

Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 31 March 2010

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

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

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To ask the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister provide details on (a) the proposed terms of reference, (b) the proposed structure and (c) the proposed timescale of his recently-announced Review of the Cost of Administering the Education System in Wales, in relation to both schools and universities. (WAQ55792)

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

On 23 February 2010 I issued a Cabinet Statement which addresses the above points. The Statement is available on the Welsh Assembly Government web site at: <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2010/100223system/?lang=en>

To ask the Minister for the Economy and Transport

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): How many actual applications were made for ProAct funding and what were the reasons for rejecting those applications that were not successful. (WAQ55785)
Transferred for answer by the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

The Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills (Lesley Griffiths): ProAct has received a total of 411 applications to date (the scheme is open to receive business cases applying for support until 30 June). 208 applications have been awarded funding. 46 applications have not been endorsed at the ProAct panel. The remainder of applicants are either working closely with an advisor to develop a training plan, resolving queries raised at the panel before they can progress to the next stage or awaiting to be reviewed at the next panel meeting.

Reasons for the panel not endorsing an application relate directly to the eligibility criteria for ProAct. For example, if the company has not demonstrated an effect of the economic downturn, not demonstrated short time working or not able to demonstrate that the company was previously financially viable.

Once an application has been considered by the panel and not endorsed, companies have the opportunity to reapply responding to the issues identified. Approximately 20% of those companies currently developing a training plan with an advisor have progressed via this route.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What assessment / scoring criteria was used to ascertain whether a genuine redundancy situation was in place within the companies applying for ProAct funding. (WAQ55786) ***Transferred for answer by the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills***

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

Lesley Griffiths: At the time of application some companies will have made redundancies and will be applying for ProAct support to prevent further redundancies.

For those applications where there are no previous redundancies, companies must demonstrate that they have begun or have a date to begin short time working and the economic downturn is resulting in a reduction in turnover and/or profit. Taking such factors into consideration, a company would be likely to make redundancies if there was no intervention.

The panel's role is to ensure business cases meet ProAct eligibility criteria and to ensure applications are turned around as quickly as possible to prevent a delay to the company, given the difficult circumstances they will be experiencing.

Companies which received ProAct funding have provided very positive feedback on the impact of the funding on their business in the short term and on the positive attitude to skills development for the future.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): How many Welsh Assembly Government staff were used to undertake assessment of the applications for ProAct funding. (WAQ55787) *Transferred for answer by the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills*

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

Lesley Griffiths: A ProAct panel has been in place from the inception of the programme to assess business cases to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria of ProAct.

The panel consists of members from a trade union, DCELLS, DE&T, Sector Skills Councils and a sector body (such as Wales Automotive Forum) where appropriate; each has a key role in assessing the business cases using their particular area of expertise to add value to the process. Each panel has one member from DCELLS to provide a training and skills perspective, and one member from DE&T to advise on business development and economic aspects.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Were external assessors used to ascertain the financial position of the companies applying for ProAct funding and to prove that there was a danger of redundancy due to financial constraints. (WAQ55788) *Transferred for answer by the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills*

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

Lesley Griffiths: The ProAct panel which assesses applications consists of external members from a trade union, Sector Skills Councils and a sector body where appropriate.

The member of DE&T staff who attends the panel is a qualified accountant who provides expert advice and guidance regarding financial information submitted by companies.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): What is the average time that the Welsh Assembly Government normally takes to assess an application for funding support under SIF/FS4B. (WAQ55789)

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

The average processing time for all elements of the Single Investment Fund for the 2009-10 financial year to date is 12 working days. Individual processing times ranged from 2 days upwards, depending on the complexity of the case and the completeness and quality of the information received.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): How many companies, and how many training places, were funded under the ProAct scheme without the company having to demonstrate that the individuals receiving training places were under threat of redundancy. (WAQ55790) *Transferred for answer by the Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills*

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

The Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills (Lesley Griffiths): No companies will have received funding under ProAct without having demonstrated that there was potential for redundancies without ProAct support.

There will be employees supported by ProAct who were not necessarily under immediate threat of redundancy at the time of application but long term employment would have been at risk given the

financial situation of the company. The training plan is focused on improving the viability of the company by providing the employees with the necessary skills to improve competitiveness and productivity.

To ask the Minister for Rural Affairs

Brynle Williams (North Wales): Will the Minister make a statement on the implementation of the electronic identification of sheep in 2010, and detail separately, what discussions she has had since then with representatives of the processing and agricultural sectors concerning its effectiveness. (WAQ55784)

Answer issued on 07 April 2010

Wales implemented the minimum requirements of Council Regulation 21/2004 by introducing legislation from 31 December 2009.

The rules are explained in guidance that was distributed to registered sheep and goat keepers during January, which was supported by a series of presentations given by officials, to raise awareness of the new rules to the industry. A revised flock record has also been issued to all registered keepers, which enables the majority of keepers to continue with paper records.

It remains early days, with relatively small numbers of lambs (couple trade) being moved, it remains too soon to assess the impact. I have met with livestock auctioneers recently, their concerns reflected the limited range of EID identifiers, available at that time. I am reassured that 12 manufacturers are now able to supply 19 approved EID eartags and 1 bolus, increasing the choice and competitiveness of that market.

The impact of this Regulation will continue to be assessed but the evidence will only become available once the volumes of 2010 born lambs increases.

To ask the Representative of the Assembly Commission

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Further to the answer to WAQ55700, what was the cost to the Assembly Commission of staging the events between the 4th and 6th of March in the Pierhead Building and the Norwegian Church. (WAQ55793)

Answer issued on 31 March 2010

Assembly Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly, Lorraine Barrett AM: Since its launch on 1 March and through the associated profile gained by the Sessions, the Pierhead has attracted almost 10,000 visitors through its doors. Each visitor has had the chance to participate in interactive polling based on topical issues of interest to the Assembly and to provide feedback on the Sessions and the building. The feedback gained so far has been overwhelmingly positive demonstrating that the building and the events hosted therein have been relevant and of interest to the people of Wales and beyond.

The Pierhead Sessions, hosted by the National Assembly for Wales, took place at the Pierhead between 4-6 March 2010.

The purpose of the inaugural three day festival was to mark the reopening of the Pierhead and establish it as a public arena for free speech and debate. This was achieved through a series of sessions that featured renowned speakers and special guests discussing a range of topical issues that affect the lives of people in Wales and the UK.

The sessions covered a wide range of topics and issues that are currently at the top of the agenda in terms of the national debate here in Wales, e.g. the future of journalism in Wales, what we should eat and the

environment. The aim of the sessions was to feed into that national conversation in order to find solutions.

It therefore forms a strand of one of the main strategic goals of the National Assembly for Wales in this the Third Assembly, which is to increase participation in the political process.

All the sessions were at, or near, full capacity which we believe demonstrates excellent value for money in terms of delivering that goal.

Educational sessions also took place, including Kontakt@The Pierhead, a groundbreaking project exploring teenagers' interactions with adults, a workshop on global citizenship and the Dockers Run – a social gaming experience at the cutting edge of large scale street theatre. A month long exhibition showing the work of Welsh photojournalist Philip Jones Griffiths was also showcased in the Futures Gallery of the building.

To complement the formal programme, the festival hosted an evening in the Norwegian Church featuring musical and comedy sets from up and coming artists in collaboration with Sŵn.

The Pierhead Sessions is also the final event in the National Assembly for Wales' year-long programme of events to mark the tenth anniversary of devolution in Wales.

The Pierhead Sessions was open to all members of the general public as well as key stakeholders, partners and students and in total over 700 guests visited the Sessions during the three days.

In order to ensure that the festival continues to be accessible and relevant to people in Wales, the UK and abroad all of the Sessions have been recorded and made available on the website www.pierheadsessions.org. The website also includes exclusive interviews with some of the speakers taking part.

Costs of staging the Sessions

Breakdown	Cost
Speakers' Fees	£4,900
Subsistence (including travel expenses and accommodation for speakers)	£1,300
Education events	£6,000
Late Night Session at the Norwegian Church	£3,450
Infrastructure (including additional lighting and multistreaming)	£10,450
Box Office	£260
Pierhead TV (including producing, production, filming)	£5,000
Total	£31,360

Festival set-up costs

There were also some associated start up and infrastructure costs but these are not one-off costs as they will support future Sessions in the Pierhead over a number of years.

Breakdown	Cost
Infrastructure set up costs	£9,150
Marketing	
Print/design - all festival materials	£12,202
Website design/set up	£8,000
Festival Photography	£1,000
Print distribution	£1,000
Advertising Space	£1,920
Festivals Company Fee	£16,500
Total	£49,772