

## **Answers issued to Members on 25 October 2007**

[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**

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister make a statement on the possible installation of flashing warning lights outside Capel Bangor School? (WAQ50534)

**The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones):** The installation of flashing warning lights on the road outside Capel Bangor School is a matter for Ceredigion County Council as the local highway authority.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister advise when a decision is likely on installing a safety camera on the A489 at Machynlleth Primary School? (WAQ50541)

**The Deputy First Minister:** The Mid & South Wales Safety Camera Partnership were contacted in August and asked to assess whether they considered a safety camera an appropriate measure in accordance with the guidance that had become effective from the introduction of the new funding arrangements after 31st March 2007. They confirmed they were arranging for vehicle speed surveys to be carried out. My officials have written to the Partnership requesting an update on progress and confirmation of whether they have now been able to assess whether a permanent safety camera is an appropriate measure in the vicinity of the primary school on the A489 Newtown Road, Machynlleth. A response is expected within the next few weeks.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What study has been undertaken into the proportion of passengers using the Ynys Môn to Cardiff air link being public servants and therefore paid for from public funds? (WAQ50543)

**The Deputy First Minister:** No such study has been undertaken. The service started in May and we plan to evaluate its initial success after one year's operation. Evaluation will include the results of a passenger survey that will seek information on usage by different categories of passenger.

### **Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing**

**Nerys Evans (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister outline the timetable of decision following the consultation on private sewers transfer? (WAQ50520)

**The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson):** The three-month joint consultation exercise by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) on 'Private Sewers Transfer—Implementation Options' closed on 19 October. The consultation discussed options and sought views on how best to take forward the proposed transfer of private sewers into the ownership of the water and sewerage undertakers, including whether the transfer should be phased. The Welsh Assembly Government and Defra are currently considering the responses and it is not yet possible to say when a decision on the issues raised in the consultation will be made.

Before any transfer of private sewers under the options outlined in the consultation document can take place, the Welsh Assembly Government and Defra would need to make regulations under the Water Industry Act 1991. We will undertake a further consultation exercise on any such draft regulations: it is likely that the consultation exercise would be in 2008.

**Peter Black (South Wales West):** What assessment has the Minister made of the merits of requiring 10 per cent of all new build housing to be wheelchair accessible throughout? (WAQ50522)

**The Deputy Minister for Housing (Jocelyn Davies):** The Welsh Assembly Government has no current powers to require 10 per cent of all new housing to be built to wheelchair standards.

The provision of wheelchair accessible homes may not meet the needs of people with other disabilities and therefore in both the public and private sectors the building of fully wheelchair accessible homes should be based on identified need.

We are however committed to the principles of barrier free housing and the introduction of Lifetime Homes Standards across all tenures. We lead by example by disseminating good practice and require all public sector housing receiving Social Housing Grant to be constructed to the standard.

Homes built to Lifetime Homes Standards provide for a wide range of disabilities and whilst falling short of wheelchair standards are accessible by wheelchair users. They help create a more flexible housing stock by providing homes that are more accessible and convenient for people of all ages including those with a disability. These homes will relieve some of the demands for physical adaptations in the future and may reduce the demand for residential care and grant funded adaptations.

**Peter Black (South Wales West):** What assessment has the Minister made of the merits of the devolution of building regulations to require all new build homes to be built to lifetime home standards? (WAQ50523)

**Jane Davidson:** To increase the stock of accessible housing in the private sector legislation is necessary. We have consistently lobbied the UK Government to introduce regulation requiring accessibility standards in excess of the current part M that was introduced in 1999.

Devolution of the Building Regulation function to Wales will provide the opportunity for us to consider introducing Lifetime Homes Standards to all new homes in Wales irrespective of tenure.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What developments have recently been made regarding the issue of Coastal Path access in Wales? (WAQ50524)

**Jane Davidson:** I announced in June how the £1.5 million allocated to the Assembly Government's Coastal Access Improvement Programme was being distributed to the local coastal authorities in Wales. In addition, in July I announced that the Assembly Government would be exploring how a statutory approach to coastal access might complement and add value to the existing programme.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What assessment has the Minister made of the introduction of voluntary access agreements as a way of allowing public access to rural pathways? (WAQ50525)

**Jane Davidson:** The Welsh Assembly Government accepts that voluntary access agreements can usefully supplement the countryside access secured through the public rights of way network. As a result we have included provision for such access agreements within the arrangements for the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme. The main disadvantage of such agreements is that they can be terminated by the landowner/farmer, for example when their participation in the agri-environment scheme ends. They do not therefore provide permanent and secure access for the public.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What plans does the Minister have to pay compensation to farmers for any loss of business incurred by the implementation of the Coastal Path Access? (WAQ50527)

**Jane Davidson:** Compensation is already payable under the terms of the Highways Act 1980 for public footpaths agreed by negotiation with landowners. This has, for example, been a feature of the new Ceredigion Coast Path in West Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government has no plans at this time to change or supplement these arrangements.

### **Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services**

**Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire):** Will the Minister make a statement on the length of time patients are waiting to see an orthodontist? (WAQ50528)

**The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart):** Currently, only data on secondary care Orthodontics is routinely collected in Wales.

The current waiting time target in Wales is that no patient should wait longer than 36 weeks to see an Orthodontist, reducing to 22 weeks by March 2008.

The latest available waiting times figures for August 2007 show that no patients were waiting over 36 weeks to see an Orthodontist and 436 were waiting over 22 weeks.

### **Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs**

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister outline her plans to compensate farmers affected by the Foot and Mouth crisis? (WAQ50546)

**The Minister for Rural Affairs (Elin Jones):** Compensation in respect of foot and mouth disease is only payable for disease control purposes for the value of animals slaughtered and materials seized. It is not Government policy to pay farmers or businesses for consequential losses such as loss of earnings or loss of trade.

I am very aware of the pressures affecting the farming industry and I am introducing from 27 October a Light Lamb Disposal Scheme under which farmers will be paid £15 per lamb. The scheme will run until 4 January. I have also made available over £1 million to Hybu Cig Cymru to help promote Welsh meat products.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What discussions has the Minister had with Defra regarding compensation for farmers in Wales affected by the foot and mouth crisis? (WAQ50547)

**Elin Jones:** In discussions with Hilary Benn I have borne in mind the likely source for the outbreak being the laboratory complex in Pirbright and the impact the disease outbreak had on the industry in Wales. It is for the industry to consider what claims it may wish to make against either the organisations or Government and it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What discussions has the Minister had with DEFRA regarding its suggestion that supermarkets should stock UHT milk instead of pasteurised milk, thereby saving energy used in refrigerating dairy products? (WAQ50548)

**Elin Jones:** It is understood that Defra has been working in close collaboration with all parts of the dairy supply chain in England to look at ways to reduce the environmental impacts of dairy production and consumption. A discussion document, which made reference to UHT milk, was drawn up by Defra at the request of stakeholder groups in England. However, we are informed that it does not represent Defra policy.

At present, there is no firm evidence to show that UHT Milk is better for the environment than fresh milk.

**Nicholas Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What assessment has the Minister made of the impact the introduction of Coastal Path Access will have on the agricultural sector in Wales? (WAQ50526)

**Elin Jones:** Successive studies have shown that improved coastal access can secure substantial economic benefits for local areas. For example, the Anglesey Coast Path contributes an estimated £12 million per annum to the local economy and attracts some 300,000 visitors annually. Farming enterprises can gain from this as well as other businesses like hotels, pubs and recreational activity centres.

In addition, and in determining the route of the new All Wales Coast Path, the aim will be to secure this, wherever possible, on unimproved land or land which is not intensively farmed, thereby lessening the possible impact on agriculture.