

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary

23 June 2004

[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 Social Justice and Regeneration

The Draft Civil Contingencies Bill

Q3 Leanne Wood: What discussions has the Minister had with the Home Office regarding the draft Civil Contingencies Bill? (OAQ36324) *Transferred for written answer by the First Minister.*

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): I attend ministerial meetings chaired by the Home Secretary where the Bill has been discussed, but the lead responsibility on the Bill lies with the Cabinet Office and its Minister, Douglas Alexander MP, and its Civil Contingencies Secretariat, with whom I have the most frequent contact on this matter.

Questions 4 and 5 answered in Plenary.

Factory-built Affordable Housing

Q6 Mark Isherwood: Will the Minister make a statement on the provision of factory-built affordable housing in Wales? (OAQ36224) *Transferred for written answer.*

The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration (Edwina Hart): By factory-built housing, I take it to mean what the construction industry calls 'off-site manufacturing'. As for affordable housing, registered social landlords are the main provider, and the Assembly, as regulator, does not insist on any particular method of construction. However, I would welcome factory-built affordable housing, as long as it provides the quality and value for money that is required.

Questions 7 to 10 answered in Plenary.

The Renewal of Housing

Q11 Christine Gwyther: Will the Minister make a statement indicating how the Assembly is supporting the renewal of housing in Wales? (OAQ36230) *Transferred for written answer.*

Edwina Hart: Our wide-ranging plans to improve housing in Wales are set out in our national housing strategy. This includes our vision for the quality we want for all housing in Wales by 2012. We have supported this with a major repairs allowance for local authority housing and increased the flexibility local authorities have to tackle housing in the private sector.

Questions to the Minister for Economic Development and Transport

Bus Services in the South Wales Valleys

Q9 Huw Lewis: Will the Minister make a statement on the framework for delivering bus services in the south Wales Valleys? (OAQ36265)

The Minister for Economic Development and Transport (Andrew Davies): Most local bus services are provided commercially by operators, but local authorities have powers to subsidise non-commercial services which they identify as being socially necessary. Each authority's local area bus strategy explains in detail how it intends to meet local needs, consistent with the relevant transport consortium's overarching regional public transport strategy.

Integrated Public Transport Links

Q10 Laura Anne Jones: Would the Minister make a statement on integrated public transport links in south Wales? (OAQ36267)

Andrew Davies: An efficient network of public transport services lies at the heart of our integrated transport policy. There are good examples of integration, including Caerphilly station, where a network of bus services links with rail. Increasing use of public transport will require better integration, and this is a priority in our transport policies.

Question 11, (OAQ36251), withdrawn.

Lefelau Cyflogaeth

C12 David Lloyd: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar lefelau cyflogaeth yng Nghymru? (OAQ36294) [W]

Andrew Davies: Yn ôl yr Arolwg o'r Llafurlu, 1,314,000 o bobl oedd mewn gwaith yng Nghymru dros gyfnod y tri mis hyd at Ebrill 2004. Dyna gynnydd o 12,000 ers yr un pryd flwyddyn ynghynt, a 82,000 ers yr un cyfnod yn 2002. Y gyfradd o bobl oed gweithio mewn gwaith yng Nghymru oedd 72.2 y cant, sef yr un lefel â blwyddyn ynghynt, a 3.6 y cant yn uwch na'r un cyfnod yn 2002. Cafwyd gostyngiad o dros hanner yn y bwch rhwng y gyfradd gyflogaeth yng Nghymru a'r DU yn ystod y ddwy flynedd diwethaf.

Employment Levels

Q12 David Lloyd: Will the Minister make a statement on employment levels in Wales? (OAQ36294) [W]

Andrew Davies: According to the Labour Force Survey, there were 1,314,000 people in employment in Wales over the three months to April 2004. This represented an increase of 12,000 on a year earlier, and 82,000 on the same period in 2002. The working-age employment rate in Wales was 72.2 per cent, the same as a year earlier and 3.6 percentage points higher than for the same period in 2002. The gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK has more than halved over the last two years.

Objective 1 Funds in North Wales

Q13 Janet Ryder: Will the Minister make a statement on the progress of Objective 1 funds in north Wales? (OAQ36274)

Andrew Davies: By the end of April, around £100 million of Objective 1 funds had been committed to over 160 local projects in north Wales with a total project investment of over £240 million. These projects

have reported the creation of around 4,450 new jobs gross and the safeguarding of over 5,400 jobs. In addition, there are numerous regional projects that have created or safeguarded a further 10,000 jobs in the area.

Note: The area of north Wales includes the local partnership areas of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire and Gwynedd. Information has been taken from the local partnership reports, which are produced quarterly.

Road Traffic Accidents

Q14 Gwenda Thomas: Could the Minister tell us what is being done to reduce the number of road traffic accidents affecting children and young people in Wales? (OAQ36335)

Andrew Davies: We take the improvement of road safety for children and young people very seriously and it is an important element of our road safety strategy for Wales. The Welsh road safety forum, which is monitoring progress of the strategy targets, has set up a child road safety subgroup to look at this in detail and to help us meet the 50 per cent casualty reduction targets by 2010 for the number of children killed or seriously injured. We are already progressing well to meet this target and the number of children killed or seriously injured in 2002 was 34 per cent lower than the 1994-98 average.

To date, over £14.5million has been provided to local authorities for safe routes to school since 1999, taking forward 81 schemes across Wales.

Since 2002, we have provided funding to each local authority to employ a child pedestrian training co-ordinator to teach Kerbcraft pedestrian skills to five to seven-year-olds. The scheme is being evaluated to consider funding beyond March 2005.

We have also provided over £24 million to local authorities through the local road safety grant to make key safety improvements on the local road network, including areas around schools and including the implementation of more 20 mph zones and limits. Many local authorities have also launched children's traffic clubs, which are aimed at pre-school children, and junior road safety officers, involving older, primary school children.

In conjunction with the Road Safety Council of Wales, we have provided publicity material and educational resources for children and young people. This year RoSCoW has also run a young persons challenge for those aged 17 to 24, with the objective of improving the driving skills of entrants.

Question 15, (OAQ36242), withdrawn