

Answers issued to Members on 18 November 2008

[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 Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister make a statement on the use of the free bus passes on community transport? (WAQ52737)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones): The Welsh Assembly Government free concessionary bus passes are not valid for travel on community transport. Community transport operators have their own criteria for persons wishing to book journeys. However, we are piloting free usage of community transport by severely disabled people and disadvantaged groups of society until 31 March 2009. Once evaluated, I shall consider the feasibility and affordability of including community transport in our concessionary bus fare scheme.

Mark Isherwood (North Wales): What is the cost of subsidy by the Welsh Assembly Government for the express train via Crewe route, including the hiring of locomotives, rolling stock, staff and what loading capacity is forecast? (WAQ52743)

The Deputy First Minister: We are currently in contractual discussions with ATW which are commercially confidential.

Mark Isherwood (North Wales): What were the key scorings Arriva Trains Wales Achieved in being selected to run the Holyhead / Cardiff Business Express service, making it the preferred bidder? (WAQ52744)

The Deputy First Minister: A number of train operating companies brought forward expressions of interest. The decision was based on the relativity of value for money and the timeframe under which the service could be most quickly introduced.

Nerys Evans (Mid and West Wales): In relation to the A470 road in Ganllwyd, will the Minister detail what (a) date a decision was undertaken; (b) surveys and environmental assessments were necessary to comply with European legislation; (c) date these surveys and assessments were commenced; and (d) date they have been or are anticipated to be completed? (WAQ52747)

The Deputy First Minister: The decision to install single-way traffic lights was made in June 2007.

An 'Environmental Statement' (ES) has recently been published for the proposed A470 Gelligemlyn Interim Scheme in accordance with EC Directive 85/337 and seeks comments on the proposal by 11 December 2008. Additionally, as the scheme is close to an European protected site, the Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation (SAC) an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out based on recent ecological surveys. These results are published as a 'Statement to Inform the Appropriate Assessment', also available for public for view until 11 December 2008.

Peter Black (South Wales West): What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to promote the campaign for a Welsh domain name (dotcym)? (WAQ52751)

The Deputy First Minister: I refer you to the reply to OAQ0728(ECT) on 12 November. We continue to work closely with the campaign in line with the One Wales commitment.

Questions to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Karen Sinclair (Clwyd South): Will the Minister make a statement on recent Assembly Government funding support made available for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills projects in the constituency of Clwyd South? (WAQ52615)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt): The Welsh Assembly Government has provided £9 million each from the School Buildings Improvement block allocation to Wrexham and Denbighshire, is also providing an additional £1.7 million in formula allocation for schools buildings improvement in this year, with additional resources anticipated for schools next year. Schools benefiting from this include Maelor School and I had the pleasure of opening the learning centre at Ysgol Dinas Bran, Llangollen last month.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Will the Minister indicate when she will publish the recommendations from the working group established to investigate permitted development rights for mobile telecommunications apparatus and her response? (WAQ52772)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): Good progress has been made by the Working Group and an options analysis we commissioned earlier this year from researchers at the University of the West of England is nearing completion. I expect that we will publish the Report in the New Year.