

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 13 December 2001

[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 Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities

Local Authority Spending Plans

Q1 Cynog Dafis: What arrangements are in place to ensure that local authorities adhere to their spending plans? (OAQ14674) *Transferred for written answer.*

The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities (Edwina Hart): It is a matter for local authorities to set their own budgets, taking account of the assumed budgets set by the Assembly. Once they have set their budgets, it is for the authorities themselves, along with their auditors, to ensure that they remain within them.

Questions 2 to 10 were answered in Plenary.

Implementation of Housing Stock Transfer

Q11 Christine Chapman: What discussions has the Minister or the Minister's Assembly representatives had with local authorities regarding implementation of housing stock transfer? (OAQ14663)

Edwina Hart: I recently chaired a seminar held for local authority executive service leaders at which stock transfer issues were discussed. My officials regularly meet with local authority chief housing officers. In addition, my officials have regular discussions with individual local authorities, who are considering available options for stock refurbishment.

The Communities First Programme

Q12 Christine Chapman: Will the Minister make a statement on progress regarding the Communities First programme? (OAQ14676)

Edwina Hart: Following the end of the consultation process in March, on 18 June I announced the areas to be included in Communities First. At the Local Government and Housing Committee on 24 October 2001, I announced additional areas to be included in the programme. The programme now covers the 100 most deprived wards as identified by the Welsh index of multiple deprivation. It also targets a further 32 sub-ward areas that show significant deprivation and 10 communities of interest or imaginative proposals, which cover further wards. These areas have been able to apply for funding for a range of preparatory activities since early July.

The guidance for the Communities First programme was issued at the end of September 2001 after a number of sessions with focus groups. Eligible communities are now in the process of developing community action plans.

I have already approved expenditure amounting to almost £2.2 million to support a variety of organisations that will be involved in the delivery of the programme.

Publicising the Communities First Programme

Q13 Brian Gibbons: Will the Minister make a statement as to what is being done to publicise the Communities First programme? (OAQ14687)

Edwina Hart: A communications strategy is currently being developed, however I am publicising the Communities First programme in a number of ways. First, press notices are issued routinely at significant stages. Secondly, the Communities First team is continually making presentations to numerous groups within Wales and throughout the UK. Thirdly, a monthly update is issued to key organisations and individuals on the programme's progress.

Finally, a public information leaflet will be issued shortly. This will be circulated widely to improve the understanding of local people.

Rôl Cymdeithasau Tai mewn Darparu Tai Cymdeithasol

C14 Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar rôl cymdeithasau tai mewn darparu tai cymdeithasol yng Nghymru? (OAQ14716) [W]

Edwina Hart: Gall landlordiaid cymdeithasol cofrestredig helpu awdurdodau lleol i fodloni blaenoriaethau eu hanghenion tai trwy ddarparu tai newydd neu wedi'u hadnewyddu i'w rhentu neu i'w perchen am bris isel yn ôl y blaenoriaethau a bennir gan yr awdurdodau lleol. Ni roddir grantiau iddynt ar gyfer unrhyw gynlluniau nad ydynt yn ymddangos mewn rhaglenni datblygu y cytunir arnynt gydag awdurdodau lleol.

The Role of Housing Associations in Providing Social Housing

Q14 Elin Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on the role of housing associations in providing social housing in Wales? (OAQ14716) [W]

Edwina Hart: Registered social landlords can help local authorities meet their priority housing needs by providing new or renovated housing for rent or low cost home ownership according to priorities determined by local authorities. They do not receive grants for any schemes that do not feature in development programmes agreed with local authorities.

Access to Local Government Officials

Q15 Owen John Thomas: How do local authorities make sure Assembly Members have access to local government officials? (OAQ14699)

Edwina Hart: This is a question you should direct to local authorities.

Questions to the Minister for Environment

Revised Version of Technical Advice Note 15 (1998)

Q1 David Davies: When will the revised version of TAN 15 (1998) be issued in Wales? (OAQ14630)
Transferred for written answer.

The Minister for Environment (Sue Essex): The revised TAN 15 will contain a risk based methodology, which will assist planners in understanding the impacts of risk in both tidal and fluvial

areas and seek to link flood risk to permissible land uses. The research work underpinning the review is due to be completed in mid January and the draft TAN will be issued for consultation as soon as is practicable thereafter.

Questions 2, 3, 5 and 6 were answered in Plenary; questions 4 (OAQ14639) and 7 (OAQ14654) were withdrawn.

Green Paper on Planning

Q9 Janet Ryder: What role does the Minister envisage for the National Assembly for Wales in terms of the planning Green Paper? (OAQ14646)

Sue Essex: I am aware that the Secretary of State for Transport, Planning and the Regions has been considering possible changes to the planning system in England. I understand that he intends to publish a Green Paper before Christmas. I propose to issue a separate consultation paper in Wales early in the new year.

Relief Road in Talgarth

Q10 Nick Bourne: What representations has the Minister had for a relief road in Talgarth? (OAQ14643)

Sue Essex: I refer you to the answer I gave to your written question WAQ14377 on 22 November.

Waste Management Practices

Q11 Richard Edwards: Will the Minister make a statement on the lessons learnt for Wales following her recent visit to Sweden to consider waste management practices? (OAQ14656)

Sue Essex: The main messages I drew from a productive visit to Sweden were confirmation of the importance of segregation of waste at source, and the need for education and awareness to proceed in parallel with the provision of physical infrastructure for recycling.

Question 12 (OAQ14633) was withdrawn.

Recycling in Schools

Q13 Rosemary Butler: What measures has the Minister implemented to encourage recycling in schools? (OAQ14661)

Sue Essex: The Assembly is preparing guidance on developing local authority waste management strategies. It recognises the importance of education about waste, and encourages local authorities to promote waste minimisation, recycling and litter prevention in schools and colleges, for example, through the Eco Schools' 'Keep Wales Tidy' campaign, and Cylch's 'All Schools Can Recycle' campaign.

Flood Defence in North Wales

Q14 Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding of flood defence in north Wales? (OAQ14627)

Sue Essex: This is primarily a matter for local operating authorities either directly or in supporting the activities of local flood defence committees.

Maintenance of Roads in North Wales

Q15 Alison Halford: What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that road upgrading and maintenance in north Wales gives value for money? (OAQ14635)

Sue Essex: Maintenance of trunk roads in north Wales is undertaken by the Assembly's trunk road agents, the North East Wales Trunk Road Agency and the North West Wales Trunk Road Agency. The performance of these agents is under continuous review by officials. In addition, a special exercise is currently taking place to develop performance indicators and seek efficiencies in the organisation of the maintenance and improvement programme.

Special grants have recently been announced totalling £25 million to improve strategic local roads. Assembly officials will undertake inspections to ensure these works are appropriate and provide value for money.