

## **Answers to the Written Assembly Questions for answer on 4 February 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 the Economy and Transport***

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What progress has been made towards achieving a fast rail link between London and South Wales. (WAQ55565)

***Answer issued on 03 February 2010***

The Welsh Assembly Government is taking a phased approach for improving train services between South Wales and London.

In the short term, we are working with First Great Western Trains to improve journey times and overall punctuality. An example of this is the 05:58 Swansea to London Paddington journey which now runs fast by missing out stops at Reading and Didcot.

In the medium term, the Welsh Assembly Government has secured the UK Government's commitment to electrify the Great Western Main line from Swansea to London by 2017. This is expected to lead to even faster journey times and an overall step change in train travel.

In the long term, we are working closely with the Department for Transport and its subsidiary, High Speed Two, to make the case for investment in new High Speed Rail lines into Wales and we are currently developing the economic and environmental case for investment in High Speed Rail.

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

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What progress has been made towards producing a draft regulatory package on single use carrier bags, as referred to in the Minister's oral statement of 3 November 2009. (WAQ55567)

***Answer issued on 03 February 2010***

Work on the preparation of the second consultation on the proposals for a second consultation on the single use carrier bag charge is well underway. The consultation will be launched in the spring. Discussions with key stakeholders have helped inform the instructions for the drafting of these regulations.

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister provide details of the meetings she has had with key stakeholders in relation to proposals for a levy on single use carrier bags. (WAQ55568)

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What progress has been made in establishing a steering group of key stakeholders in relation to proposals for a levy on single use carrier bags, as referred to in the Minister's oral statement on 3 November 2009. (WAQ55569)

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister provide details of the key stakeholders involved in the steering group in relation to proposals for a levy on single use carrier bags, as referred to in her oral statement of 3 November 2009. (WAQ55570)

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister provide details of discussions involving the steering group of key stakeholders in relation to proposals for a levy on single use carrier bags, as referred to in her oral statement of 3 November 2009. (WAQ55571)

***Answer issued on 03 February 2010***

My officials and I have had a number of discussions with key stakeholders on the development of draft regulations. These discussions have included CBI, FSB, BRC, Association of Convenience stores (ASC), retailers and local authorities. In particular, I met with retailers, CBI and FSB on 25 November to outline my intentions for these regulations and to seek views on their content. My officials last met with BRC, FSB, ACS and retailers on 12 January and with FSB, to discuss particular concerns of small businesses, on 21 January. Meetings and discussions will continue throughout the process of drafting regulations through to implementation of the charge in 2011.

***To ask the Minister for Health and Social Services***

**Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central):** How much money has the Minister ring fenced for the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit (WAPSU) for the forthcoming financial year. (WAQ55563)

***Answer issued on 05 February 2010***

The establishment of the Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit (WAPSU) is being supported through the Welsh Assembly Government's Invest to Save programme, and funding of approximately £0.300m is being made available in 2010-11.

**Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central):** How many recommendations of the Routledge Review have been implemented. (WAQ55564)

***Answer issued on 05 February 2010***

I have established an Implementation Group to take forward the recommendations and the interim progress report I have received from the Group demonstrates that all of the recommendations have been set on their path to implementation. I am expecting the final report from the Group in March 2010.

**Andrew RT Davies (South Wales Central):** What level of discussion did the Minister or her officials have with the UK Minister prior to the decision being made regarding the Welsh position on a Thalidomide compensation package. (WAQ55572)

***Answer issued on 05 February 2010***

The Minister for Health Services wrote to me in December to let me know of his decision to fund a 3-year pilot scheme to meet the needs of Thalidomide survivors.

***To ask the Minister for Heritage***

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What representations has the Minister made to the UK Government regarding proposed changes to the Furnished Holiday Letting Rules in the last six months. (WAQ55566)

***Answer issued on 05 February 2010***

I wrote to Stephen Timms MP, First Secretary to the Treasury in July 2009 to express my concerns about the potential impact on tourism businesses, particularly the self catering sector. I also discussed this matter with Barbara Follett MP, the then Tourism Minister on 17th September.