

## **Answers issued to Members on 13 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

**Mike German (South Wales East):** In the draft budget, how much expenditure within the roads capital budget (Cost of Capital and Maintaining the Trunk Road Network) is the Welsh Assembly Government contractually committed to? (WAQ52729)

**The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones):** Approximately £6.2 million.

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

**Irene James (Islwyn):** Will the Minister make a statement on the future of Coleg Gwent's Campus in Crosskeys? (WAQ52699)

**The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt):** The governors of the College have asked its management to undertake a review of the options available to the College to secure its long term future; and to ensure that its programmes of learning are best aligned to fit with existing and developing Welsh Assembly Government policy. The review has included the contribution that is made by each campus but no conclusions have been reached. The Governing Body of the College is scheduled to discuss the outcomes of the review in January 2009.

**Irene James (Islwyn):** What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to provide guidance and support to teachers during the roll out of the foundation phase? (WAQ52700)

**Jane Hutt:** The Foundation Phase requirements are set out in the Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales. During the lead up to the introduction of the Foundation Phase at the start of the school year, an extensive range of support and guidance materials was produced to prepare practitioners to deliver the new curriculum. These materials comprise:

- Play/Active Learning: overview for 3 to 7-year olds;
- Observing Children;
- Learning and Teaching Pedagogy;
- Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity;
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills;
- Mathematical Development;
- Welsh Language Development;
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World;
- Physical Development; and
- Creative Development.

A national Training Pack has been developed, in partnership with key stakeholders, to support staff in both the planning for and delivery of the Foundation Phase. The training is provided for the many new recruits, who may come with little or no experience in the field, and for existing practitioners to ensure they are fully equipped to implement the Foundation Phase pedagogy effectively.

The Pack forms the basis for locally delivered training programmes and, to date, five modules have been developed covering:

- An Introduction to the Foundation Phase;
- Child Development;

- Observing, Recording and Reporting;
- Experiential Learning in Practice; and
- Additional Learning Needs.

During the course of the current school year the Pack will be further enhanced to include modules on:

- Well-being and levels of involvement
- Early Intervention
- Outdoor Learning
- Leadership for Learning; and
- Transition.

Work is also in train to provide practitioners with material to support the assessment of children in the Foundation Phase. We are developing a national Baseline Assessment scheme to be administered when a child first enters the Foundation Phase. This will build on and replace the current 12 local schemes in use across Wales. Work will also start in 2009 on exemplification materials—DVDs and booklets—to support practitioners' assessment of the children at the end of the Foundation Phase. Further modules on Baseline and end of phase assessment will form part of the National Training Pack. Additionally, we intend to publish guidance in Spring 2009 on profiling child development to assist practitioners with their ongoing observation and assessment of children throughout the Foundation Phase.

### **Questions to the Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery**

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Will the Minister list the number of invoices that have taken longer than 10 days to settle from the date of receipt since April 2008? (WAQ52694)

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Will the Minister give the average waiting times for settlement of all invoices received by the Welsh Assembly Government during the month of September 2008? (WAQ52695)

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Will the Minister give the average waiting times for settlement of all invoices received by the Welsh Assembly Government during the month of August 2008? (WAQ52696)

**The Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery (Andrew Davies):** The Welsh Assembly Government monitors payment of invoices from the latest of the following dates:

- (a) receipt of a valid invoice;
- (b) satisfactory receipt of the goods or services concerned; or
- (c) resolution of any dispute over the invoice or the goods or services concerned.

In the period April to October (inclusive) 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government paid 168,005 invoices. Of these, our records show that 8,144 invoices took longer than 10 days from the point when the clock starts running to when the money is in suppliers' accounts.

On the same basis, the average time for settlement of invoices paid in September 2008 was 5.89 days, and the average time for settlement of invoices paid in August 2008 was 6.65 days.

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

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister detail the percentage of invoices received by public bodies for which they are responsible that are paid within 30 days, within 40 days and within 2 months, and provide figures for each of the previous three years? (WAQ52722)

**The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing (Jane Davidson):** I have sought to hold bodies for which I am responsible to the public sector benchmark of 95% of invoices to be paid within 30 days. Performance against this target is reported in the annual accounts of each organisation. Performance against other targets is not recorded by the Welsh Assembly Government.

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister detail what meetings have been held between the Welsh Assembly Government, Powys CC and the Countryside Council for Wales regarding mineral extraction in Powys giving dates of meetings, details of conclusions and any documents relating to those meetings? (WAQ52709)

**Jane Davidson:** No meetings have been held with Powys County Council regarding mineral extraction in Powys.

Meetings have been held to discuss the direction that I issued in the summer, preventing the County Council from adopting the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) without the inclusion of policies to safeguard certain mineral reserves. The aim of such policies is ensure that the mineral resources which may be needed by future generations are protected from sterilisation by other permanent development; it does not mean that extraction will be necessary or permitted within these areas during the plan period of the UDP.

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Is the Minister aware of any intention to quarry for minerals north of Garth in Powys? (WAQ52708)

**Jane Davidson:** I understand that an application for a limited lateral extension and quarry waste tipping area at the existing quarry at Cribarth, north of Garth, was approved by Powys County Council in July this year. This proposal was not referred to the Welsh Assembly Government prior to approval either as a departure from the development plan, or as a result of a request for the application to be called in.

I am not aware of any other proposals.

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Over what timescale does the Minister plan to introduce legislation relating to the Right to Buy? (WAQ52726)

**The Deputy Minister for Housing (Jocelyn Davies):** The timing of the introduction of any legislation in practice depends upon the Assembly Government gaining Legislative Competence in this area of policy. Subject to these approvals and as announced in the First Minister's statement on the Legislation Programme, the Assembly Government remains committed to developing and proposing an Assembly Measure on this subject as part of 2008/09 Programme.

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** What process, including consultation, will the Minister follow in relation to changing the laws on the Right to Buy? (WAQ52727)

**Jocelyn Davies:** The One Wales document includes a commitment to seek legislative power for the Assembly to suspend the Right to Buy in areas of housing pressure. A public consultation took place between 21st July 2008 and 1st September 2008 on the broad principles of how this policy might be implemented. The Assembly Government has requested legislative competence for the Assembly in this area. Subject to that competence being conferred, the Assembly Government intends to propose an Assembly Measure to give effect to the One Wales commitment. This Measure will be subject to Assembly scrutiny in the normal way.

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

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister make a statement on the implementation of Agenda for Change by Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust? (WAQ52711)

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What target has been set by the Welsh Assembly Government for the completion of payment of salary arrears to NHS staff in Gwent due to the implementation of Agenda for Change? (WAQ52712)

**The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart):** From data received by the Trust in September we understand that 98.2% of staff have been assimilated onto the Agenda for Change pay bands.

Of those staff entitled to pay arrears 96.8% had been paid in September 2008.

The completion of assimilation and arrears was estimated to be concluded in October 2008. The data on this will be collected by 20 November and presented to the Agenda For Change Partnership Forum.

Early in the project implementation phase organisations were encouraged to pay arrears within 3 months of staff being assimilated.

Due to the pressures on payroll with the implementation of the electronic staff record, the partnership forum agreed there should be some local flexibility on the timescale.

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to assist sufferers from Motor Neurone Disease in Wales? (WAQ52713)

**Edwina Hart:** I commissioned an independent clinical review of adult neurosciences services in 2007. The Welsh Neuroscience Expert Review Group has now published its recommendations and I have asked for two implementation planning groups to be established, one for North Wales and one for Mid and South Wales.

The outcome of this review will act as a useful basis on which to plan and deliver improved services to all patients with neurological conditions, including motor neurone disease. In addition, I have decided to establish a working group under the Neuroscience Expert Group, which will have local clinical input, to develop care pathways for Long Term Neurological Conditions.

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister detail the percentage of invoices received by public bodies for which they are responsible that are paid within 30 days, within 40 days and within 2 months, and provide figures for each of the previous three years? (WAQ52721)

**Edwina Hart:** I expect all bodies for which I am responsible to meet the public sector benchmark of 95% of invoices to be paid within 30 days. Performance against this target is reported in the annual accounts of each organisation. Performance against other targets is not recorded by the Welsh Assembly Government.

### Questions to the Minister for Heritage

**Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales):** Will the Minister detail the percentage of invoices received by public bodies for which they are responsible that are paid within 30 days, within 40 days and within 2 months, and provide figures for each of the previous three years. (WAQ52723)

**The Minister for Heritage (Alun Ffred Jones):** I have sought to hold bodies for which I am responsible to the public sector benchmark of 95% of invoices to be paid within 30 days. Performance against this target is reported in the annual accounts of each organisation. Performance against other targets is not recorded by the Welsh Assembly Government.

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Will the Minister list any organisations received grants under the Community Radio Fund? (WAQ52730)

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Will the Minister give a breakdown of the distribution of £100,000 Community Radio Fund? (WAQ52731)

**Alun Ffred Jones:** The Welsh Assembly Government's Community Radio Fund was established to recognise and support the contribution community radio stations make to their communities. The Fund has a £500,000 budget over five years. In the current financial year, BRFM (Nantyglo), GTFM (Pontypridd) and Calon FM (Wrexham) which are on-air, were awarded £13.5k each. Tudno FM (Llandudno), Point FM (Rhyl), and Bro Radio (Barry), applied for support as stations preparing to go on air, and were each awarded up to £9k.

### Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Will the Minister give a breakdown of the funding allocation to the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme in terms of administration costs and money available for businesses that qualify? (WAQ52724)

**The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government (Brian Gibbons):** Approximately £13 million was given in small business rates relief for 2007-2008, and relief worth up to an additional £6.7 million, is to be backdated to 1 April 2008 and will be made available from 1 December 2008.

Up to £108,000 is available to assist local authorities with the administrative costs of backdating the additional relief.

**Alun Cairns (South Wales West):** Will the Minister list the number of sexual assault referral centres there are in local authority area in Wales? (WAQ52728)

**Dr Gibbons:** There are 5 operational Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) based in Carmarthenshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, Cardiff and Caerphilly in Wales. The Conwy SARC based in Colwyn Bay is expected to open on 17 November 2008.