for determining how it uses discretionary revenue allocation, which totals £383.790 million in 2006-07, to commission the specialised services for which it is responsible. In 2006-07, Health Commission Wales will support 90 renal transplants including simultaneous pancreas and kidney transplants as part of the renal transplant and dialysis programme at Cardiff & Vale Trust.

Jonathan Morgan: How many non EU citizens have received haemodialysis whilst visiting Wales? (WAQ47052)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not centrally held.

Jonathan Morgan: How much has been spent since 1999 on awareness raising campaigns to promote donation of organs? (WAQ47053)

Brian Gibbons: Since 2003 (the first year for which figures are readily available), our records show that a total of £118,000 has been spent by the Welsh Assembly Government specifically on raising awareness of the importance of registering on the NHS organ donor register. This spend has been on a mix of campaigns and publicity material.

There are now 13,186,564 people registered on the NHS organ donor register, of whom 673,897 have Welsh postcodes. This represents 5 per cent of the total number of registrants and 23.2 per cent of the Welsh population. I recognise that transplantation is the optimal treatment for someone with a failing organ, and the Assembly Governments draft policy on renal disease, which is currently out to consultation with the renal services national services framework standards, proposes a formal target of 725,000 registrations by March 2008.

Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister commission an independent audit of the current dialysis unit at Carmarthen which was recommended for closure in 2001? (WAQ47054)

Brian Gibbons: I have no plans to commission an independent audit of this unit. Carmarthenshire NHS Trust has developed a business case for a replacement renal dialysis unit and cardiac rehabilitation unit at West Wales General Hospital. The Assembly Government has approved capital funding of £4m for this scheme. The additional revenue implications of the renal unit are still under consideration by HCW.

HCW recognises the need to invest in this unit and this will be taken in to account in its annual commissioning plans.

Jonathan Morgan: How will the Minister increase dialysis capacity throughout Wales? (WAQ47055)

Brian Gibbons: The provision of dialysis services for the people of Wales is a matter for Health Commission Wales (HCW). HCW has recognised the need for investment and has already invested £5 million on a recurrent basis.

The Welsh Assembly Government has also published for consultation the Renal Services National Service Framework (NSF) for Wales. The main aim of the NSF is to improve the quality of the care of those people with or at risk from renal disease. Health Commission Wales will need to take account of the NSF standards in planning future dialysis capacity.

Jonathan Morgan: What level of funding has been allocated to support paediatric nephrology at the Children's Hospital for Wales? (WAQ47056)

Brian Gibbons: Paediatric nephrology in Cardiff is commissioned as part of a wide range of specialist paediatric services, including Paediatric intensive care and paediatric neurosurgery. In order to stabilise paediatric nephrology in south Wales two additional consultants together with a team of nurses have been funded by Health Commission Wales. From 1 April 2006 the service in Cardiff has been fully functioning which means that children no longer have to travel to Bristol for inpatient care.

Jonathan Morgan: What proportion of renal patients: are able to collect their prescriptions locally: have to collect their prescriptions from UHW (WAQ47057)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not centrally held.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister detail what requirement is placed upon (i) the social services department, and (ii) residential settings, to consult a resident's next of kin should that resident be moved a different nursing or residential setting? (WAQ47058)

Brian Gibbons: Where an individual needs to move to a different residential setting because of a changed care need, a full assessment of that person's needs should first have been undertaken in line with social services' statutory duties. Although there is no statutory requirement to consult with a person's next of kin or representative, it is considered good practice to involve and inform them of the process and to give their views due consideration.

Similarly where a care home is subject to closure, for whatever reason, residents and their representatives should be consulted by social services and their views taken into account as far as is reasonably practical in the circumstances. Officials are currently developing guidance to commissioners and providers on all aspects of care home closures.

Jonathan Morgan: Has the Minister's department, NHS Wales or any other relevant body ever maintained comprehensive records of individuals in Wales detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 since the National Assembly for Wales was established? (WAQ47064)

Jonathan Morgan: Does the Minister's department, NHS Wales or any other relevant body maintain comprehensive records of the addresses of individuals living in Wales detained under the Mental Health Act 1983? (WAQ47065)

Jonathan Morgan: Does the Minister's department, NHS Wales or any other relevant body maintain comprehensive records of individuals in Wales detained under the Mental Health Act 1983? (WAQ47066)

Brian Gibbons: HS Trusts patient records will include those for individuals who have been detained under the Mental Health Act 1983. In addition the Home Office maintains a record of those people who have passed through the criminal justice system and on whom a restriction order has been placed.

Jonathan Morgan: Does a central and comprehensive database of individuals in Wales detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 exist? (WAQ47067)

Brian Gibbons: There is no central and comprehensive database held of individuals in Wales detained under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister make a statement on ambulance provision for residents of Tywyn and the surrounding area? (WAQ47079)

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister make a statement on the future of Tywyn ambulance station? (WAQ47080)

Lisa Francis: What discussions has the Minister had regarding the future of Tywyn ambulance station? (WAQ47082)

Brian Gibbons: Decisions regarding the management of ambulance services and stations are the responsibility of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust and their commissioners – Health Commission Wales. Information on the provision of ambulance cover and decisions over the working hours of ambulance stations should be obtained from the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust.

Helen Mary Jones: Further to his response to WAQ46247: will the Minister clarify whether he monitors the closure of ambulance stations, and whether he keeps a record of the location of stations? (WAQ47084)

Helen Mary Jones: Further to his response to WAQ46247: will the Minister detail the location of any ambulance stations that have closed since he took office as Minister, and the location of any closures that have been recorded by his department? (WAQ47085)

Brian Gibbons: Decisions regarding the management of ambulance services and stations are the responsibility of the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust and their commissioners - Health Commission Wales. Information on the provision of ambulance cover, decisions over the working hours of ambulance stations and information about of current and past stations should be obtained from the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust.

Jonathan Morgan: What is the total long term financial commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government or constituent bodies under contractual agreements signed between private health care providers, including dental care providers? (WAQ47127)

Jonathan Morgan: How many contracts have been signed between the Welsh Assembly Government or a constituent body and private health care providers, including dental care providers? (WAQ47128)

Jonathan Morgan: What is the total value of contracts signed between the Welsh Assembly Government or a constituent body and private health care providers, including dental care providers? (WAQ47129)

Jonathan Morgan: Can the Minister provide a guarantee that all current contractual obligations between the Welsh Assembly Government or constituent bodies and private health care providers, including dental care providers will be honoured? (WAQ47136)

Brian Gibbons: Commissioning of health care services for Welsh patients is the responsibility of local health boards and Health Commission Wales. As such any arrangements for the contracting of private health care services will be decided locally by individual commissioners in line with their requirements.

Jonathan Morgan: What financial cost assessment has the Minister made of banning smoking public places in Wales? (WAQ47130)

Brian Gibbons: Professor David Cohen of the University of Glamorgan was commissioned to model the economic impact of a ban on smoking in public places in Wales to contribute to the evidence being taken by the Assembly's Committee on Smoking in Public Places. Key findings are:

- Savings to the NHS from reductions in both passive and active smoking are estimated to be in the range of +£3.5 million to +£10 million with a most likely estimate of +£5 million.
- Productivity gains from reductions in sickness absence related to both passive and active smoking are estimated to be in the range +£3.6 million to +£5.2 million with a most likely estimate of +£4.5 million.
- Economic impacts of a ban on workplaces comprise a loss of productivity due to an increase in the number of smoking breaks by workers currently working in establishments with no restrictions on smoking (range -£0.4 million to 0) and positive impacts from savings from reduced smoking related fire damage (+£6.0 million) and cleaning costs (+£7.6 million).
- The annual effect on the hospitality sector in Wales is estimated to lie in the range -£48 million to +£131 million with a most likely estimate of +£42 million. The net effect on the Welsh economy, however, will be smaller than this as any change in spending will be redistributed to or from other sectors of the economy.
- To estimate the total effect of eliminating exposure to environmental tobacco smoke money values are applied to the health gains (avoided illness and avoided death) and added to the economic impacts on the NHS and the wider economy. The most likely estimate for the full annual value of the benefits is +£177 million (range = +£32 million to +£319 million). This is equivalent to +£66 million when adjusted to take account of the timing (in the future) of effects (discounted range = +£12 million to +£118 million). The value over a 30-year period is +£2,158 million in today's terms (range = +£332 million to +£3,903 million).

Jonathan Morgan: How much has been spent by the Welsh Assembly government on advertising on the issue of banning smoking in public places? (WAQ47131)

Brian Gibbons: No costs have been incurred to date. The Assembly Government has commissioned a public awareness campaign, which will highlight the risks of second-hand smoke and prepare the public and businesses for the introduction of the ban. Several contracts have been awarded—public relations, creative and wb. This work is currently focused on the development of a dedicated website for the smoking ban in Wales, which will be ready to go live as soon as the Health Bill has received Royal Assent.

Jonathan Morgan: How many a) medical and b) non-medical staff work in GP surgeries across Wales? (WAQ47132)

Brian Gibbons: As at 30 September there were 1,849 general medical practitioners and 4,224 practice staff. Further details are on the StatsWales site at <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx>

The practice staff figure includes other medical professions as well as administrative staff

Jonathan Morgan: How many patients are registered with an English GP and live in Wales? (WAQ47133)

Brian Gibbons: The latest available figure for patients who are resident in Wales, but are registered with an English GMS practice is 14,992.

Jonathan Morgan: How many patients are registered with a Welsh GP and live in England? (WAQ47134)

Brian Gibbons: The latest available figure for patients who are resident in England, but are registered with a Welsh GMS practice is 20,308.

Jonathan Morgan: What has been the total administrative cost of implementing the free prescriptions policy and what assessment has the Minister made of the future cost until the scheme is full introduced? (WAQ47135)

Brian Gibbons: The administrative cost of implementing the free prescriptions policy has so far, and will continue to be, absorbed within normal departmental running costs, and is for that reason impossible to isolate.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Carl Sargeant: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to tackle the problems associated with unoccupied houses in Wales? (WAQ46953)

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): We will be introducing new powers for local authorities to manage empty homes in addition to the wide range of powers they already have such as the serving of improvement notices, entering properties to execute works and the use of compulsory purchase orders. We have also encouraged local authorities to develop empty homes strategies which should be part of their wider housing strategies, including local priorities on housing need and homelessness.

Carl Sargeant: What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to help prevent re-offending in Wales? (WAQ46955)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government is working in partnership with the National Offender Management Service to produce and deliver a joint reducing re-offending strategy for Wales. The consultation on the draft strategy entitled 'Joining Together in Wales—an Adult and Young People's Strategy to Reduce Re-offending' ended earlier this month and the final strategy will be published later this year. The Welsh Assembly Government is also funding and supporting a number of existing initiatives aimed at reducing re-offending in Wales—for example the transitional support scheme.

Ann Jones: How many hoax telephone calls were made to the fire brigade(s) in (i) Wales and (ii) north Wales in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available? (WAQ47013)

Edwina Hart: The number of malicious false fire alarms attended by each of the Welsh fire and rescue services between 1994 and 2004 are detailed on the attached table.

Malicious false fire alarms attended by Welsh FRS, 1994-2004

FRS area	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002 ⁽¹⁾	2003 ⁽¹⁾	2004
Wales	8,393	6,108	5,765	4,397	4,160	3,904	3,760	3,723	3,024	2,368	1,878
North Wales	1,365	1,180	1,150	984	1,186	1,101	1,146	1,212	1,129	548	301
Mid and West Wales	2,260	1,743	1,665	1,562	1,506	1,421	1,264	1,070	686	733	585
South Wales	4,768	3,185	2,950	1,851	1,468	1,382	1,350	1,441	1,209	1,086	992

¹Includes estimates for incidents not recorded in November 2002 and January and February 2003 during industrial action

Ref.: 2006119.sas Source: DCLG

Ann Jones: How many firemen were (a) killed and (b) seriously injured whilst on duty in (i) Wales and (ii) North Wales in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available? (WAQ47014)

Edwina Hart: The total number of firefighter fatalities and injuries, which occurred whilst attending fires, for each of the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services between 1994 and 2004 are detailed on the attached table. No definition for "serious injury" is available for Fire Statistics in the UK. Injuries (non-fatal casualties) are "persons requiring medical treatment beyond first aid given at the scene of the fire". Precautionary checks are not included.

FRS casualties⁽¹⁾ in fires, Wales, 1994-2004

Year	Total	Fatal casualties	Nonfatal casualties
1994			
WALES	34	0	34
North Wales	2	0	2
Mid & West Wales	9	0	9
South Wales	23	0	23
1995			
WALES	65	0	65
North Wales	9	0	9
Mid & West Wales	10	0	10
South Wales	46	0	46

1996			
WALES	38	2	36
North Wales	1	0	1
Mid & West Wales	8	0	8
South Wales	29	2	27
1997			
WALES	26	0	26
North Wales	3	0	3
Mid & West Wales	4	0	4
South Wales	19	0	19
1998			
WALES	25	0	25
North Wales	1	0	1
Mid & West Wales	4	0	4
South Wales	20	0	20
1999			
WALES	16	0	16
North Wales	4	0	4
Mid & West Wales	8	0	8
South Wales	4	0	4
2000			
WALES	25	0	25
North Wales	2	0	2
Mid & West Wales	11	0	11
South Wales	12	0	12
2001			
WALES	18	0	18
North Wales	8	0	8
Mid & West Wales	5	0	5
South Wales	5	0	5
2002			
WALES	15	0	15
North Wales	2	0	2
Mid & West Wales	8	0	8
South Wales	5	0	5

2003			
WALES	13	0	13
North Wales	2	0	2
Mid & West Wales	7	0	7
South Wales	4	0	4
2004			
WALES	11	1	10
North Wales	1	0	1
Mid & West Wales	1	0	1
South Wales	9	1	8

(1) Excluding precautionary check-ups

Source: DCLG Ref.: 2006120(1994-2004).sas 23MAY06

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the introduction of community-based restorative justice schemes in Wales? (WAQ47021)

Edwina Hart: In Wales community-based restorative justice schemes are primarily the responsibility of Youth Offending Teams who are monitored by the Youth Justice Board. I support the use of these schemes as they often allow victims of crime to see tangible evidence that the harm done by offending behaviour is being tackled. I also believe that in many cases, especially for young people, work in the community is a better alternative than custody.

Ann Jones: How many anti-social behaviour orders have been issued in each local authority area in Wales? (WAQ47022)

Edwina Hart: The Home Office's Crime Reduction website provides the number of ASBOs issued in each local authority at www.crimereduction.gov.uk

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on progress toward meeting the decent homes standard in Denbighshire? (WAQ47023)

Edwina Hart: The Decent Homes Standard only applies in England. The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), is the target standard for all existing social housing in Wales to achieve by 2012.

The business plan proposals provided by Denbighshire County Council have been reviewed and discussed with Council officials. The council has concluded that it will be able to achieve and maintain WHQS for its retained housing stock within its projected financial resources supported by prudential borrowing. Accordingly, the council has been given clearance to proceed with implementation of the business plan at its discretion. My officials will work closely with the council to monitor ongoing compliance with the requirements of the Standard.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the fitting of front-line fire service vehicles with satellite navigation systems: and what percentage of such vehicles in each fire and rescue service in Wales are fitted with such devices? (WAQ47024)

Edwina Hart: Statistical information on equipment in front line fire service vehicles is not gathered by the Welsh Assembly Government as it is an operational matter for each Fire and Rescue Authority.

Ann Jones: What discussions has the Minister had with the police regarding improved enforcement of the law prohibiting the riding of mini-motorbikes on public land? (WAQ47039)

Edwina Hart: I have not discussed this issue with the police recently but the Welsh Assembly Government, working with DEFRA, have published guidance to Police Authorities and Local Authorities to help deal with this problem.

Under the 'Safer Communities Fund', we are supporting schemes for the provision of appropriate off-road facilities.

Responsibility for countryside access, including off-road driving, is a matter for the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside.

Ann Jones: How many ASBO's have been served in Wales containing conditions where people were prohibited from driving a mini-motorbike? (WAQ47040)

Edwina Hart: Neither the Welsh Assembly Government or the Home Office hold this information.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the powers available to seize illegally ridden mechanically propelled mini-motorbikes in Wales? (WAQ47041)

Edwina Hart: It is an offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to drive a vehicle carelessly or inconsiderately: or to drive it without authority on land which is not a road. These provision were strengthened by the Police Reform Act 2002 which allows police to seize cars and motorbikes, including mini-motorbikes, driven carelessly, inconsiderately or 'off-road' in a manner that causes alarm, annoyance or distress.

Laura Anne Jones: What funding has the Newport-based 'Echo Group' received from the National Assembly Government previous to April 5th 2006? (WAQ47071)

Edwina Hart: ECHO Stow Hill Community Group is a fully constituted body serving the interests of the community and works very closely with the Communities First Partnership in Stow Hill. I can find no record of the group having received any direct funding from the Welsh Assembly Government.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how social justice is implemented in Wales? (WAQ47103)

Edwina Hart: My Social Justice Annual Report 2005 sets out how the wider social, educational and economic barriers that contribute to social exclusion are being tackled across Wales. The Social Justice Annual Report 2006 should be available later this summer.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on drug rehabilitation services? (WAQ47104)

Edwina Hart: Drug rehabilitation services are commissioned by Community Safety Partnerships at a local level according to local needs and priorities. There are 120 places for residential rehabilitation and 46 places for in-patient detoxification in Wales.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the value of public open space in community regeneration plans? (WAQ47105)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government recognises the value of green space and areas for recreation in relation to improving social inclusion, health and well being. This message is reinforced in 'Planning Policy Wales', 'Climbing Higher' and in the Environment Strategy.

I approved increased funding for the Groundwork movement in Wales in 2006-07. Groundwork helps build sustainable communities through joint environmental action. The four Welsh Trusts work with local authorities and communities to create better, safer and healthier neighbourhoods, including open spaces accessible to all members of the community.

Jonathan Morgan: What discussions has the Minister had with the Home Office regarding the benefits the proposed Police restructuring will bring to Cardiff? (WAQ47106)

Edwina Hart: I have had no discussions with the Home Office about the benefits of police restructuring for any specific area of Wales.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the impact of energy prices on fuel poverty in Wales? (WAQ47107)

Edwina Hart: Living in Wales indicates that in 2004 130,000 households were in fuel poverty. As a result of energy price rises we estimate that another 30,000 households were in fuel poverty by the end of 2005. I have commissioned models to assess the impact of future energy price changes.

Laura Anne Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Welsh Assembly Government is assisting disadvantaged young people in Wales? (WAQ47108)

Edwina Hart: My Social Justice Annual Report 2005 sets out how the wider social, educational and economic barriers that contribute to social exclusion are being tackled across Wales. Examples for young people include Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) providing an incentive for young people from lower-income families to continue/remain in full-time education. A National Inclusion Policy and Performance Framework is being developed to bring together the key issues/principles of Inclusive Education, encourage collaborative working arrangements within and between statutory agencies.

Laura Anne Jones: What discussions has the Minister had with the Home Office on plans to restructure police services in Wales? (WAQ47109)

Edwina Hart: I am keeping the Assembly informed of my discussions with the Home Office about police restructuring in Wales via regular statements.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on neighbourhood wardens in Wales? (WAQ47110)

Edwina Hart: Neighbourhood Wardens play an important role in building stronger, more cohesive communities and providing reassurance. Wardens address many of the problems faced by people in deprived neighbourhoods and can provide eyes and ears to prevent crime: reduce youth nuisance: maintain a pleasant built environment and reassure people against the fear of crime.

Karen Sinclair: Will the Minister make a statement on tackling drug use in Wales? (WAQ47111)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government is tackling drug misuse in Wales by working with local agencies and partners to delivery the Welsh substance misuse strategy at a national and local level. The delivery of this strategy is being supported by increase in the substance misuse action fund of over 600 percent between 2003-04 and 2007-08.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on over-indebtedness in Wales (WAQ47112)

Edwina Hart: The Deputy Minister will be making a statement on the progress made to date at Social Justice and Regeneration Committee on 8 June.

Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on suspending the right to buy in Wales? (WAQ47113)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government has a manifesto commitment to 'look to designate areas of housing

pressure in Wales where the Right to Buy can be suspended'. However, a change of this nature would require primary legislation to implement. On 29 March 2006, the National Assembly approved a motion, put forward by the Assembly Government, for a 'Wales-only' Bill to suspend the Right to Buy in areas of housing pressure. This has been submitted to the UK Government to consider whether it can be included within the legislative programme for the next Parliamentary session.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister update us on her policies for community regeneration in Mid and West Wales? (WAQ47114)

Edwina Hart: The policies supporting community regeneration are Communities First, Community Facilities and Activities Programme (CFAP), (incorporating the Community and Voluntary Local Regeneration Fund), and the Physical Regeneration Fund (PRF).

Communities First supports 12 partnerships in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Pembrokeshire. I have approved 17 CFAP projects, worth £1,121,638, in these Communities First areas.

In this part of Wales there are another 106 CFAP projects, worth £6,645,429, and 7 projects under the Community and Voluntary Local Regeneration Fund, worth £1,725,027. In addition I have approved PRF funding of £4,904,995.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister update us on her policies for supporting Post Office branches in rural Wales? (WAQ47115)

Edwina Hart: Post Offices are a non-devolved responsibility. Through the Post Office Development Fund, I awarded £4.1 million to post offices in the most deprived and most isolated areas in Wales.

I continue to make representations to the UK Government to ensure that the interests of Wales are well considered in the decision-making on their future support for the social post office network. I will not make a decision on reopening the Post Office Development Fund until there is greater clarity from the UK Government regarding the future of the social post office network in Wales.

Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on suspending the Right-to-buy in Wales? (WAQ47116)

Edwina Hart: The Welsh Assembly Government has a manifesto commitment to 'look to designate areas of housing pressure in Wales where the Right to Buy can be suspended'. However, a change of this nature would require primary legislation to implement. On 29 March 2006, the National Assembly approved a motion, put forward by the Assembly Government, for a 'Wales-only' Bill to suspend the Right to Buy in areas of housing pressure. This has been submitted to the UK Government to consider whether it can be included within the legislative programme for the next Parliamentary session.

Owen John Thomas: What discussions has the Minister had with the Minister for Local Government regarding

affordable social housing? (WAQ47117)

Edwina Hart: Ministers regularly discuss cross cutting issues in cabinet and we recently discussed the development of a protocol for the disposal of Assembly land for affordable housing. My officials are in regular contact with the Minister's officials over cross cutting issues such as the Affordable Housing Toolkit which we are about to issue. We will also be engaging in discussions over the issue of affordable housing in the context of the 2006 spending review.

Questions to the Business Minister

Ann Jones: What proportion of black and minority ethnic children are living in poverty in (a) Denbighshire (b) Wales? (WAQ47016) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration.*

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): No figures are available specifically on the proportion of black and minority ethnic children living in poverty in Wales.

Ann Jones: What assessment she has made of the employment of staff from ethnic minorities in the public sector in Denbighshire? (WAQ47026)

The Business Minister (Jane Hutt): Information on the employment of staff from ethnic minorities in the public sector in Denbighshire is not held centrally. According to Census 2001, there were 40,700 economically active people resident in Denbighshire, of whom 400 were from ethnic minorities. Out of this total, 30,800 were employees, including 300 from ethnic minorities.

Peter Black: What innovations is the Minister introducing to the Assembly's website to make it more interactive and accessible? (WAQ47074)

Jane Hutt: I am committed to making the Assembly Government's site as accessible as possible. The current Assembly Government website project is making the website more accessible by putting the right platform in place in terms of technology, governance, operational management and content. The project has first relied heavily on designing the new site to meet the needs of users. Users have influenced the design of the new site architecture layout and style of the site. Further work is being done to improve the search function and to test and validate the accessibility improvements made to date.

Responsibility for the National Assembly for Wales' website rests with the Assembly Parliamentary Service.

Peter Black: Will the Minister comment on the accessibility of the Welsh Assembly Government's own website? (WAQ47075)

Jane Hutt: I refer you to my answer to WAQ47074.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on public access to Assembly Government documents?
(WAQ47076)

Jane Hutt: The framework for public access to Assembly Government information is set out in our Code of Practice on Public Access to Information. Our present Code (the third edition) complies fully with the detailed legislative changes which the UK Government brought into force on 1 January 2005 through the commencement of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. The Code, like the legislation, provides for access to information rather than documents.

Whilst complying with the legislation, the policy reflected in our Code describes how we go beyond the legal requirements. I am pleased that we have continued to demonstrate our ability to meet these high standards whilst responding to large numbers of requests since January 2005.

Many champions of open government continue to recognise us as being an exemplar of good practice. We have been praised by the Campaign for Freedom of Information, journalists, academics and the Information Commissioner for the amount of information we release and our practices in handling information requests.

We also remain committed to maintaining initiatives which support our pledge to maximise openness. These include our widely-praised publication scheme which is being updated and ensures that we routinely publish much information – including ministerial decisions and Cabinet papers and minutes. Members of the public wishing to obtain or inspect published information may do so by contacting our publications centre or visiting our web-site.

Nick Bourne: How are the Minister's policies designed to promote equality in Wales over the next 12 months?
(WAQ47078)

Jane Hutt: I am fully committed to promoting equality through mainstreaming throughout all of our business functions. Equality forms the cornerstone of our work and underpins our vision for Wales as set out in 'Wales: A Better Country'.

We are currently undertaking an independent and retrospective equality audit of Assembly policies. Every department already sets out its priorities in our race equality scheme and we are now developing action plans in terms of disability and gender to fulfil our obligations under the new statutory duties.