

Answers issued to Members on 3 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 Economy and Transport

Mike German (South Wales East): Has the Minister made any representations to the Association of Train Operating Companies about developing a priority list for rail improvements in Wales? (WAQ50423)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones): Officials collaborated with the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) during the preparation of the Wales Rail Planning Assessment, which was published in July 2007. My officials are also working with ATOC in helping to scope Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): Has the Minister any plans to issue planning guidance on the provision of equal and adequate accessible public toilets for men and women? (WAQ50410)

The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson): I refer you to the answer to WAQ50412, which was sent to you by my colleague Brian Gibbons, Minister for Social Justice and Local Government.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): When will Wales introduce commissioning directives for respiratory care? (WAQ50414)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): The Service Development and Commissioning Directives for Chronic Respiratory Conditions will be published by the end of October 2007. Plans are currently being made to officially launch the document on World COPD Day, 14 November.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): Has the Minister any plans to issue planning guidance on the provision of equal and adequate accessible public toilets for men and women? (WAQ50412)

The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government (Brian Gibbons): Section 87(3)(c) of the Public Health Act 1936 is being amended by the UK Government to allow local authorities in England and Wales to charge for the use of all sanitary conveniences (lavatories and urinals). This will not only enable local authorities to apply the law equally should they decide to charge but will also allow them to recover the maintenance cost of providing such facilities to the public.

The introduction of Access Statements to accompany planning applications already requires applicants to give early consideration to how the external routes to their developments will be accessible to all. The draft Guidance on Access Statements has been out for consultation and the responses are currently being considered along with how the guidance will integrate with proposed changes to guidance on design statements and revisions to TAN 12. However it is for Part M of the building regulations to address the internal dimensions and layouts of public toilets.

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): Does the Minister have any plans to make toilet provision and cleaning a statutory responsibility for Local Government? (WAQ50422)

Brian Gibbons: I have no plans to make toilet provision and cleaning a statutory responsibility for Local Government.

This would require a change to primary legislation and the Assembly Government has no plans to seek such a change. The UK Government Department for Communities and Local Government are working to produce a Public Access to Toilets Strategic Guide by November. The UK Government also plans to introduce an amendment to section 87(3)(c) of the Public Health Act 1936 which will allow local authorities to charge for the use of public conveniences including urinals. The amendment will cover England and Wales and is expected to be in place by December 2007.