

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 23 May 2002

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

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

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Questions on Local Government to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities

Assembly Cross-cutting Objectives

Q11 Glyn Davies: When did the Minister last discuss the Assembly's cross-cutting objectives with the chairman of Powys County Council? (OAQ17857)

The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities (Edwina Hart): I regularly discuss such issues with local authority members.

Control of Business Rates (Local Authorities)

Q12 Alun Cairns: Will the Minister make a statement on the representations she has received from the business community over Assembly plans to hand control of business rates to local authorities? (OAQ17769)

Edwina Hart: We have consulted on a range of options for some form of local rate. The consultation period ended on 17 May and the responses are presently being analysed.

Community Housing Mutual Model

Q13 Lynne Neagle: Will the Minister make a statement on the community housing mutual model? (OAQ17804)

Edwina Hart: I was pleased to launch the community housing mutual model on 8 May. The model rule set has been approved by the Financial Services Authority and is available for those local authorities that wish to consider it as an option for stock transfer.

Establishment of New Community and Town Councils

Q14 Brian Gibbons: Will the Minister make a statement on the establishment of new community and town councils in Wales? (OAQ17829)

Edwina Hart: The Local Government Act 1972 sets out the procedure by which communities currently without community and town councils may set up such bodies.

Question 15 (OAQ17797) withdrawn.

Questions to the Minister for Environment

Value of Wales's Heritage

Q2 Lynne Neagle: Will the Minister make a statement on what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to ensure our heritage in Wales is valued? (OAQ17810) *Transferred for written answer.*

The Minister for Environment (Sue Essex): The Welsh Assembly Government attaches great importance to the heritage of Wales. I recently published 'Planning Policy Wales', which sets out the objective to preserve and enhance the historic environment, recognising its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride and quality of life, and its importance as a resource for future generations. I am also initiating a study into the development of a strategic heritage policy, and am holding a conference in July 'Valuing our Heritage' to raise awareness and consider the interaction of heritage with the Assembly's other priority areas.

The Welsh Assembly Government's culture strategy 'Creative Future: Cymru Greadigol' gives overall strategic direction to the programmes and activities of bodies, including Cadw. Over the past five financial years, Cadw has offered over £11 million in grant aid to outstanding buildings in Wales. Grants have also been made available for repairs to buildings that improve the appearance of historic conservation areas, and some 30 local authority town partnership schemes have been supported.

Questions 3-5 answered in Plenary. Question 6 withdrawn.

Transport Consortia of Wales

Q7 Lynne Neagle: Will the Minister report on the progress of her meetings with the transport consortia of Wales? (OAQ17859) *Transferred for written answer.*

Sue Essex: I am pleased with the commitment shown by the local authority consortia in seeking to improve public transport. Differing solutions will be required across Wales but all consortia recognise the potential of enhancing their role and I shall consider how we can assist in developing these partnership arrangements over the next few months.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (Planning Policy)

Q9 Glyn Davies: What discussions has the Minister had with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park about planning policy? (OAQ17839)

Sue Essex: I have had no discussions with Pembrokeshire Coast National Park about planning policy during the last 12 months. I have met national park officials over this period, but planning policy was not discussed. My officials have been in contact with the national park on a number of planning issues.

Question 8 answered in Plenary.

Cockle Beds (Burry Inlet)

Q10 William Graham: Will the Minister make a statement concerning the problems affecting the cockle beds along the Burry inlet? (OAQ17794) *Transferred for answer by the Minister for Rural Affairs and Assembly Business.*

The Minister for Rural Affairs and Assembly Business (Carwyn Jones): The Burry inlet cockle beds were re-opened for gathering on Monday 20 May. Swansea and Carmarthenshire county councils, along with the Food Standards Agency, will continue weekly monitoring for the presence of diarrhetic shellfish poisoning.

Recycling Targets in Wales

Q11 Christine Chapman: Will the Minister make a statement on progress regarding recycling targets in Wales? (OAQ17840)

Sue Essex: I shall publish the new waste strategy for Wales on 14 June. The strategy will emphasise the importance of recycling as a contribution toward sustainable waste management in Wales and will confirm the first set of targets under policy agreements between local authorities in Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government. Most local authorities have signed up to these targets, which require 15 per cent combined recycling and composting by 2003-04.

Flooding in Monmouth

Q12 David Davies: When does the Minister expect to report back on the findings of the pre-feasibility study that has been carried out into the problem of flooding in Monmouth? (OAQ17816)

Sue Essex: The responsibility for this study and any resulting action rests with Monmouthshire County Council. Completed studies are to be submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government at the end of this month.

Increasing Bird Nesting in Cardiff Bay

Q13 Alison Halford: Will the Minister make a statement about the move to increase bird nesting in Cardiff bay in order to tackle the growing number of chironomid insects around the bay? (OAQ17791)

Sue Essex: The Countryside Council for Wales has informed me that Cardiff Harbour Authority is attempting to accelerate the achievement of a balanced ecology in and around the bay. It has also provided the authority with general advice on ways in which that could be done, including encouraging species that eat flying insects. As a result, it is understood that the harbour authority has employed Cardiff University to trial the effectiveness of bird and bat boxes around the bay.

Conservation of the Built Environment in Cardiff

Q14 David Melding: Will the Minister make a statement on conservation of the built environment in Cardiff? (OAQ17831)

Sue Essex: The Assembly Government's objective, as set out the recently published 'Planning Policy Wales', is to preserve and enhance the historic environment throughout Wales, recognising its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride and quality of life, and its importance as a resource for future generations. The Assembly Government protects buildings of special architectural or historic interest by including them on the statutory lists, and makes funds available to those most architecturally and historically significant. In Cardiff, grants for historic repairs of over £200,000 were offered in 2001-02, with almost £450,000 being offered since 1999.

Severn Trent Water's Plans for a Reservoir

Q15 Janet Davies: Can the Minister make a statement on the Severn Trent Water's plans for a reservoir in Wales? (OAQ17849)

Sue Essex: Following recent press speculation, my officials have contacted the managing director of Severn Trent Water. He wishes to assure the National Assembly that neither he nor his company nor Water UK are developing any plans to enlarge Craig Goch reservoir.