

First Minister's Report August 2001- July 2002

Welcome to my second annual report as First Minister of the Welsh assembly Government.

Last October, I published Plan for Wales 2001, setting out an agenda for the rest of the life of this first Assembly. This report briefly records some of the good progress that has been made.

Many people ask me what difference the Assembly is making. In this report we set out some of the benefits which the people of Wales now enjoy directly as result of the decisions the Assembly Government has taken. These include:

- lower prescription charges than in England;
- free local bus travel for pensioners and disabled people;
- free entry to our eight national museums;
- no Key Stage 1 statutory testing in schools;
- six weeks free home care;
- Assembly Learning Grants for people in higher and further education after the age of 18 on a means tested basis;
- Finance Wales set up as a user-friendly 'bank' for small and medium enterprises;
- Piloting the Welsh Baccalaureate for the 16-19 age group in 19 schools and colleges

Adding up these practical examples you find an exciting agenda and a new approach to government which is distinctive to Wales. We want to build a future for Wales, which is sustainable, prosperous and fair. We lead the way on Freedom of Information and anyone can see the record of our Cabinet meetings on the Assembly website.

Our policies benefit all parts of Wales on an equal basis. Over the summer the whole Cabinet held a well-attended open discussion session for North Wales members of the public in Llandudno – and we will repeat this in other areas of Wales so we can hear directly people's concerns. We are developing our office dispersal policy, such that the number of Assembly Government staff employed in different parts of Wales, outside of Cardiff, increases by several hundred.

This August, I represented Wales in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Wales has taken a leading role in forming a new international network of regional governments from all continents of the world. Presenting Wales' voice on sustainable development internationally in this way for the first time was a unique occasion.

Unemployment has continued to fall. It is now at levels last seen in the mid-1970s. We have helped secure a new future for the areas of Wales most heavily affected by the Corus job losses and by foot and mouth. Diversifying and developing the Welsh economy and the skills of the Welsh workforce remains a top priority.

Education and Lifelong Learning

"We are committed to achieving the highest possible standards of education and training for all people in Wales"

A year ago we published Wales first comprehensive strategy for developing our education and training – The Learning Country. Since then we have made good progress on its implementation.

Improving Standards

We believe in getting the best out of, and from, our children, young people, and adult learners, regardless of where they live or their social background.

Just 0.6 per cent of pupils were in classes of over 30 by September 2001. We are continuing to reduce junior class sizes.

We are achieving good standards of education in our schools. Overall attainment of pupils in nearly every core subject and every key stage is better than last year. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in over 93% of lessons in primary and secondary schools with over 50% assessed as good or very good.

We have ended statutory tests for 7 year olds, and launched new schools' ACCAC guidance on equal opportunities.

The Welsh Baccalaureate is being developed and will be piloted from September 2003

ELWa National Council has completed its first year of operation. During this momentous change we have maintained stability while achieving a platform for development and further collaboration.

Young People's Partnerships have been established by local authorities and their partners to deliver the Assembly's vision set out in 'Extending Entitlement'.

Improving Skills

We are committed to strengthening links between learning and business and to creating new opportunities for work based learning.

Our Skills and Employment Action Plan is in place setting out the actions to raise the skill levels across Wales.

We extended access to skills training through the introduction of the Modern Skills Diploma for Adults, the extension of Modern Apprenticeships beyond 25 and a new skills development fund worth half a million pounds. Over 10,055

Modern Apprentices are in training and over a thousand are on the new Modern Skills Diploma for Adults.

There were over 50,000 calls to learndirect and over 170,000 personal interviews were delivered to help young people and adults make informed learning and careers choices.

Reaching Higher

We are committed to creating a new era of post-16 learning in Wales with the widest possible participation

We introduced a new scheme of Assembly Learning Grants which provide a real incentive to students from less well-off families to continue in further and higher education after the age of 18.

Participation in Further Education has now reached to almost double the rate of a decade ago. 99 per cent of all Further Education teaching assessed by Estyn as satisfactory or better, and we have the widest curriculum of Further Education on offer in the UK.

Our targets for 2002 for reducing the number of 16 to 18 year olds without qualifications have been met.

We set out a clear vision for the Higher Education sector in Wales with aspirations for participation, research and knowledge development.

The Higher Education achieved significant improvement in its research ratings and gained additional Assembly funds of £6 million to support this research.

Supporting Teachers

We are making Wales an outstanding place to teach as well as learn.

Extra incentives to attract the best graduates into teaching have been introduced.

We are committed to continuing teacher training and development and are introducing new induction arrangements for newly qualified teachers as well as increasing the opportunities for professional development and training in school leadership and headship.

Health and Social Care

“ We are committed to improving health services and reducing inequalities in access, promoting better health, tackling ill-health effectively, and improving standards in care.”

Meeting the needs of the People

We will deliver the new NHS structures in Wales by April 2003. The 22 Local Health Boards will be close to local people – they will respond to local needs and commission local services.

We have introduced a free Eye Health Examination scheme for at-risk groups.

Prescription charges have remained frozen in Wales.

We have put in place incentives for recruiting and retaining GPs such as the £5,000 “golden hello” scheme to attract GPs to Wales.

Another group of 13 projects under the Inequalities in Health Fund was announced – there are now 67 projects in deprived communities across Wales.

Preventing ill-health

Healthy school schemes have been set up in all areas of Wales and 300 schools are currently participating.

The Assembly Government has continued its smoking prevention and cessation programme targeted particularly at young adolescent smokers.

A campaign to raise awareness about sexually transmitted infections among 16-30 year olds was launched.

Twenty grants totalling £70,000 were awarded to support local food projects across Wales.

Supporting elderly people

Free nursing care for nursing home residents was introduced. The Assembly Government has been working with partners on a Strategy for Older People.

Improving standards in care

Major steps have been taken to improve the quality of care provided to vulnerable people. The Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales was established with offices in each part of Wales.

The Care Council for Wales, which will work to raise standards in the Social Care Workforce, was created.

The Carers Strategy is being implemented with positive effects on the day to day lives of carers

We have announced approval of the Bryn y Neuadd Hospital resettlement plan which will mean that all the resettlement programmes at long-stay learning disability hospitals will be completed in 2006, thus allowing these hospitals to close.

A new fund entitled Cymorth – the Children and Youth Support Fund - is to be set up from April 2003. More than £35 million will be available in 2003/4. This is the first time that a common fund of this kind has been achieved in the UK.

The Assembly Government's Childcare Action Plan has increased funds for local childcare partnerships and childminder start-up grants.

Delivery of Services

The maximum waiting time for cardiac surgery have been reduced to twelve months.

In the main, the maximum waiting times for orthopaedics have been reduced to 18 months.

We have set targets to ensure that patients considered urgent by a cancer specialist are seen within ten days of the hospital receiving the GP's referral.

Over 100 additional hospital beds have been funded.

Wales has some of the shortest waiting times in the UK for accident and emergency patients, with nearly 85 per cent being seen by a doctor within one hour.

We have also appointed additional consultants, nurses and other staff.

The Clinical School in Swansea has now opened, and we expect to exceed our planned targets to for more doctors and nurses in training in Wales.

The National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease was launched in July 2001. Work has since begun on a new coronary care unit at Nevill Hall hospital, Abergavenny, and a new cardiology day unit at University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

Wales now also has a National Service Framework for Adult Mental Health Services will develop services that are accessible, responsive and efficient.

Other recent work has included:

- implementation of appointment booking schemes through the Assembly's Innovations in Care Team
- Publication of Diabetes NSF Standards for Wales
- Development of Renal National Service Framework given the go-ahead

Economic Development

“We are committed to making Wales a more productive economy - improving the quality and diversity of the jobs available, getting more people into work and developing opportunities in poorer areas.”

A Winning Wales

We launched “A Winning Wales”, the new National Economic Development Strategy for Wales, in January 2002. This set out priorities and actions to modernise the Welsh economy, spread prosperity and develop sustainably.

We have established a new Economic Research Advisory Panel which will guide a programme of research work to ensure that the strategy remains up to date and relevant to the needs of Wales.

Supporting businesses to grow

Over the year the Welsh Assembly Government has substantially increased the support available to business.

We launched a new lending body – “Finance Wales” - to fill a gap in the market in the financing of smaller companies.

Work is in hand on a strategy to assist and support growth sectors, promote clusters and support supply chains.

2001/2 was a record year for Regional Selective Assistance offers which should lever in £623 million of investment from 270 projects and create or safeguard 13,100 jobs. Examples of companies which were offered assistance towards their investment proposals include Faurecia Automotive Seating in Deeside, Elev 8 Solutions in Ammanford, Continental Teves in Ebbw Vale, and General Dynamics in Oakdale.

We introduced the new Assembly Investment Grant to assist small businesses in all parts of Wales with financial assistance to support their investment without the undue burden of complex form filling.

We also continue to encourage innovation. The Assembly Government’s grant programmes for product and process innovation –SMART Wales - were transferred to the Welsh Development Agency, enabling more focus and co-ordination. We awarded nearly 140 grants to the value of £4.8 million. We are establishing a network of innovation centres to help turn good ideas into profitable products.

The successful Technium programme – new business incubation centres for businesses linked in to academic expertise - is being rolled out and work is well in hand for the launch later this year of a Technology Commercialisation

Centre, Manufacturing Advisory Service and associated Regional Centre of Manufacturing Excellence.

Business Connect – the business advisory service – has the role of making it easier for small businesses to identify the broad range of assistance available from help with premises to training staff and grants.

ICT and e-commerce

Maximising the business use of ICT is crucial to the modernisation and diversification of the Welsh economy. This is why the Assembly Government has given such a high priority to developing broadband connectivity and its use by Welsh businesses - committing over £100 million to this objective. We are continuing the development of the public sector broadband/lifelong learning network and generally broadband connectivity is improving. Over 200 Welsh companies registered for the UK wide e-commerce awards.

Economic Regeneration

The European Structural Funds Programme 2000/6 is a major opportunity for Wales, especially for the two-thirds of Wales in the Objective One area – West Wales and the Valleys. Wales compares very well with UK regions in implementing Objective 1.

<i>(to June 2002)</i>	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3
Number of Projects Approved	579	39	292
Value of Grant Committed	£336.3m	£4.6m	£30.4m
% of total funds Committed	29.4%	6.2%	37.3%
Amount Paid	£101.7m	£0.3m	£11.2m

Sustainability

Sustainable development is at the centre of our economic development strategy. Three major developments over the year were:

- Work towards a distinctive clean energy policy for Wales to contribute towards lower energy costs for businesses as well as making Wales a cleaner place to live and work
- Successfully bidding for and launching a regional programme of innovative actions under a European funding programme to promote sustainable development objectives
- The award from the European Union of funding to lead a network of European Regions under the innovative actions programme.

Tourism

Our programmes for the support of tourism have a particular significance in the light of the impacts of foot and mouth and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre. Expenditure on promoting Wales and supporting small and medium-sized tourism enterprises has increased by 26% since last year

Grant assistance of £10.7 million was awarded to 370 individual projects, generating a total of £34.3 million investment and 1,240 full time equivalent jobs, of which 441 were safeguarded.

Communities and Local Government

“We are committed to improving the quality of life in our communities, particularly the most deprived; to supporting access to good quality housing for all people; and to promoting an effective local democracy which provides people with control of their local communities and ensures high quality local services.”

Communities First

The first steps have been taken on the long road of regenerating the most deprived communities in Wales. Local partnerships have been formed by local people and they have been allocated over £10 million.

A Communities First Trust Fund has been established to provide small grants to local voluntary and community groups. The Fund will have £9 million over 3 years

The objective is to ensure that as local people identify their needs then all parts of the Assembly Government are in a position to respond. To this end a Community Regeneration and Social Inclusion Policy Board has been formed which includes participants from all parts of government in Wales.

Tackling Crime

The Assembly Government recognises the negative effect of crime and the fear of crime on communities in Wales and we have begun to develop our strategy for reducing crime and making our communities safer

Better Housing

Our National Housing Strategy - *‘Better Homes for People in Wales’* - sets out the Assembly Government's long term vision for housing in Wales in which all people shall have the opportunity to live in good quality homes.

To achieve this, the Welsh Housing Quality Standard has been developed with a target of ensuring that all housing is of this standard by 2012.

Guidance has been provided to local authorities who are required during this year to assess the current condition of the housing stock and the resources needed to achieve the required standard.

The Assembly Government has produced a draft National Homelessness Strategy, taking account of the work of the Assembly's Homelessness Commission.

We have produced a strategy and an action plan to meet the housing needs of black and minority ethnic communities and individuals - achieving equality in our diverse nation.

Modern Local Government

The 22 principal local authorities in Wales have worked with the Assembly Government to put in place new political structures which clarify the political leadership in those authorities and ensure that there is full accountability and scrutiny of those leaderships.

We have provided the first comprehensive statement of the future for local government in Wales - "*Freedom and Responsibility in Local Government*" - local authorities which provide clear leadership for their communities; deliver and secure high quality services for their local communities; and are open, accessible and accountable.

The Assembly Government and Welsh local government have a shared aim in ensuring that local services are of the highest quality and achieve results. There are policy agreements between the Assembly Government and each local authority which specify the key results to be achieved in each local area.

We introduced a new approach to achieving continuous improvement in local service delivery – the Wales Programme for Improvement - which requires each local authority to provide a comprehensive assessment of its capacity to deliver and to provide an Improvement Plan. Audit and inspection will provide an independent check on these plans and their implementation.

We are ensuring that there is better quality information on performance through the Local Government Data Unit.

We have a shared aim with local government of ensuring that local services meet the needs of all the different groups in Wales and to this end we have established a Local Government Equalities Unit.

Environment, Planning and Transport

“We are committed to ensuring that the ways in which we use the land and resources of Wales, the ways we move around and organise our towns and villages promote and sustain our environment, economy and quality of life”.

Sustainability

The Welsh Assembly has a unique legal duty to promote sustainable development.

We are refining organisational and policy tools to ensure that all its actions and policies, and those of its Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, support sustainable development. This is required by the Assembly’s Sustainable Development Scheme and reported in the annual report on the implementation of that scheme.

One of the most successful government initiatives that is bringing sustainable development alive, is the Environmental Development Fund, supporting 198 projects in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We are committed to working beyond our borders to share good practice and innovation and have:

- Organised a major conference in Cardiff with WWF and Oxfam;
- Established a network of European Regions;
- Participated in the World Summit in Johannesburg and founded an international network on sustainable development.

Managing Waste Sustainably

Tackling waste is a high priority and we have committed considerable resources to supporting a major change of practice.

The ***Wales Waste Strategy*** was launched. It aims to reduce waste and to maximise the re-use of waste wherever possible, achieving economic benefits in so doing. This will lead to less reliance on landfill sites in the future. The strategy sets key targets and puts in place the necessary local and regional arrangements.

Transport

We introduced the **Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme** for all Wales which entitles all women aged over 60, men over 65 and registered disabled people to free transport on local buses.

We launched the new **Transport Framework** – showing how we will enable the transport infrastructure and services that we need in Wales both internally and to connect us to the rest of the world. The new Transport Framework is being used to guide the assessment of bids for Transport Grant and further policy development, such as the draft Walking and Cycling Strategy for Wales.

In support of local integrated transport we have increased Transport Grant by a further £130 million in addition to the £300 million provided in the previous year.

The Trunk Road Forward Programme addresses a number of key needs aimed at supporting and securing economic and environmental improvements for communities.

Progress continues on the establishment of a Wales and Borders Rail Franchise, and on supporting and improving the network in advance of its establishment.

Planning

Planning Policy Wales has been fully revised and was published in March 2002. This is a unique, comprehensive and integrated document which sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Assembly Government. It is an important tool for meeting our sustainable development obligation and promoting prosperity, by providing the strategic policy framework for development plans and decision making on planning applications and appeals.

We have also published for consultation '*Planning: Delivering for Wales*, which sets out proposals for improving the planning system in Wales

We have continued our preparations for a **Wales Spatial Plan**

Widening Access

We have made good progress in implementing the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 in Wales

We published '*Overcoming the Barriers*', which offers guidance on ways to improve physical access into, and within, historic buildings – ensuring the place of diversity and equality within our cultural heritage.

Valuing our National Heritage

We have held a major conference to join up the cultural, environmental and economic aspects of heritage

In nature conservation we created three new Special Protection Areas for Birds, established new procedures relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest; and consulted on habitats and species as a focus for biodiversity conservation

Rural Development

“We are committed to promoting a sustainable and diverse rural economy which allows rural communities to prosper and adapt”.

Supporting the Rural Economy

Wales was declared free of foot and mouth disease in December. Steps continue to be taken to establish precautions against recurrence including new arrangements for the movement of livestock. Livestock markets re-opened in February 2002.

We were able to return our focus to the longer-term development of the rural economy. Over £34 million has been spent by the end of June under the Rural Recovery Plan to aid businesses affected by the outbreak. Expected outturn by the end of the financial year is that some £46 million will have been spent, around three quarters of the total Plan.

We have put in place further foundations for the long term.

- Made major progress in delivering the Wales Agri-Food Strategy, working through the WDA and the Agri-Food Partnerships, e.g. True Taste branding; nearly £10 million of grant aid agreed.
- Sent monthly magazine ‘*Gwlad*’ free to all farmers in Wales providing farming families with information that will help them adapt their business.
- Published proposals for single strategic body to drive forward the development of the red meat industry in Wales.
- Established the Welsh Ewe Genotyping Scheme to help increase resistance to scrapie in Welsh flocks.
- Substantially improved arrangements for the Sheep Annual Premium, more than doubling payments to Welsh farmers.
- Improved arrangements for applying for and receiving subsidy and established an independent appeals mechanism.

Promoting sustainable rural development

The Assembly Government published ‘*Farming for the Future*’, the first ever distinctly Welsh strategy pointing a new direction for Welsh agriculture which reflects the principles of sustainability. We have made progress on 90% of the actions in this strategy.

A key part of this strategy to help farming adapt is the pioneering Farming Connect scheme which was launched in September - an innovative and uniquely Welsh initiative which, in its first six months, received over 4,000 enquiries, initiated around 1,500 consultant visits and completed some 250 farm business development plans.

An important feature is the establishment of a network of 30 demonstration farms under the umbrella of specialist development centres to aid technology

transfer and share best practice; and excellent progress has been made in putting these in place.

We committed an extra £1.5 million a year to the Tir Gofal scheme and we have continued to support the organic conversion programme.

Applying the most restrictive possible policy we have had no trials of genetically modified crops in Wales. We have initiated a debate across Europe on managing the co-existence of GM and non-GM crops.

We have allocated an additional £2.4 million to the Environment Agency for inland fisheries and established the Inland and Sea Fisheries Strategy group to develop potential for fisheries in Wales.

We commissioned the Age-Balanced Study to identify the issues which cause young people to leave rural communities and act as barriers to their returning.

Wales Abroad

We are committed to supporting economic and cultural development through promoting the image of Wales abroad”

We have sent the Wales World Nation Communications package to every Embassy and Consulate across the World, staged international events showcasing Wales and developed closer international partnerships and greater involvement in influential European networks.

The year saw the consolidation of our presence in Brussels. A full time member of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department was appointed in autumn 2001. This is a significant step forward as we move into the crucial Mid Term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy and ensures a much stronger voice for us in Brussels on the future of CAP.

The economic aftermath of the very tragic events of 11 September 2001 underlined the fact that Wales is part of a global market.

Not only is Wales the location of choice for a very large number of international companies but an ever increasing tranche of our small and medium sized enterprises is also competing in the global market.

A range of new programmes, delivered by Wales Trade International, has been introduced to further encourage and assist in the development of the capability to trade successfully, and strategically, in international markets.

Since Wales Trade International was formed in April 2000 more than £750 million of opportunities have been identified, leading to deals worth over £100 million. More than 2,500 Wales based companies have received help and support creating 81 new exporters.

Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language

“We are helping all people to express themselves and their identity through arts and sports - widening participation, developing excellence and presenting a confident Wales to the world”.

Building on our creative strengths

The Assembly Government published Wales’ first comprehensive Culture Strategy ‘*Creative Future Cymru Greadigol*’, which sets a bold programme of action by all parts of Government and all other groups over the next few years.

To promote joint working on cultural issues, we established a cultural consortium ‘*Cymru’n Creu*’ - promoting a range of projects, including ‘*Culturenet Cymru*’ a web-site which is showcasing Wales and its culture to the rest of the world.

We increased funding to the arts by 23% (an increase of nearly £3 million) for 2002/3.

The Arts Council is preparing a five-year arts development strategy for 2002/7, which aims to develop an artistically and financially sustainable arts sector across Wales and implement the priorities in ‘*Creative Future Cymru Greadigol*’. It has been engaged in extensive reviews and consultation in preparation for this strategy.

The Assembly Government agreed in January 2002 to support the development of the Wales Millennium Centre, a landmark project of huge importance to Wales. The building and the showcase it provides for the expression of Wales’ culture will help define Wales nationally and internationally.

The announcement that Wales will host the 2010 Ryder Cup at Celtic Manor was great news for Wales and a tribute to all those involved in the joint public and private sector bid team. It provides a decade of opportunity to raise the profile of Wales on the world stage and to develop Wales as a high quality golf tourism destination

We have also supported Cardiff’s bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2008. If successful, this bid will bring enormous benefits for the whole of Wales.

Promoting bilingualism and cultural diversity

We were pleased to participate in the Assembly Committee’s review of the Welsh language. The Government’s strategy builds on the work of the Committee and will assist in creating a genuinely bilingual Wales in which our culture and expression in both English and Welsh will be promoted and will develop.

The Government's strategy recognises the relationships between language, culture, economy and environment – sustainable cultures and languages require sustainable local communities and economies.

The rich cultural diversity of Wales extends beyond our two main languages to people of many ethnic and cultural backgrounds whose contribution enhances the quality of all our lives.

Increasing participation and accessibility

To develop the arts and artistic capacity outside Cardiff, the Assembly Government is making available an additional £2 million a year.

We established the Wales Outdoor Activities Awareness Forum to promote safe participation in outdoor activities, and created the Football Forum for the development of young football players in Wales, including women's football.

The Sports Council has conducted sport participation surveys through all 22 local authorities in Wales which will lead to action plans for increasing the levels of participation in sport for all ages.

We have also been working closely with the Lottery distributors to ensure that Lottery funding streams reflect needs in Wales. The new Fair Share Programme is aimed specifically at deprived areas.

Finance

“We are committed to investing in the public services in Wales and ensuring that we deliver the best results for the money invested”.

Planned expenditure for 2002/3 is £10.5 billion and we have worked closely with the Treasury during the 2002 Spending Review to ensure that Wales received its proper share of resources for the next three years.

The Spending Review was announced in July. Taking account of this and the Chancellor's April Budget announcements, the Assembly's budget will rise by £251 million in 2003/4 compared to the current financial year; by £924 million in 2004/5 compared to the current financial year and by £1.764 billion in 2005/6 compared to the current financial year.

As in the previous Spending Review, we secured expenditure cover for the use of European funds over and above Barnett formula consequential to the extent of £492 million over the three years from 1 April 2003 – compared to £421 million for the last three years.

The Assembly Budget

Each autumn the Assembly Government proposes the budget which will reflect the needs and priorities for public expenditure in Wales.

The following chart shows the planned expenditure on each major service area in 2002/3

Managing Expenditure

It is vitally important that the Assembly Government manages its expenditure so that we do not over-spend; but equally that we use all the money available to ensure that public services in Wales are funded to the maximum extent possible.

In 2001/2 we spent over 99.3% of our Departmental Expenditure Limit. This is a good a record of financial management as is ever found in government and we intend to maintain this record. Our underspend of 0.7% compares to 4.1% in Scotland and 6.1% in Northern Ireland as well as comparing favourably with all key Whitehall spending departments.

Achieving Results

It is not sufficient to increase the money available and spend it – we must achieve results that really improve the lives of people in Wales.

Through the **Welsh Procurement Initiative** we aim to make substantial savings and improve the quality of the goods and services that we purchase – we intend to achieve an initial £6 million of savings in procurement this year.

The Assembly with its health organisations and sponsored bodies owns a large quantity of land, buildings and capital equipment. Effective management requires that these assets are well maintained and replenished. In the past year **Asset Management Plans** have been developed by all the relevant bodies

The Assembly continues to achieve much of its delivery through its **Sponsored Bodies**. There is a programme of reviews of each of these bodies nearing completion which leads to action plans to drive forward improvements in service delivery.

Open Government

“We are committed to being one of the most open, accessible and egalitarian governments in the world”.

Freedom of Information

Since July 2001 we have published on the Internet the minutes and the papers of Cabinet meetings and Cabinet sub-committee meetings (six weeks after the meeting has taken place) so that people can see what was discussed. We are currently developing proposals to make the factual information behind each individual Ministerial decision available automatically on the Internet and are finalising a publication scheme under the Freedom of Information Act, setting out what material we make available to the public. Information on the work of the Assembly is also available through a network of link libraries in each constituency.

Partnership

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to working in partnership with all sectors of society. This year we helped to establish the Wales Social Partners' Unit so that business and trade unions have a dedicated resource to help them to work with us in developing policy. This follows additional support to the voluntary sector and successful joint working with local government in the formal partnership councils.

We have also been developing a new Internet consultation site which will allow individuals to specify what materials they want to see from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Equality and Engagement

Our work on equality issues has put us at the forefront of policy work in the UK.

The Assembly has formally adopted a Race Equality Scheme setting out how we will ensure that policies promote racial tolerance. The scheme requires a review of existing policies and will be updated next year following this initial review.

During the year, the Assembly agreed a pay settlement with staff that will allow individuals who take a career break to return at the level of pay they would have reached had they not taken the break and will shorten the pay bands to address the existing pay gaps between men and women. We see this as an example to other employers.

Specific funding has been given to equality groups to ensure that every part of society has a clear voice in policy making. Following the previous support to the Wales Women's National Coalition, the All Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA) and Disability Wales, this year we helped launch the

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Forum Cymru. These bodies act as reference points for policy development, seeking to test impacts of policy for the respective groups.

As a result of successful policy input from disability groups, the original proposal for free local bus travel for pensioners was extended to cover disabled people and accompanying persons.

The Assembly Cabinet

1st August 2001 – 31st July 2002

First Minister		The Rt. Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM ¹
Deputy First Minister and Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad		Mike German AM ²
Minister for Economic Development		Andrew Davies AM ³
Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities		Edwina Hart MBE AM
Minister for Open Government		Carwyn Jones AM ⁴
Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning		Jane Davidson AM
Minister for Culture, Sports and the Welsh Language		Jenny Randerson AM
Minister for Environment		Sue Essex AM
Minister for Health and Social Services		Jane Hutt AM
Deputy Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning		Alun Pugh AM
Deputy Minister for Local Government		Peter Black AM
Deputy Minister for Health		Brian Gibbons FRCGP AM
Deputy Minister for Rural Affairs, Culture and Environment		Delyth Evans AM
Deputy Minister for Economic Development		John Griffiths AM

¹ Minister for Economic Development until 26th February 2002
from June 2002

² Minister for Assembly Business until 26th February 2002

³ Minister for Assembly Business until 26th February 2002
⁴ Minister for Assembly Business and Rural Affairs (26th February 2002 – 17th June 2002); Minister for Rural Affairs (until 26th February 2002)