

## Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 4 July 2002

[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 Economic Development

#### Datblygu Economaidd yn Ne-orllewin Cymru

**C7 Cynog Dafis:** A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar y ffordd y mae'r Cynulliad yn hybu datblygu economaidd yn ne-orllewin Cymru? (OAQ18790) [W]

**Y Gweinidog dros Ddatblygu Economaidd (Andrew Davies):** Mae'r Prif Weinidog a minnau wedi pennu ein strategaeth datblygu economaidd yn 'Cymru'n Ennill'. Mae hon yn darparu fframwaith clir ar gyfer Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru yn ogystal â Thîm Cymru a busnesau. Yr wyf yn cadw golwg agos ar ddatblygiadau economaidd y maes, yn arbennig drwy fforwm economaidd de-orllewin Cymru, a fynychais yr wythnos diwethaf, a thrwy gyfarfodydd rheolaidd â chyfarwyddwr Awdurdod Datblygu Cymru dros orllewin Cymru.

#### Economic Development in South-west Wales

**Q7 Cynog Dafis:** Will the Minister make a statement on how the Assembly is promoting economic development in south-west Wales? (OAQ18790) [W]

**The Minister for Economic Development (Andrew Davies):** The First Minister and I have set out our economic development strategy in 'A Winning Wales'. That provides a clear framework not only for the Welsh Assembly Government but also for Team Wales and businesses. I keep a close eye on economic developments in the area not least through the south west wales economic forum, which I attended last week and regular meetings with the Welsh Development Agency's director for west Wales.

#### Broadband in North Wales

**Q8 Ann Jones:** Will the Minister make a statement on the measures that the Assembly is taking to promote the availability and take-up of broadband internet services in north Wales? (OAQ18712)

**Andrew Davies:** As far as north Wales is concerned, we have supported and will continue to pursue several initiatives designed to bring affordable broadband access within the reach of many more people. These include:

- a broadband wireless project that will pilot the use of 802.11b technology;
- Strand 6 of the Llwybr/Pathway project that has brought asymmetrical digital subscriber line services to the north Wales towns of Bangor, Holyhead, Denbigh and Llandudno;
- ongoing detailed negotiations on making available the Assembly's broadband infrastructure along the A55; and
- the lifelong learning network that will introduce high speed points of presence into eight local authorities in north Wales.

Furthermore, I will soon make a major announcement on the implementation of the Analysys report on broadband in Wales. I expect that this way forward will help to make affordable broadband services more widely available in all parts of Wales.

### **Diweithdra yng Ngorllewin Cymru**

**C9 Elin Jones:** A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar ddiweithdra yng ngorllewin Cymru? (OAQ18797) [W]

**Andrew Davies:** Cyfradd ddiweithdra gorllewin Cymru—Sir Gaerfyrddin, Ceredigion a Sir Benfro—yw 4.2 y cant. Mae'r nifer wedi syrthio dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf ac mae diweithdra dros Gymru gyfan ar ei lefel isaf ers 27 blwyddyn.

### **Unemployment in West Wales**

**Q9 Elin Jones:** Will the Minister make a statement on unemployment in west Wales? (OAQ18797) [W]

**Andrew Davies:** The claimant count unemployment rate in west Wales—Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire—is 4.2 per cent. This rate has fallen over the last year and overall unemployment in Wales is the lowest for 27 years.

### **Regional Selective Assistance**

**Q10 Brian Hancock:** What discussions has the Minister had with colleagues regarding providing information on the numbers of Welsh indigenous firms receiving regional selective assistance? (OAQ18766)

**Andrew Davies:** My officials have had discussions with their statistician colleagues about the breakdown of regional selective assistance by Welsh indigenous companies. It was hoped that, by now, it would have been possible to match the regional selective assistance and the inter-departmental business register databases to produce the result. However, there are some difficulties with this, and I have now asked staff to produce the numbers from scans of the files. I will report to the Economic Development Committee on this at its meeting on 10 July.

### **Small and Medium-sized Enterprises**

**Q11 Brian Hancock:** Will the Minister report on the progress of Finance Wales in providing funding to small and medium-sized enterprises? (OAQ18765)

**Andrew Davies:** By the end of April 2002, Finance Wales had already assisted over 540 small and medium-sized enterprises, created or safeguarded nearly 4,200 jobs, invested £13.5 million and leveraged private sector funds of over £45 million.

Over the next five years, Finance Wales aims to assist 4,000 small firms with growth potential, creating 10,000 new jobs.

*Question 12 (OAQ18725) withdrawn.*

### **Broadband in South Wales Central**

**Q13 Owen John Thomas:** What steps is the Minister taking to promote the take-up of broadband technology in the South Wales Central region? (OAQ18727)

**Andrew Davies:** Promoting the demand for and take-up of broadband services is as important as measures to stimulate their rollout and supply. The plan to implement the Analysys report, which I hope

to announce in the near future, will be vital in addressing the issue of promoting broadband take-up. Stimulating demand should help to drive forward supply and, in turn, this should lead to wider access and further increases in the supply and take-up of broadband services. It is hoped that this balanced approach between boosting supply and demand will help to create the conditions within which an accelerated rollout and take-up of broadband services can take place.

### **European Structural Funds**

**Q14 Janet Ryder:** What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that European structural funds allocated to Wales are passed on in full by the UK Treasury to the National Assembly? (OAQ18769)

**Andrew Davies:** Our priority for the current spending review is to ensure that we are able to continue to secure funding for European structural funds over and above the normal Barnett formula arrangements. I have discussed this issue with the First Minister and the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities, and they have made our position clear both to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Wales.

### **Workability Wales Initiative**

**Q15 Val Lloyd:** Will the Minister make a statement about the workability Wales initiative? (OAQ18729)

**Andrew Davies:** I launched the workability Wales initiative on 14 May at Cardiff City Hall. This is an independent Welsh workability project built on a working partnership between Leonard Cheshire, the UK's leading voluntary sector provider of support services for disabled people, and Coleg Gwent, the largest further education college in Wales, to provide online training to clients throughout Wales.

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

### **Pembrokeshire**

**C5 Richard Edwards:** How has Pembrokeshire benefited from the expenditure decisions of the Welsh Assembly Government since 1999? (OAQ18746) *Transferred for written answer.*

**The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities (Edwina Hart):** Pembrokeshire has benefited greatly from the expenditure decisions of the Welsh Assembly Government, as has every part of Wales.

- Excluding ITV Digital/Manpower there have been seven investment projects into Pembrokeshire expected to lever almost £6 million in capital expenditure and create over 300 jobs.
- Assembly grant paid to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks Authority has increased by over £780,000 (41 per cent) in the period 1999-2000 to 2002-03. An additional £750,000 has also been allocated to the park authority since April 2000 for the administration of the environment development fund in the park, designed to support innovative sustainable development projects in the park.

*Questions 6, 7 and 8 answered in Plenary.*

### **2003-04 Budget**

**C9 Peter Black:** What additional resources will be available to the National Assembly for the 2003-04 budget? (OAQ18734)

**Edwina Hart:** I will not know what additional resources will be made available to the National Assembly for the next financial year until the Chancellor announces the outcome of the spending review in July.

### Comprehensive Spending Review

**Q10 Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What discussions has the Minister had with the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad regarding his portfolio's requirements from the forthcoming comprehensive spending review? (OAQ18705)

**Edwina Hart:** I will discuss these matters with the Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad as part of the budget planning round.

### Education Budget

**Q11 Mick Bates:** Does the Minister have plans to increase the education budget? (OAQ18749)

**Edwina Hart:** This is a matter for discussion in the budget planning round.

### Welsh Athletes

**Q12 John Griffiths:** Does the Minister have any plans to provide additional one-off funding from the Assembly budget, to support Welsh athletes competing in the Commonwealth Games? (OAQ18801)

**Edwina Hart:** I do not have any plans to provide additional one-off funding from the Assembly budget to support Welsh athletes competing in the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. The Sports Council for Wales has already provided financial support to the Commonwealth Games Council for Wales, which is responsible for the Welsh team.

### New Assembly Chamber Project

**Q13 Jonathan Morgan:** Will the Minister make a statement on how much money has been spent to date on the new Assembly Chamber project? (OAQ18694)

**Edwina Hart:** The total costs associated with the Assembly building to date are as follows:

Construction costs	£2.588 million
Professional fees	£3.608 million
Estates and legal costs	£0.426 million
<b>Total (inclusive of VAT)</b>	<b>£6.622 million.</b>

### Promoting and Advertising Assembly Policies

**Q14 Phil Williams:** How much has the Assembly Government spent so far this year on promoting and advertising its policies? (OAQ18709)

**Edwina Hart:** Up to 24 June, the Welsh Assembly Government had spent £735,740 on publicity in the current financial year. That expenditure included major promotional and advertising campaigns on road safety, free bus passes for older and disabled people, and the NHS open week.

### Environment, Planning and Transport Budget

**Q15 Pauline Jarman:** What discussions has the Minister had with the Minister for Environment regarding the funding that her portfolio requires to promote Government policies? (OAQ18711)

**Edwina Hart:** I will discuss these matters with the Minister for Environment as part of the budget planning round.