

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 6 December 2001

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

Contents

- 1 Questions to the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language
- 3 Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs
- 5 Questions to the Minister for Assembly Business

Questions to the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language

Lottery Funded Projects

Q6 Alison Halford: Will the Minister make a statement on the current number of lottery funded projects in north and south Wales? (OAQ14458)

The Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language (Jenny Randerson): Since lottery funding began in 1995, Wales has benefited from over 10,000 awards, with nearly 2,400 in north Wales and around 4,000 in south Wales. In total, the awards across Wales amount to more than £480 million.

The Failed Centre for Visual Arts

Q7 Jocelyn Davies: What impact will the recent investigation by the Audit Committee into the failed Centre for Visual Arts have on future funding arrangements for arts projects in Wales? (OAQ14576)

Jenny Randerson: It is not appropriate for me to comment on the Audit Committee's investigation into the Centre for Visual Arts until the Committee has reported and the Cabinet has responded to the recommendations. I am satisfied, however, that the Arts Council of Wales is putting effective procedures in place to prevent a recurrence. In addition, the council is currently commissioning an independent review of its grant systems and its monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

Free Entry to the National Museums and Galleries of Wales

Q8 Peter Law: Can the Minister report on the progress of free entry to the National Museums and Galleries of Wales? (OAQ14460)

Jenny Randerson: Free entry has been a great success since its introduction on 1 April. Visitor figures at the eight sites of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales have risen by some 90 per cent and many thousands of people from all walks of life have visited the museum who perhaps have never been before.

Supporting Photography in Wales

Q9 David Melding: Will the Minister make a statement on measures to support photography in Wales? (OAQ14512)

Jenny Randerson: The Arts Council of Wales sponsors Ffotogallery, the national photography centre of Wales. In 2000-01, this support amounted to over £88,000. The council also supports six other development galleries across Wales which exhibit photographic works.

In addition, each year the arts council runs an exhibition support programme via a grant scheme to fund a large number of exhibitions across Wales. This is at a cost of over £108,000 a year and includes provision for photography among the other visual art forms. In addition, there are grant schemes which give support to individual artists, including photographers.

Question 10 (OAQ14535) withdrawn.

The South Wales Film Commission

Q11 David Davies: Does the Minister support the work of the South Wales Film Commission? (OAQ14533)

Jenny Randerson: I very much welcome the good work that the South Wales Film Commission has done to attract film makers to the area. Scenes for a Bollywood movie were shot this year at the Millennium Stadium. The stadium will be seen by an estimated 40 million people across India, the United Kingdom and America.

Welsh Language Policy in South-east Wales

Q12 John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh language policy in south-east Wales? (OAQ14575)

Jenny Randerson: There is undoubtedly an increased level of interest in the Welsh language in this area of Wales and I welcome this. The Welsh Language Board's remit is to promote and facilitate the Welsh language throughout Wales. *Mentrau iaith* are working at a local level in most areas of Wales.

Cardiff's Bid to be Cultural Capital of Europe

Q13 Alun Cairns: How does Liverpool's award of nearly £1 million of European funding affect Cardiff's bid to be Cultural Capital of Europe? (OAQ14523)

Jenny Randerson: Cardiff is not in the Wales Objective 1 area. However, while Liverpool benefits from additional Objective 1 finance in supporting its bid, Cardiff has different, but equally important, advantages. The Welsh Assembly Government and Cardiff City and County Council have pledged between them £1 million to support the preparation of Cardiff's bid. In addition, Cardiff has unique status as the capital city of Wales, in a land rich with culture, including the Welsh language. The greatly increased budget settlement for the Arts Council of Wales will have a significant impact on the development of artistic capacity across Wales before 2008, and the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities has also announced a further £2 million per year for the arts outside Cardiff when the Wales Millennium Centre comes on stream. I am confident that Cardiff is very well placed in its bid to be Cultural Capital of Europe in 2008.

A National Art Gallery for Wales

Q14 Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister make a statement on plans for a national art gallery for Wales? (OAQ14527)

Jenny Randerson: A number of options for displaying the national art collection will be set out in the forthcoming public consultation paper from the National Museums and Galleries of Wales. It would be inappropriate for me to pre-empt the museum's findings at this stage.

Funding the Welsh National Opera

Q15 Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding of the Welsh National Opera? (OAQ14526)

Jenny Randerson: The Arts Council of Wales will receive a budget increase of nearly £3 million next year on top of the £1.3 million increase already planned, and this will enable it to increase support to all aspects of the arts in Wales. I have asked the Arts Council of Wales to make the funding for the stabilisation of the Welsh National Opera a priority. The stabilisation programme will enable WNO to establish a sound financial base for the business and to consolidate activity through a major restructuring exercise. I have also asked the council to ensure that an additional £75,000 is made available to allow the WNO to stage a second week of mainscale performances in Swansea.

Questions to the Minister for Rural Affairs

Fishing Projects

Q3 Eleanor Burnham: How many fishing projects have been accepted for European funding? (OAQ14570) *Transferred for answer by the First Minister under his economic development portfolio.*

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): To date, one fisheries project has been approved for financial instrument for fisheries guidance (FIFG) funding, namely the Pembrokeshire fish week, with a total project cost of £36,000 and a grant of £15,090.

Two other projects have been submitted for FIFG funds, with a total grant request of £3,833,130. These projects are currently undergoing eligibility checks.

Question 4 (OAQ14484) was withdrawn, questions 5, 6 and 7 were answered in Plenary and question 8 (OAQ14545) was withdrawn.

Rural Recovery Plan

Q9 Peter Black: What resources have been allocated to the rural recovery plan? (OAQ14559)

The Minister for Rural Affairs (Carwyn Jones): The rural recovery plan outlines £60 million of new expenditure and £5 million of reprioritised expenditure to assist the rural economy.

Question 10 (OAQ14560) withdrawn.

Foot and Mouth Disease

Q11 David Lloyd: Will the Minister make a statement on the cost of dealing with the foot and mouth disease crisis in Wales? (OAQ14464)

Carwyn Jones: Costs incurred in dealing with foot and mouth disease in Wales are the responsibility of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The total cost paid to date, arising out of the operational aspects of the foot and mouth disease cull, is £107,678,406, excluding civil service staff costs.

Tir Gofal

Q12 Alun Pugh: Will the Minister make a statement on recent developments in Tir Gofal? (OAQ14571)

Carwyn Jones: In response to the difficulties caused by foot and mouth disease, the third application window was extended to 31 August. A total of 1,205 applications were received, of which 1,107, or 92 per cent, scored over the 100-point threshold. This compares with success rates of 51 per cent and 75 per cent in the first and second rounds respectively.

We are also in the process of seeking European approval to a number of modifications to the rural development plan. These have been designed to reduce administration costs, ensure that we derive the maximum possible environmental benefit from the available resources, and ensure that family farms are able to gain entry to the scheme. The modifications include measures that will make it easier for a wider range of farms to access Tir Gofal, for example young farmers, mixed farms and farmers prepared to introduce a limited amount of arable cropping into their livestock systems.

Compensation for Farmers (Foot and Mouth Disease)

Q13 Helen Mary Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the level of compensation paid thus far to farmers in Wales due to foot and mouth disease? (OAQ14471)

Carwyn Jones: Compensation paid to farmers in connection with foot and mouth disease in Wales is the responsibility of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The amount of compensation paid to Welsh farmers to date, arising from the foot and mouth disease cull, is £56,139,259.

Entrepreneurship in the Rural Community

Q14 Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister make a statement on how the Assembly is facilitating enterprise and entrepreneurship in the rural community? (OAQ14558)

Carwyn Jones: The rural economy must be viewed as an integral part of the wider economy of Wales. 'A Winning Wales', the national economic development strategy, and the 'Plan for Wales 2001' underline our commitment to supporting enterprise throughout Wales in a co-ordinated way. The targets contained in 'A Winning Wales' will be achieved through a range of strategies being implemented through lead bodies such as the Welsh Development Agency, local authorities, Education and Learning Wales, higher and further educational establishments. We have published plans in relation to Communities First, Objectives 1, 2 and 3, LEADER+, and the rural development plan to ensure that the facilitation of enterprise and entrepreneurship is mainstreamed in Welsh rural communities. The entrepreneurship action plan is also a Wales-wide programme.

I launched Farming Connect on 17 September to help promote farm diversification and farm business development and on 21 November, I published a strategy for the future of farming in Wales.

The final draft of 'Planning Policy Wales' will contain guidance on the rural economy, including encouragement for rural diversification. It is being finalised for issue in March 2002.

Marketing Welsh Farm Produce in the UK and Abroad

Q15 Alison Halford: Will the Minister make a statement on how much the Assembly spent on marketing Welsh farm produce in the UK and abroad in the last financial year? (OAQ14468)

Carwyn Jones: The Welsh Development Agency's Food Directorate has direct responsibility for food promotion. In 2000-01, £3.8 million of the WDA's grant in aid was allocated to agri-food developments, with over £1.8 million being directed towards food promotion. A further £600,000 was secured by the WDA from European funding. In addition, £2 million was allocated to the marketing development scheme and the processing and marketing grant scheme.

Questions to the Minister for Assembly Business

Telecommunications Networks

Q4 Alun Cairns: What is the Minister doing to ensure that businesses in all parts of Wales have access to sufficient quality telecommunications networks, which are capable of maintaining data traffic? (OAQ14478) *Transferred for written answer.*

The Minister for Assembly Business (Andrew Davies): ‘Cymru Ar-lein—Online for a Better Wales’ sets out the commitment to ensuring that Wales has a modern telecommunications infrastructure which is accessible and affordable for everyone.

A range of projects have been supported by us which include strand 6 of the Llwybr/Pathway project and the multi-agency rural area network (MARAN), which is also a part of Llwybr/Pathway. Further projects will be driven forward as part of the analysis report action plan, which will be available next month.

Questions 5,6 and 7 were answered in Plenary.

Telemedicine and E-health Initiatives in Wales

Q8 Janice Gregory: Will the Minister make a statement on the use of telemedicine and e-health initiatives in Wales? (OAQ14538)

Andrew Davies: There are over 30 examples of telemedicine and e-health initiatives in Wales covering a wide spectrum of clinical disciplines. On 4 July this year, the Minister for Health and Social Services announced the start of two ground-breaking telemedicine project demonstrators, one for North Wales Health Authority covering dermatology and minor injury services and the second for Dyfed Powys Health Authority for minor injury services, covering Pembrokeshire and Powys. Both projects will provide nurse-led services, provided locally and providing care earlier to the patients.

These demonstrator projects will be making a major contribution to the development of a telemedicine and e-health strategy due for completion in May 2002. This strategy will be submitted to the Health and Social Services Committee for approval.

A number of other projects and initiatives are being considering for support by the all-Wales telemedicine and telecare programme board.

Wales TUC (Promoting ICT Literacy)

Q9 Brian Gibbons: Has the Minister had any discussions with the Wales Trades Union Congress on promoting information and communications technology literacy among the workforce? (OAQ14500)

Andrew Davies: So far I have not had any direct dealings with Wales TUC representatives to discuss this matter but I have discussed this with individual union representatives. Promoting opportunities for developing ICT skills in the workplace is a key priority for the Assembly under ‘Cymru Ar-lein—Online for a Better Wales’. I believe it is essential for the Assembly to continue working with the TUC to develop workplace learning opportunities and to build on the projects already established through the Wales union learning fund.

Teleworking

Q10 William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning the growth, outside call centres, of teleworking within Wales? (OAQ14506)

Andrew Davies: ‘Cymru Ar-lein—Online for a Better Wales’ sets out the Welsh Assembly Government’s commitment to making Wales an excellent place to live and work. The spring 2001 labour force survey found that 7.3 per cent of those in employment in Wales were involved in teleworking. This compared to 4.9 per cent in spring 1998.

Remote Learning via Broadband (Rural Areas)

Q11 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister comment on what has been done to encourage people in rural areas of Wales to consider remote learning via broadband? (OAQ14501)

Andrew Davies: Developing information systems and services is vital to promote increased economic, social and cultural development. ‘Cymru Ar-lein—Online for a Better Wales’, the Welsh Assembly Government’s strategic framework for information and communications technology, shows the way ahead to ensure that Wales has a first-class system in place to boost the economy, create a better, fairer society in Wales and foster the use of the Welsh language. Delivering broadband infrastructure throughout Wales is a top priority. We are doing this by aggregating public sector demand which, in turn, would lead to an increased demand for advanced telecommunications services in Wales. All of this builds upon the successful and proven track record of Llwybr/Pathway and the multi-agency rural area network (MARAN).

Broadband Conductivity and Digital Television

Q12 Brian Hancock: What plans does the Minister have to integrate the need for complete coverage of Wales with broadband conductivity and the related need to ensure that all parts of Wales will be able to receive digital television when analogue service is switched off? (OAQ14504)

Andrew Davies: I refer you to the answer I gave to a supplementary question asked by Janice Gregory in Plenary today in terms of what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to speed up the availability and affordability of broadband in Wales. I fully recognise that Wales-wide availability of digital television will make broadband available to the vast majority of the population. However, this must be balanced against the broadcast requirements of the people of Wales. I know that Jenny Randerson is committed to ensuring that analogue television is not switched off in Wales until those in Wales can access digital signals, access equipment and afford the services.

Training in ICT and Internet Technologies

Q13 Alun Cairns: What is the Minister doing to ensure that businesses in all parts of Wales have access to training in information and communications technology and internet technologies? (OAQ14497)

Andrew Davies: Education and training is one of the five key thrusts of ‘Cymru Ar-lein—Online for a Better Wales’. A wide range of learning provision in these areas is available through Education and Learning Wales to help businesses improve the skills of their workforce. In addition, people living in Wales can use an individual learning account, with certain ICT courses qualifying for an 80 per cent discount on the cost.

Promoting Wales in International Markets through ICT

Q14 Jonathan Morgan: Will the Minister make a statement on how Wales is promoted in international markets through the medium of information and communications technology? (OAQ14498)

Andrew Davies: A package of marketing material about Wales was launched on St David’s Day this year. The material includes an interactive CD-ROM and the Wales World Nation website. This initiative is being further developed and the website is to become part of an international web gateway, which will provide speedy access to information for people overseas.

Question 15 (OAQ14539) withdrawn.