

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 23/03/2010

[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 First Minister

The Ambulance Service

Q11 Peter Black: Will the First Minister make a statement on the reform of the ambulance service? OAQ(3)2766(FM)

The First Minister (Carwyn Jones): The whole national health service is currently implementing the NHS reform programme. The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust is working closely with all local health boards and trusts, as it has an important role to play in delivering an integrated system of high-quality healthcare.

Collaboration (Local Authorities)

Q12 William Graham: Will the First Minister outline Welsh Assembly Government policies to promote greater collaboration of local authorities towards shared service provision in Wales? OAQ(3)2757(FM)

The First Minister: At the recent public services summit, I made clear the need to accelerate and deepen collaboration across the public services in Wales. While there are many good examples of collaboration, we need to drive progress much harder. This is at the heart of our new efficiency and innovation programme, which is now well under way.

Welsh Exports

Q13 David Melding: Will the First Minister make a statement on the current level of Welsh exports? OAQ(3)2754(FM)

The First Minister: In turbulent export markets, many of which are in recovery mode, companies in Wales continue to internationalise, consistent with their contemporaries elsewhere in the United Kingdom. This expansive approach has resulted in exports from Wales increasing by almost 41 per cent since 1999, compared with a figure of 32.5 per cent for the UK as a whole.

Communities First

Q14 Eleanor Burnham: Will the First Minister make a statement on the Communities First programme in Wales? OAQ(3)2752(FM)

The First Minister: The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government issued an oral

statement on the programme last week. I see Communities First as remaining fundamental to the vision of building a better Wales, with local partnerships working closely with service deliverers and other partners to regenerate their communities.

Question 15, OAQ(3)2762(FM), withdrawn.

Questions to the Minister for Business and Budget

The Chancellor's 2010 Budget

Q10 William Graham: Will the Minister outline the discussions that she has held with the UK Treasury with regard to the Chancellor's 2010 budget? OAQ(3)1029(BB)

The Minister for Business and Budget (Jane Hutt): I have been in regular contact with Treasury Ministers since taking up post in December. I discuss a range of issues, including issues relating to future budget settlements and spending plans. As you are aware, the Chancellor announces his 2010 budget tomorrow.

Communities First

Q11 Janet Ryder: What consideration did the Minister give to Communities First projects when allocating funding to the social justice and local government portfolio? OAQ(3)1035(BB)

Jane Hutt: During the preparation of the Assembly Government's 2010-11 budget, discussions took place with all Ministers about priorities within their portfolios. The outcome for the social justice and local government portfolio is that the revenue allocation has increased by 2.2 per cent over the budget for 2009-10.

Question 12, OAQ(3)1028(BB), is withdrawn.

The Further Education Sector

Q13 Chris Franks: What representations has the Minister received regarding the provision of additional funding to the children, education and lifelong learning portfolio for the further education sector? OAQ(3)1024(BB)

Jane Hutt: During the preparation of the Assembly Government's 2010-11 budget, discussions took place with all Ministers about priorities within their portfolios. The outcome for the children, education and lifelong learning portfolio is that, excluding the 2009-10 supplementary budget allocation and transfers, the revenue allocation has increased by 2.5 per cent compared to 2009-10.

The Efficiency and Innovation Board

Q14 Bethan Jenkins: Will the Minister detail how the work of the efficiency and innovation board will be fed back to the Assembly? OAQ(3)1026(BB)

Jane Hutt: The board had its inaugural meeting on 18 March, when discussions started as to the most appropriate conduit between the board and the Assembly. Once channels of communication are agreed, we will feed back.

Regional Pay Awards

Q15 Brian Gibbons: What assessment has the Minister made of the impact of regional pay

awards on the Welsh Assembly Government's budget? OAQ(3)1001(BB)

Jane Hutt: We depend on staff working in a range of organisations across Wales to deliver our service objectives. Some of these organisations are funded directly by the Assembly Government, and others by UK departments. The Assembly Government's view is that regional pay does not treat all employees fairly and, as a result, we do not support its further expansion.

Questions to the Minister for Heritage

Grass-roots Sports Participation

Q9 Leanne Wood: Will the Minister make a statement on grass-roots sports participation? OAQ(3)1111(HER)

The Minister for Heritage (Alun Ffred Jones): The Welsh Assembly Government works closely with the Sports Council for Wales to ensure that young people have more opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity, that we support and train our volunteers and coaches, and that we nurture our sporting talent.

Promoting Heritage in 2010

Q10 William Graham: Will the Minister outline how Welsh heritage will be promoted during 2010? OAQ (3)1107(HER)

Alun Ffred Jones: 'One Wales' outlines our aim to support and promote Welsh heritage throughout Wales and abroad. In particular, for 2010-11, the Welsh Assembly Government will provide £25.438 million in grant in aid funding to Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales to preserve and promote Welsh heritage at its sites throughout Wales.

Protecting our Heritage

Q11 Nick Ramsay: Will the Minister make a statement on his policies for protecting our heritage in Wales? OAQ(3)1117(HER)

Alun Ffred Jones: Protecting our heritage is one of the key priorities of my historic environment strategic statement and the range of policies and programmes across my portfolio, in partnership with stakeholders, including measures for museums, libraries, the arts, the Welsh language and sport .

Financial Support for Athletes

Q12 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Will the Minister make a statement on financial support for athletes in Wales? OAQ(3)1097(HER)

Alun Ffred Jones: Welsh Assembly Government support for our athletes is provided via the Sports Council for Wales. Last year, the governing body, the Welsh Athletics Association, received funding of more than £550,000.

The Future of Broadcasting

Q13 Peter Black: What discussions has the Minister had on the future of broadcasting in Wales? OAQ(3)1081(HER)

Alun Ffred Jones: I have regular discussions with the UK Government, broadcasters,

producers, Ofcom and other organisations about broadcasting matters in Wales. I have recently met with representatives of the companies bidding for the independently funded news consortia for Wales, and I have met with Janet Lewis-Jones, the Welsh representative of the BBC Trust, and S4C management.

The Welsh Language

Q14 Nick Ramsay: Will the Minister outline his policies for promoting the Welsh language?
OAQ(3)1116(HER)

Alun Ffred Jones: The One Wales Government remains committed to making Wales a truly bilingual country in which people can live their lives through the medium of Welsh or English. We have recently introduced the proposed Measure relating to the Welsh language, and we are also developing a new Welsh language strategy for consultation later in the year.

Free Entry to Cadw Sites

Q15 Alun Davies: Will the Minister provide an update on the Welsh Assembly Government's policy of giving pensioners and children living in Wales free entry to all Cadw sites? OAQ(3)1126(HER)

Alun Ffred Jones: The Assembly Government continues to provide free access to its monuments for Welsh residents aged 60 and over and 16 and under, who have applied for the appropriate free entry pass. More than 18,000 free passes have been issued since 1 September 2008.