

Written Questions answered between 20 and 27 October 2005

[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 First Minister

Lisa Francis: Will the First Minister list his overseas ministerial trips since May 2003 and give details of the purpose of his visit and the total cost of each? (WAQ44080)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): The table below shows my overseas visits showing the cost, including officials, and the purpose for each visit since May 2003.

Visited	Date	Total Cost	Reason
Greece	15/5/03-16/5/03	£1,067	EU ministerial meeting on regional policy
Barcelona	19/6/03-20/6/03	£604.30	To speak at British Council Conference and meeting with Celsa

Estonia/ Latvia/Milan	1/9/03-7/9/03	£9,259	Participation in "Wales in Estonia" week, trade mission and WDA reception
St Malo	11/9/03-12/9/03	£2,628	Attend anniversary conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
Rome	16/17 Oct 2003	£1,600 (excluding hotel costs met by hosts)	EU ministerial meeting on regional policy
Australia	24 October - 5 November 2003	£13,885.50	Showcase Wales and WTI trade mission
Brittany	15/16 January 2004	£2,250 (excluding hotels costs met by hosts)	Signing of memorandum of understanding
South Africa	22-27 January 2004	£9,288.90	WTI mission and 125th anniversary of battles of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift
Paris and Brussels	1/2 March 2004	£1,181.85	St David's Day celebrations
Finland	1/2 June 2004	£2,382.09	Finland's approach to heart disease reduction and mass participation in fitness programmes
China	September 2004	£1,2210.70	To promote political, education and trade links and to open WDA office
Vietnam	2-6 April 2005	£4,733.07	Trade mission and meeting regarding avian flu

Nick Bourne: What representations has the First Minister made to UK Government Ministers regarding the proposed increase in the cost of the television licence fee? (WAQ44515)

The First Minister: We have raised the issue of ensuring that the licence fee is affordable to all viewers, on several occasions, as part of the review of the BBC's Royal Charter, and we will continue to do so. Our written responses to the review are available on the Assembly Government website.

Nick Bourne: What was the cost of the Minister's recent visit to the west coast of the United States? (WAQ44102)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 27 September.

The Minister for Economic Development and Transport (Andrew Davies): The total cost of my recent ministerial visit to the west coast of the United States, including officials, was £16,630.53.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister list each of his overseas ministerial visits since May 2003 and give details of the purpose and total cost of each visit? (WAQ44110)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 27 September.

Andrew Davies: The table below shows my overseas visits showing the cost, including officials, and the purpose for each visit since May 2003. The list does not include routine visits to Brussels on Assembly business.

Visited	Date	Total Cost	Reason
Dublin	10/7/03	£326	Launch of new Stena Line ship and meeting with Stena CEO.
Brittany	4/8/03-7/8/03	£2,166	Annual Interceltique Festival.
Belgium	1-9 November 2003	£842.49	Attend classic design event.
Navarre	15-17 February 2004	£1,089.24	Discuss and view Navarre's renewable energy developments.
New York	25 February - 2 March 2004	£12,868	Opening of Wales International Centre and St David's Day celebrations.
Dublin	7-8 April 2004	£500.53	Ireland/Wales electricity supply, Broadband roll-out, economic co-operation and transport issues.
Brittany	28 July-2Aug 2004	£837.45	Attend Lorient Festival and explore economic development links with regional Government.
USA	23-30 October 2004	£8,882.80	Trade mission.

Spain	10-14 February 2005	£1,117.56	Lead a delegation of Welsh local authority representatives; view Navarre's renewable energy developments.
Dubai and Doha	25-28 February 2005	£2,466	Assembly showcase of Wales event. Attend opening of LNG gas train.
Brittany	4-8 August 2005	£1,300	Attend Lorient Festival and lead local authority delegation to investigate maritime development opportunities.
California	September	£16,630.53	Trade mission.

Jenny Randerson: Will the Minister outline what discussions he has had over the hydrocarbon oil duty consultation? (WAQ44281)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 11 October.

Andrew Davies: My officials have subsequently had discussions with HM Customs and Excise in relation to the consultation exercise.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the low skills sector in Flintshire? (WAQ44282)
Transferred for answer by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): The Welsh Assembly Government aims for a Wales where everyone has the skills, motivation and opportunities to obtain good quality jobs that meet their aspirations and abilities. In May 2004, the Assembly Government consulted on the content for a refreshed skills and employment action plan 2005, which was published in January this year. This sets out over 50 new evidenced-based actions to help develop the skills that are relevant and necessary in a modern world of work and to help more people into employment. Underpinning this, the revised strategy for basic skills, Words Talk—Numbers Count, was launched in April 2005 setting out how we will build on the progress that has been made, to date, in improving literacy and numeracy skills across the board in Wales. All this will have a considerable impact on helping to raise low skill levels in Flintshire.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister give a progress report on the Objective 1 application made to Welsh European

Funding Office in respect of the Cwmni Egni Abergynolwyn Cyf project? (WAQ44475)

Lisa Francis: What decision was made by WEFO in respect of an Objective 1 application for the Cwmni Egni Abergynolwyn Cyf project? (WAQ44476)

Lisa Francis: Further to WAQ43356, what advice did WEFO receive from the Welsh Assembly Government Legal Services Directorate in respect of Cwmni Egni Abergynolwyn Cyf project? (WAQ44477)

Lisa Francis: What advice has WEFO recently given to the Cwmni Egni Abergynolwyn Cyf in respect of its woodchip burning project, which was to supply heat and hot water for the village of Abergynolwyn? (WAQ44478)

Andrew Davies: When considering the application under the normal appraisal process, WEFO found that the project met with state aid and article 29 (income generation) issues. The Welsh Assembly Government's Directorate of Legal Services advised WEFO that the percentage of public funding that the project had gathered to support its financial package was too high and this advice was passed to the project applicant. WEFO has offered the applicant a solution to try to make the application compatible with structural funds' regulations, which they are considering.

WEFO is continuing to work with the applicant to try to find a workable solution. A final decision on the application has not yet been made.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the progress towards completion of the Pontllanfraith to Ystrad Mynach link road (the Maesycwmmmer bypass)? (WAQ44490)

Andrew Davies: This is a matter for Caerphilly County Borough Council as the A472 at Maesycwmmmer is a county road and not the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government. I understand that the council has identified the scheme as a priority, but there is no adopted line for improvement and no approach has been made to the Assembly Government for funding.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline the discussions held with Highways Agency traffic officers on how the introduction of their new service to patrol the motorway network on routes approaching the Severn bridges will impact on traffic flow in Wales? (WAQ44499)

Andrew Davies: Discussions have been held with the Highways Agency regarding the operation of traffic officers on the Severn bridges, and also to establish working relationships and routes of communication between the Welsh Assembly Government, the traffic management centre and the new Highways Agency south west regional control centre. There are some legal issues yet to be resolved regarding the operation of traffic officers, for which discussions are ongoing. Transport Wales will monitor the impact traffic officers have on their introduction from December.

Similar meetings are taking place between the Welsh Assembly Government, Traffic Wales and the north south west regional control centre. These are to ensure that a standard approach is being taken to address those issues where main trunk roads cross borders between Wales and England and the use of Highways Agency traffic officers is employed.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: What discussions has the Minister had with Transco in relation to the proposed routes of the Milford Haven liquified gas pipeline? (WAQ44503)

Andrew Davies: I have discussed the proposed pipeline at meetings with Transco. Transco will be publishing proposals shortly on the selection of the best route options for environmental and construction purposes, and a full statutory public consultation will take place.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister state who will fund the installation of two passing loops on the infrastructure of the Cambrian line, if it is agreed? (WAQ44505)

Lisa Francis: Has a decision to install two passing loops on the Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury railway line been made and, if so, how will the Wales Transport Bill being made law affect the installation of these loops? (WAQ44506)

Andrew Davies: A study is being undertaken to look at the provision of further passing loops on the Cambrian coast line. This would enable a doubling of the current service from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury, to deliver an hourly passenger service should future demand warrant it. Funding for the installation of the loops has yet to be determined between the Welsh Assembly Government and Network Rail.

Williams Graham: Will the Minister outline how the Health and Safety Executive ladders week (14 to 18 November 2005) will be co-ordinated in Wales? (WAQ44520)

Andrew Davies: Ladders week is a UK-wide Health and Safety Executive initiative to promote the safe use of ladders, running from 14 to 18 November. Ladder falls remain an important health and safety issue in the workplace, accounting for 13 fatalities and 1,200 major injuries in the UK during 2004. The Welsh Assembly Government welcomes this initiative.

The area of health and safety is not devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government and remains with the Health and Safety Executive.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister list each of her overseas ministerial trips since May 2003 and give details of the purpose of her visit and the total cost of each? (WAQ44083)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning (Jane Davidson): The table below shows my overseas visits, showing the cost, including officials and purpose for each visit, since May 2003. All visits are reported to committee.

Visited	Date	Total Cost	Reason
New South Wales	22 August 2003-29 August 2003	£10669	Forge education links and benchmark Wales as a learning country.
New Zealand	27 August- 7 September 2004	£13,640.81	Study and benchmarking of a comparable country.
Maastricht	15 December 2004	£572.21	Vocational education and training conference.
Catalunya	November 2004	£1153.30	Bilateral programme.
Florence	20-21 January 2005	£608.00	European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning focus conference and board meeting.
Florence	March 2005	£357.50	EARLALL conference.
Dublin	5 April 2005	£401.20	Bilingualism conference.
Bergen	19-20 May 2005	£1469.76	Higher education Ministers summit.
Germany	September 2005	£2017.42	EARLALL conference

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister make a statement on Vale TV? (WAQ44487)

Alun Cairns: What analysis has the Minister made of the skills and benefits that pupils learn when taking part in media4schools and Vale TV? (WAQ44488)

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister make a statement on media4schools? (WAQ44489)

Jane Davidson: The media4schools project is developed for students in schools across Wales with the objective

digital media to stimulate learning and develop media skills across schools in Wales through the TV network produced by students for students.

I recently attended the media4schools awards, which is an event recognising the hard work school pupils have put into producing short films for their regional TV network.

From the films shown, which were of very high standard, I saw evidence of literacy skills, creativity and teamwork. For the pupils to produce such professional films they will have had to learn new technical skills, set goals to complete their films, take responsibility for their actions, be motivated to succeed and use their initiative.

Media4schools is an excellent project and the benefit from the project is that these skills are all of importance in other areas of pupils' education as well as in the world of work.

Schools for the Vale TV network were winners of three awards in what was a very competitive competition.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister make a statement on nutrition in school meals? (WAQ44514)

Jane Davidson: The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that a good diet is important both to school performance and health and is determined to help secure, maintain and improve the health of young people in Wales.

One of our initiatives has been to put in place a regulatory framework to control the content and nutritional standards of school meals. The Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) (Wales) Regulations 2001, which came into force on 1 September 2001, define the different food groups and set out the daily minimum nutritional standards for primary and secondary school pupils. Local education authorities, schools and school caterers must comply with these standards when providing school lunches.

The Assembly Government has also issued guidance entitled 'Nutritional Standards for School Lunches', circular 03/2003, which advises local education authorities, schools and caterers on ways of meeting or exceeding standards set in the regulations. It also contains advice on healthy diets, the provision of healthy food that young people enjoy, making school meals an attractive choice to encourage children to choose healthier options at lunch time, a whole-school approach to healthy eating in the curriculum, and teaching pupils about the benefits of healthy food.

Earlier this year, we established a new group to look at how to improve the quality and nutritional standards of school meals, and to ensure we have a consistent and coherent approach to driving forward improvements in food and nutrition in our schools. The food in schools working group consists of dietitians, headteachers, caterers and public-health experts, along with representatives from local authorities and the Food Standards Agency.

The main role of this group is to advise the Welsh Assembly Government on the extent to which more stringent nutritional standards should be introduced with the aim of delivering a reduction in pupils' consumption of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar and an increase in the consumption of fruit, vegetables and other foods containing essential nutrients. I expect this work to be completed by March 2006.

Nick Bourne: What discussions has the Minister had with UK Government Ministers regarding her proposals to ban junk food in schools in Wales? (WAQ44519)

Jane Davidson: I fully welcome the announcement by Ruth Kelly, the Secretary of State for Education, on 28 September, of her intention to ban junk food from school meals and vending machines in English schools and would propose to do likewise.

Currently, legislation only allows standards to be set for school lunches and, therefore, additional primary legislation would be required to allow standards to be set that would restrict or ban certain foods/drinks from being provided on school premises. We are looking closely at the proposals contained in the report that the Department for Education and Skills published on 3 October, and look forward to hearing about any new legislation that will encourage healthy eating among young people in Wales. We will be working closely with colleagues within the UK Government on this issue and they are aware that I would wish Wales to be joined with any new powers.

My officials recently met with their counterparts in DfES to discuss the recently published report by the school meals review panel and are maintaining close touch with them.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside

Glyn Davies: What consideration has the Welsh Assembly Government given to how a worldwide avian flu pandemic would affect birds and the farming community in Wales? (WAQ44463)

The Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Carwyn Jones): The Welsh Assembly Government views with concern the increasing number of countries affected by outbreaks of high pathogenic avian influenza and has put in place import controls to help protect against a similar outbreak in Wales. The extent of the impact on wild birds, poultry or game birds would depend on the circumstances of the outbreak. Similarly, the nature and extent of the outbreak would determine the impact on the farming community and the disease-control measures that would be required to be put in place.

Glyn Davies: What direct communications has the Welsh Assembly Government had with affected Asian Governments about the behaviour of the current avian flu virus? (WAQ44465)

Carwyn Jones: The Welsh Assembly Government has had no direct contact with Asian Governments in respect of avian influenza. However, the evolving situation in Asia and eastern Europe is being closely monitored in consultation with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Alun Cairns: Will the Minister make a statement on retrospective planning applications and their purpose? (WAQ44479)

Carwyn Jones: Local planning authorities can invite a retrospective planning application for unauthorised development where they judge that there are no planning objections to it. Otherwise authorities have wide-ranging enforcement powers to control development undertaken without planning permission. A review of the enforcement system is currently under way.

Alun Cairns: What analysis has the Minister made of the potential exploitation by individuals or groups of the use of retrospective planning to gain planning permission post-development, which would normally have been rejected in the first instance? (WAQ44481)

Carwyn Jones: The Assembly Government carried out a survey of local planning authorities in Wales in 2000 about the use made of retrospective planning applications. The results indicated that 6 per cent of planning applications in Wales in 1999 were retrospective. Enforcement action was taken in 6 per cent of those cases. No analysis is done centrally about the exploitation of the system by individuals or groups.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the criteria he uses in choosing to call in a planning application? (WAQ44493)

Carwyn Jones: Planning applications should be determined by local planning authorities wherever possible; I call in applications only if they raise issues of more than local importance. Assembly Government policy, including the criteria against which applications are assessed for possible call-in, is set out in section 4.12 of 'Planning Policy Wales'.

Michael German: Will the Minister make a statement on the guidance that he offers local authorities on how the expense of defending an appeal against the refusal of a planning application should affect consideration of that application? (WAQ44494)

Carwyn Jones: 'Planning Policy Wales' reminds local planning authorities that legislation requires them to determine applications for planning permission in accord with the adopted development plan for their area, unless material considerations dictate otherwise. Material considerations must be planning matters; the expense of a possible appeal would not be relevant.

Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister make a statement on the Assembly Government's guidance for the cutting of hedgerows and the impact on wildlife? (WAQ44498)

Carwyn Jones: Following consultation on proposed changes to the single payment cross-compliance regime, I recently announced that there will be no changes to the current hedge-cutting or laying dates because of the potential damage to wildlife. I have agreed two exceptions: an earlier cutting period allowed for arable farmers where normal practice determines that the winter arable crop is planted before 31 August and an extension to 30 April for specialist hedge-laying/training events. Both exceptions are subject to compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how the project to eradicate the Ruddy Duck, jointly funded by DEFRA and the European Commission, will be applied within Wales? (WAQ44501)

Carwyn Jones: A UK-wide project board is currently being established to oversee the eradication programme. To ensure that Wales is fully represented, the board will have an official of the Welsh Assembly Government as a member.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how the DEFRA proposals in 'Charting a New Course' will be applied to the fishing industry in Wales? (WAQ44502)

Carwyn Jones: The proposals in 'Charting a New Course' sets out how DEFRA, working with stakeholders in England, intends to manage and develop fisheries policy. It outlines how it will meet the aims and objectives agreed by the four UK fisheries administrations in 'Securing the Benefits', the joint UK response to the Prime Minister's strategy unit report 'Net Benefits'.

In Wales, the focus for the Assembly Government's support of the fishing industry is the development of a Welsh fisheries strategy to cover aquaculture, inland sea and recreational fisheries. The process has begun in the establishment of a stakeholder group, which will contribute to the development of the strategy and will be comprised of representatives from all sectors of the industry. In developing the strategy, the group will consider the above documents and also the review of marine fisheries and environmental enforcement and will consider those issues relevant to the industry in Wales and will look to address these in the strategy.

Peter Black: Does the Minister intend to make representations to the UK Government to introduce a third-party right of appeal on planning applications? (WAQ44504)

Carwyn Jones: No.

William Graham: Will the Minister outline how new guidance and best practice on tackling drug-related litter issued by DEFRA will be applied within Wales? (WAQ44518)

Carwyn Jones: DEFRA's guidance will be applied in Wales through the work of local community safety units. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of individual local authorities to implement the best practice procedures recently outlined by DEFRA in its October 2005 publication, 'Tackling Drug Related Litter—Guidance and Good Practice.' Assistance and advice will be available from the Welsh Assembly Government through the work of the community safety units.

This document is, however, guidance, and therefore may not be precisely followed in areas where it is not practical to do so. Responsibility for what areas of the guidance and best practice are followed rests with local authorities.

Questions to the Finance Minister

Jonathan Morgan: What discussions has the Minister had with the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding budgetary provision for sustained reduction of hospital waiting lists? (WAQ44058)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 29 September.

The Finance Minister (Sue Essex): I have discussed the matter with the Minister for Health and Social Services on a number of occasions as part of this year's budget planning round.

William Graham: Has the Minister been required to amend the Assembly budget in response to recent economic pressures? (WAQ44059)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 29 September.

Sue Essex: The budget for the current year was agreed by Plenary on 8 March. I keep our expenditure under regular review during the year and will bring budget amendments forward in line with the provisions of Standing Order No. 21.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister outline her current budget priorities? (WAQ44060)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 29 September.

Sue Essex: Our priorities are set out in 'Wales: A Better Country', which is available on the website. The draft budget published on 27 September reflects these priorities.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on the impact of the Assembly's budget for the next three

years on the overall budget for the culture, Welsh language and sport portfolio? (WAQ44061)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 29 September.

Sue Essex: The budget for culture, the Welsh language and sport is set to increase by 22 per cent, £27 million, by 2007-08. In addition, the draft budget for the next three years was published on 27 September and took account of our commitments in 'Wales: A Better Country' and committee priorities.

Nick Bourne: Have any financial penalties been paid by the contractor building the new National Assembly building in Cardiff bay, and if so, how much? (WAQ44105)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 30 September.

Sue Essex: Under the terms of the contract, the contractors have been granted an extension of time due to variations instructed by the Assembly, principally in relation to builders' work in connection arising from information and communications technology requirements

Nick Bourne: How far behind schedule is the new National Assembly building? (WAQ44106)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 30 September.

Sue Essex: Under the contract, the contractors have been granted an extension of time due to variations ordered by the Assembly on construction. In terms of the fit-out, I can confirm that work to install the state-of-the-art information and communications technology systems has commenced and will be followed by a period that has been allowed for integration, acceptance testing and training and familiarisation for Assembly Members and officials. The majority of the loose furniture has already been manufactured and awaits installation. Time has also been allowed to undertake a security search exercise.

In addition, of the artwork, two of the commissions have already been installed; the other two are currently being manufactured. No date has yet been agreed for the first Plenary in the new Chamber. This will be subject of further discussion and agreement with the House Committee. However, the project remains on course to be finished in advance of its official opening on 1 March 2006.

Nick Bourne: Will the Minister list all the costs, other than the fixed-price construction contract, incurred in the development of the new National Assembly building since the project was first envisaged in 1998? (WAQ44107)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 30 September.

Sue Essex: Costs incurred to date, excluding the lump sum contract, but including value added tax are as follows:

Professional fees:	£ million
Architect (includes adjudication award)	3.18
Project management	2.02
Other professional services (1)	0.66
Legal costs	0.36
Construction costs up to termination in July 2001	2.66
Furniture (2)	1.25
Art	0.19
ICT broadcasting	4.24
Total	14.57

Notes:

1. Includes such items as clerk of works, access advice, health and safety advice and other miscellaneous items of expenditure.
2. Expenditure under the approved £1.6 million budget for furniture items such as committee tables, chairs, and so on, which were not provided under the fixed-price contract.

Lisa Francis: Will the Minister list each of her overseas ministerial visits since May 2003 and give details of the total cost and purpose of each visit? (WAQ44112)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 27 September.

Sue Essex: The table below shows my overseas visits, showing the cost, including officials and purpose for each visit, since May 2003.

Visited	Date	Total Cost	Reason
The Netherlands	19-21 April 2004	£314.20	Spatial planning and public service delivery.

Ireland	22-23 March 2005	£805.83	Discussion on Government decentralisation programme
Denmark	19-20 May 2005	£783.86	Tax discussions in relation to local and central Government and give evidence to the Lyons enquiry

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the rationalisation of local authority plans in Wales?
(WAQ44183)

Substantive answer following holding reply issued on 4 October.

Sue Essex: In April this year, I announced our plans to reduce radically the number of plans that local authorities have to prepare. The consultation, issued in June with a closing date of the end of this month, contained proposals entailing removing 34 service-specific plan requirements, leaving only four high-level strategies that all local authorities will still need to prepare. We have held three workshops to enable my officials to get direct feedback from local authorities and their partners on the proposals. These have been very constructive and the principles of plan rationalisation have been very much welcomed.

I will be presenting the analysis and conclusions from the consultation to the Local Government and Public Services Committee and in Plenary later on in the autumn.

David Lloyd: Will the Minister detail the revenue collected by each local authority from council tax for each financial year since 1997? (WAQ44470)

Sue Essex: The information requested is given in the table below:

Council tax collected (a) (£ thousand)

Authority	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Isle of Anglesey	8,959	9,038	10,305	11,571	13,603	14,318	16,096	18,312	19,381
Gwynedd	17,657	18,227	21,668	23,370	25,843	26,682	29,711	33,051	35,223
Conwy	14,572	14,632	16,842	18,205	21,042	23,348	26,129	28,723	30,472
Denbighshire	12,041	14,668	16,714	18,196	19,182	22,229	25,339	28,107	29,740
Flintshire	20,803	22,219	24,891	26,934	30,453	33,187	36,069	38,930	42,525
Wrexham	16,124	17,819	19,982	22,282	25,044	26,438	28,988	31,822	34,140
Powys	18,397	19,040	21,536	24,167	27,720	30,271	32,078	35,996	40,593

Ceredigion	11,171	12,313	13,354	15,067	16,723	17,738	18,997	20,204	21,150
Pembrokeshire	15,263	15,988	18,192	19,769	22,368	23,206	24,355	26,626	28,341
Carmarthenshire	25,976	26,394	29,426	32,516	35,589	37,406	40,844	44,667	47,071
Swansea	27,624	29,687	34,094	38,076	44,524	47,056	50,333	55,766	59,090
Neath Port Talbot	18,152	21,029	23,433	25,510	28,657	31,136	33,897	36,627	39,042
Bridgend	17,721	19,793	22,004	24,062	26,830	29,788	32,853	36,666	37,691
Vale of Glamorgan	17,626	18,105	20,012	22,962	26,098	28,698	31,640	35,211	37,581
Rhondda Cynon Taf	26,314	29,020	32,862	37,267	43,006	45,166	47,627	51,185	53,264
Merthyr Tydfil	5,965	6,951	7,787	8,653	9,790	10,773	11,756	13,199	13,863
Caerphilly	17,839	20,491	23,622	26,108	28,448	30,110	32,984	36,110	38,335
Blaenau Gwent	6,285	7,086	8,286	9,599	10,894	12,025	13,479	14,693	15,685
Torfaen	10,319	11,481	12,811	12,955	15,244	16,066	17,647	20,336	21,919
Monmouthshire	12,666	13,057	14,787	16,034	19,849	22,988	25,198	29,413	31,791
Newport	14,286	15,345	17,445	20,067	22,027	23,011	24,101	26,736	29,608
Cardiff	35,893	40,333	47,879	52,396	56,934	62,621	69,276	78,291	81,965
Wales	371,653	402,716	457,932	505,766	569,868	614,261	669,397	740,671	788,470

Source: Council tax collection forms.

(a) Includes arrears of council tax and amounts collected on behalf of police authorities.

Leanne Wood: How much has been spent on installing terrain blockers or high-security anti-terrorist crash-rated roadblockers as part of constructing the new Assembly Chamber? (WAQ44483)

Sue Essex: The cost of installing the roadblockers and security planters is £238,000, excluding value added tax. They have been installed on the advice of Government security advisers.

William Graham: What consideration has the Minister given to applying for financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme to support local authority areas in Wales which have experienced storm and flood damage during October 2005? (WAQ44500)

Sue Essex: The situation in areas affected by storm and flood damage is being monitored. Assistance is

considered within the context of existing guidelines, which include establishing that the financial impact on an authority is likely to exceed a predetermined threshold. The threshold is communicated annually to each authority and calculated at 0.2 per cent of an authority's net revenue budget.

I will consider formally opening a Bellwin scheme if the overall impact is likely to exceed the financial threshold set or when an authority makes a formal approach.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Peter Law: Will the Minister outline the programme for new hospital developments in Wales? (WAQ44027)

Substantive answer following holding reply.

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Brian Gibbons): The capital investment programme as published in appendix 5 of 'Designed for Life', details the programme for new hospital developments in Wales and states,

'A £795 million investment programme from 2004-05 to 2007-08 will modernise hospitals and equipment'.

Glyn Davies: What considerations has the Welsh Assembly Government given to how a worldwide avian flu pandemic would affect Wales? (WAQ44461)

Glyn Davies: What discussions has the Welsh Assembly Government had with the Chief Medical Officer for England following his statement that an outbreak of avian flu is inevitable? (WAQ44466)

Glyn Davies: What discussions has the Welsh Assembly Government had with the World Health Organization on the possibility of the avian flu mutating to become a significant human pathogen? (WAQ44467)

Brian Gibbons: Experts believe that events affecting both human and animal health have brought the world closer to an influenza—also known as flu—pandemic than at any time since the last one in 1968-69. A pandemic occurs when a new strain of flu that is markedly different from recently circulating strains emerges. Experts believe that a pandemic virus may emerge from an avian flu virus if it mixes with a human flu virus—creating a new one that is highly infectious for humans.

A serious pandemic is likely to cause severe illness and deaths. It will disrupt the daily life of many people and cause intense pressure on health and social care services. Past pandemics have consistently announced themselves with an explosion of cases, whereas developments in epidemiological and virological surveillance have given the world an unparalleled warning that one may be imminent. We have therefore had a rare opportunity to enhance our preparedness.

The WHO has led a wealth of work worldwide on pandemic planning and has guided countries, including the

UK, on the development of contingency plans. In the UK, the Chief Medical Officer for England and his officials have the lead responsibility for health but work very closely with the three devolved administrations. We have jointly developed a UK pandemic influenza contingency plan that provides comprehensive information on the overall framework for our response, including the use of antiviral drugs for treatment and vaccines when they are available. This can be viewed at:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/10/44/37/04104437.pdf>

Jenny Randerson: Why has the Minister reduced the amount allocated to the improving access budget? (WAQ44469)

Brian Gibbons: As part of the budget planning round process, resources have been transferred within the health and social services main expenditure group. This budget line is primarily used to pump-prime waiting list initiatives: the majority of waiting list initiatives funding would be incorporated in the national health service allocations spending programme area.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: With regard to the Townsend formula, will the Minister detail the distance from target in terms of money and percentage for each local health board, for each financial year since the inception of the Townsend formula? (WAQ44473)

Brian Gibbons: With regard to the Townsend direct-needs formula, the distance from target shares for each local health board, expressed in both money and percentages is shown below. The first year of implementation of the formula was 2003-04, which also represented the first year of the establishment of local health boards. Distances are detailed for 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06.

	2003-04	2003-04	2004-05	2004-05	2005-06	2005-06
	Distance from target	Distance from target	Distance from target	Distance from target	Distance from target	Distance from target
	£ million	%	£ million	%	£ million	%
Caerphilly LHB	(14.7)	(13.4)	(17.2)	(10.8)	(16.1)	(9.6)
Blaenau Gwent LHB	(2.4)	(4.4)	(1.3)	(1.8)	(1.1)	(1.5)
Torfaen LHB	(11.0)	(18.8)	(10.8)	(12.2)	(8.3)	(9.1)
Monmouthshire LHB	7.8	14.4	9.4	15.7	6.7	10.7

Newport LHB	(3.5)	(4.1)	(4.6)	(4.0)	(4.7)	(3.9)
Vale of Glamorgan LHB	7.1	9.3	0.3	0.3	(1.5)	(1.5)
Rhondda Cynon Taff LHB	(0.2)	(0.1)	8.7	4.1	6.9	3.1
Merthyr Tydfil LHB	(1.6)	(3.8)	0.1	0.1	(1.3)	(2.2)
Cardiff LHB	0.0	0.0	(9.6)	(4.0)	(8.1)	(3.2)
Powys LHB	7.8	9.2	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.3
Ceredigion LHB	5.3	10.3	4.6	7.7	4.2	6.8
Pembrokeshire LHB	3.3	4.2	2.6	2.7	3.3	3.3
Carmarthenshire LHB	(11.5)	(9.9)	(13.6)	(8.2)	(11.8)	(6.9)
Swansea LHB	(8.9)	(6.3)	0.1	0.0	(0.8)	(0.4)
Neath Port Talbot LHB	(4.8)	(5.0)	(2.3)	(1.8)	(2.0)	(1.5)
Bridgend LHB	0.4	0.5	8.5	7.8	8.2	7.3
Anglesey LHB	2.2	4.7	2.4	4.2	0.9	1.6
Gwynedd LHB	11.7	13.3	18.1	18.8	15.9	15.8
Conwy LHB	2.0	2.4	(1.3)	(1.3)	0.2	0.1
Denbighshire LHB	11.8	16.2	9.0	11.2	12.3	14.8
Flintshire LHB	(4.8)	(5.7)	(9.7)	(8.4)	(7.5)	(6.2)
Wrexham LHB	4.0	4.7	4.3	4.0	2.0	1.9

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the cost per bed of Prestatyn Community Hospital, and how this compares with the average cost of a community hospital bed in Wales? (WAQ44480)

Brian Gibbons: The costs for Prestatyn Community Hospital in 2004-05 were £492,607 for 12 beds. Prestatyn Community Hospital ran at 84 per cent occupancy in 2004-05, and this gave 3,659 bed days, namely, £135 per day. These figures are for the direct costs only and do not include any premises or management costs, or trust overheads.

Comparable all-Wales figures are not centrally held. The trust financial return 2 documents provided to the Assembly by each NHS trust provide costs per in-patient day and patient episode on a specialty basis, but not by site and include all overhead costs.

Kirsty Williams: What action is being taken to reduce the shortfall in the number of rehabilitation workers for blind and partially sighted people? (WAQ44482)

Kirsty Williams: What plans does the Minister have for the future funding of rehabilitation services for blind and partially sighted people? (WAQ44485)

Kirsty Williams: What action is being taken to ensure that the delivery of rehabilitation services for blind and partially sighted people is of a consistently high standard across Wales? (WAQ44486)

Brian Gibbons: The funding and delivery of rehabilitation services and the number of qualified workers who may be required to deliver this service are essentially a matter for local consideration.

The Welsh Assembly Government and the Association of Directors of Social Services have jointly funded a benchmarking exercise on services for people with a visual impairment. The benchmarking exercise was managed by Syniad and the report will be launched shortly. The Social Services Inspectorate for Wales will then consider any wider implications which may arise from the benchmarking report in conjunction with the ADSS and other interested organisations including representatives from the voluntary sector.

Separately, in August this year, my officials facilitated a meeting with a number of interested parties including ADSS Cymru, the Care Council for Wales, SSIW and the voluntary sector to discuss a number of matters relating to workers who provide rehabilitation services for the blind. As a consequence of this and following individual discussions in the occupational standards groups of each of the four countries across the UK—the Care Council for Wales in Wales—it has been agreed that there is a clear need to ensure appropriate qualifications are available for sensory impairment workers, including rehabilitation officers for the blind. A funding bid has been made to the UK National Occupational Standards Board for this.

Ann Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the cost per bed in a community hospital, and how this compares with the average cost of a standard bed in a Welsh district general hospital? (WAQ44491)

Brian Gibbons: All-Wales figures on the cost per bed in community and district general hospitals are not centrally held. The trust financial return 2 documentation provided to the Assembly by NHS trusts provides costs per in-patient day and per patient episode on a specialty basis, but these figures are not broken down by hospital or site.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Pursuant to your answer to WAQ44248, will the Minister detail the administration costs of health authorities for the final year of their existence? (WAQ44492)

Brian Gibbons: The information is shown in the table below.

Health Authority Administration Costs

	2002-03
Health Authority	£'000
Bro Taf	9,210
Dyfed Powys	8,242
Gwent	10,422
Iechyd Morgannwg	6,968
North Wales	8,713
	43,555

Source: Health authority annual accounts 2002-03

Note: Health authority administration costs are not directly comparable with local health board administration costs because the reconfiguration of health authority functions following abolition is not exactly replicated by the functions of LHBs.

Carl Sargeant: Will the Minister make a statement on what support the Welsh Assembly Government is providing to breast cancer services in Wales? (WAQ44495)

Brian Gibbons: Tackling cancer is one of the top priorities for the Welsh Assembly Government. Early detection and treatment improves survival rates. Breast Test Wales, which we commission through Health Commission Wales, currently screens women between the ages of 50 and 67. By March 2006, this will be extended to women up to the age of 70. The latest UK-wide figures show that Breast Test Wales has the highest detection rates in the UK.

We have also recently published the new national cancer standards, which cover 10 cancer sites including breast cancer. These will be subject to regular scrutiny by the cancer services co-ordinating group to ensure that they represent best clinical practice and guidance and are in keeping with cancer standards produced by the rest of the UK.

Jocelyn Davies: Will the Minister make a progress report on the expert patient programme? (WAQ44507)

Brian Gibbons: An expert patient programme advisory group has been set up to oversee national mainstreaming. It has a standing item on its agenda to receive progress reports from each of the three NHS regions. Each region has set up an EPP network, with representatives from voluntary organisations, community groups, community health councils and others. The EPP roll-out is progressing according to plan, with 19 of the 22 LHBs currently participating in the programme. Every LHB will be involved by 2006. The EPP roll-out is on course to achieve full mainstream throughout the NHS in Wales by 2008.

Jocelyn Davies: What plans does the Minister have to commission services from the voluntary sector to facilitate implementing the expert patient programme? (WAQ44508)

Brian Gibbons: The commissioning of EPP courses is undertaken by local health boards. The model being used by LHBs to mainstream EPP throughout the NHS in Wales is based on working collaboratively. Within each NHS region LHBs are working together with key stakeholders, including the voluntary sector, local community groups and community health councils to ensure that the programme develops in a way that promotes effective partnership working.

Although a number of different models of EPP course delivery are being used, it is envisaged that LHBs will focus on the most cost effective route while ensuring that the national quality assurance standards are being met.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Further to the Minister's answer to WAQ44248, will the Minister detail annual changes to the running costs of local health boards? (WAQ44509)

Brian Gibbons: The information to compare the annual changes in administrative costs since local health boards were created on 1 April 2003 is provided in the final two columns of the table below. The information provided should be considered within the following contexts:

1. The term 'running costs' can have different definitions. The information provided in response to these questions is consistent with the information requested previously under WAQ44248 regarding 'admin costs'. Administration costs—excluding capital charges—as set out in the published annual accounts of each LHB are made up of the following:

- non-executive directors' remuneration
- other salaries and wages
- establishment expenses
- transport and moveable plant
- premises
- external contractors
- auditors' remuneration—audit fee
- auditors' remuneration—other fees
- business services centre recharge
- interest payable—unwinding of discount
- interest payable—other

- Other

2. The Minister for Health and Social Services stated in July 2002 that the running costs of the new LHB structure would not exceed those of the structure it replaced. The administrative cost definitions used in the attached table are not comparable to the running cost definitions used in July 2002. It should also be noted that it is not possible to make comparisons of the administration costs of the former health authorities with those of the current local health boards, because there have been significant changes in the way services and the administration costs have been structured and defined.

LOCAL HEALTH BOARDS ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATING COSTS								
Local Health Board	2004-05	2004-05	2004-05	2003-04	2003-04	2003-04		
	Admin costs	Operating costs	Admin costs as % of operating costs	Admin costs	Operating costs	Admin costs as % of operating costs	Admin costs (Difference)	Operating costs (Difference)
	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
Anglesey	1,562	76,981	2.029%	1,578	71,637	2.203%	-16	5,344
Blaenau Gwent	1,848	90,271	2.047%	1,649	81,297	2.028%	199	8,974
Bridgend	2,266	156,764	1.445%	2,098	146,891	1.428%	168	9,873
Caerphilly	2,865	191,336	1.497%	2,340	169,931	1.377%	525	21,405
Cardiff	3,303	316,042	1.045%	3,042	294,227	1.034%	261	21,815
Carmarthenshire	2,849	199,944	1.425%	2,309	183,999	1.255%	540	15,945
Ceredigion	1,723	89,761	1.920%	1,598	83,371	1.917%	125	6,390
Conwy	1,981	137,295	1.443%	1,826	125,225	1.458%	155	12,070
Denbighshire	1,864	126,965	1.468%	1,770	118,451	1.494%	94	8,514
Flintshire	2,204	144,483	1.525%	2,089	132,240	1.580%	115	12,243
Gwynedd	2,194	154,750	1.418%	2,095	143,877	1.456%	99	10,873
Merthyr Tydfil	1,809	73,024	2.477%	1,436	69,112	2.078%	373	3,912
Monmouthshire	2,138	96,384	2.218%	1,772	86,143	2.057%	366	10,241
Neath/Port Talbot	2,361	160,932	1.467%	2,113	150,308	1.406%	248	10,624

Newport	2,230	155,628	1.433%	2,084	141,178	1.476%	146	14,450
Pembrokeshire	2,096	137,213	1.528%	1,962	126,291	1.554%	134	10,922
Powys	1,062	158,714	0.669%	923	146,160	0.631%	139	12,554
Rhondda Cynon Taff	3,320	282,694	1.174%	2,939	253,014	1.162%	381	29,680
Swansea	2,980	252,681	1.179%	2,604	238,652	1.091%	376	14,029
Torfaen	1,727	113,583	1.520%	1,544	100,103	1.542%	183	13,480
Vale of Glamorgan	1,726	143,497	1.203%	1,636	128,968	1.269%	90	14,529
Wrexham	2,310	148,816	1.552%	2,077	135,927	1.528%	233	12,889
Totals	48,418	3,407,758	1.421%	43,484	3,127,002	1.391%	4,934	280,756

Note: Powys LHB includes costs of commissioning and providing services

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on waiting times for rheumatology for each year since 1999? (WAQ44510)

Brian Gibbons: Information on waiting times for rheumatology may be found on the StatsWales website at <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk>.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on waiting times for physiotherapy for rheumatology for each year since 1999? (WAQ44511)

Brian Gibbons: Information on the number of patients waiting for physiotherapy specifically for rheumatology is not held centrally.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of patients from Wales receiving treatment for rheumatology in England? (WAQ44512)

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on the number of children from Wales receiving treatment for rheumatology in England? (WAQ44513)

Brian Gibbons: The information available from the patient episode database Wales is given in the following table.

Welsh residents treated in England in the specialty of Rheumatology (a)

	Children (b)	All ages
2000-01	42	379
2001-02	43	275
2002-03	33	257
2003-04	22	196
2004-05	56	159

Source: Patient episode database Wales. PEDW receives information about patients treated in England through the English clearing system, Clearnet. It is the responsibility of the NHS in England to supply data through this route.

a) Hospital spells with a primary specialty of rheumatology.

b) Aged 16 or under.

William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement on how the NHS Redress Bill will be applied in Wales? (WAQ44516)

Brian Gibbons: Under the NHS Redress Bill, the National Assembly is seeking a broad regulation-making power, or framework power, which will allow the Assembly to specify the detail of the arrangements for NHS redress in Wales. This will ensure that the principles underpinning the NHS Redress Bill, for example, of supporting the NHS to deliver a more proactive response when things go wrong and facilitating learning across complaints, clinical negligence and redress are fully endorsed. Any arrangements will be specifically based on Welsh needs and will ensure that Welsh patients are not disadvantaged.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration

Leanne Wood: In relation to the Welsh Assembly Government's anti-poverty initiatives, does the Minister keep records on the percentage of Welsh citizens living on: a) less than £5,000 per annum: b) less than £10,000 per annum: c) less than £20,000 per annum: d) less than £50,000 per annum and e) more than £50,000 per annum,

and if so, will she publish those figures? (WAQ44497)

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): The Assembly Government does not hold information on the income levels of Welsh citizens. The most comprehensive official source of information for areas within the UK is the survey of personal incomes produced by HM Revenue and Customs. With regard to the measurement of poverty, an alternative source of information on the income distribution is available from 'Households Below Average Income', a Department for Work and Pensions publication.

Further details are available on their websites at: www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/income_distribution/menu-by-year.htm#311 and www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai.asp

Questions to the Business Minister

Kirsty Williams: What grants does the Welsh Assembly Government offer to those with disabilities? (WAQ44462)

The Business Minister (Jane Hutt): The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 introduces a positive statutory duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment of disabled people.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to creating an inclusive society for disabled people in Wales. In recent years the Assembly Government has provided disabled people either directly or indirectly with support across a broad range of its policy areas, including health, education, culture and sport. In addition, the Assembly Government works with many voluntary sector organisations which represent people with disabilities and provides them with grant funding to develop and implement a variety of projects.