

## **Information further to Ministerial Answers**

### **Information further to the Plenary Debate on the Draft Budget issued by the Finance Minister, Edwina Hart, on 25 October 2002**

#### **To David Lloyd:**

At the end of the debate last Tuesday, I undertook to respond to any specific budgetary points raised by Members that were not covered in my closing speech.

You asked whether I had made provision in my draft budget proposals for the new general practitioner contract. As I said in my speech, I will be underwriting £20 million for the local health boards in 2003-04 to cover the implementation of the GP contract and associated developments in primary care. Taken together with the allocations I have made to the family health services budget expenditure line, this represents a total increase of nearly 8 per cent for this demand-led budget in 2003-04 over the current year.

You also suggested that there should be a dedicated ambulance budget line. Historically, ambulance funding has been contained within the annual health authority revenue allocation, which is in the local health board and trusts and central budgets budget expenditure line. I have allocated an additional £2.5 million for emergency ambulances to that budget expenditure line. As you know, Health Commission Wales will commission ambulance services from April 2003. As yet, however, decisions regarding funding arrangements for HCW and the ambulance service have not yet been made.

Although the health promotion budget expenditure line has been reduced, this funding has been transferred to the public health (including vaccines) budget expenditure line, where it is more appropriately placed. The health promotion budgets are for the Assembly Government's national programmes, such as tobacco control, the Welsh network of healthy school schemes, the corporate standard for health at work and support for local health alliances. While some elements of these programmes are delivered by the national health service, it is important to recognise that the budgets only include funding for specific activities and not for health promotion services as a whole. Trusts and, from 2003, local health boards, also contribute to health promotion and provision for this is made in the local health board and trust current expenditure budget expenditure line.

In relation to your question about funding to address fee levels for care homes for the elderly, I can confirm that general pay and price pressures are provided for in the provision we have included as part of the local government settlement. I have also set aside some considerable sums to fund a package of measures in later years covered by this spending review. I understand the concerns about the care sector pressures and measures are already in hand to assist in addressing these. We have established the Wales care strategy group to look at medium to long-term issues. We are also taking action on better commissioning and planning, training, workforce issues and fairer charging.

#### **To Helen Mary Jones:**

At the end of the debate last Tuesday I undertook to respond to any specific budgetary points raised by Members that were not covered in my closing speech.

You asked whether the Education and Learning Wales budget contains an element of capital that could be applicable to school buildings for sixth forms. Capital funding for schools will, in general, continue to be the responsibility of local authorities, which will remain responsible

for the schools estate. In that sense, the new arrangements for post-16 funding represent no change. However, and in addition, ELWa—National Council is able to fund specific projects involving schools and other partners in line with its strategic plans. Projects most likely to attract ELWa support would be those aimed at expanding learning opportunities, particularly through wider partnership or community development.

You also asked that the budget for school repairs should be increased. I have made additional provision for schools capital funding in my draft budget proposals which, by 2005-06, in total represents an increase of nearly 40 per cent over the current year. As I said in my speech I have also, exceptionally, given a commitment to sustain significant expenditure up to 2010, which underlines the Assembly Government's determination to fulfil our target of bringing all school buildings up to standard by that time.

**To Janet Davies:**

At the end of the debate last Tuesday, I undertook to respond to any specific budgetary points raised by Members that were not covered in my closing speech.

You suggested that the ULTra scheme is an example of chaotic financial allocation. On the contrary, the automated urban transport scheme for Cardiff is an innovative project which formed part of Cardiff County Council's bid for transport grant support in 2002-03. The scheme will link the city centre, civic centre and Cardiff bay, and the Assembly Government is providing funding of £3.7 million in 2002-03 to meet the initial design costs of the scheme. The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions is funding the prototype testing with a grant of £2.7 million. If the testing is satisfactory, and subject to the granting of any necessary statutory consents, the Assembly Government has undertaken to fund the cost of implementing the initial stage in Cardiff bay at a total cost (including design) of £19.2 million.

You also expressed concern about the reduction in the special areas of conservation budget expenditure line in 2003-04. I can assure you that the new baseline provides sufficient resources to continue the programme of reviewing consents for activities that could be damaging Natura 2000 sites. There is also provision for the Countryside Council for Wales to allow the council to continue to monitor Wales's suite of Natura 2000 sites, which cover some 60 per cent of sites of special scientific interest in Wales.

**To Janet Ryder:**

At the end of the debate last Tuesday, I undertook to respond to any specific budgetary points raised by Members that were not covered in my closing speech.

You expressed concern that the additional provision for community generation throughout Wales was insufficient. I recognise that the community regeneration budget alone will not be enough to fully transform our most deprived communities. Other sources of funding are needed. For example, one of the central tenets of Communities First is that it will act as a 'catalyst for action' and draw in other sources of funding to help regenerate these communities. Furthermore, the community regeneration and social inclusion policy board—of which I am Chair—will work to ensure that all other public sector programmes are targeted at Communities First areas.

I also recognise the needs of those communities that are only marginally better off than those eligible under Communities First. That is why I have established a community facilities and

activities programme. This is a flexible all-Wales programme designed to complement Communities First and priority will be given to areas that are disadvantaged.

You also questioned the Government's commitment to creating better homes for people in Wales. 'Better Homes for People in Wales' is the overarching framework, with aims and objectives that will lead to significant improvements across the board in housing in Wales.

We are providing significant capital and revenue resources and have a number of specific budgets to target resources at strategic housing schemes and those areas of priority which are identified in 'Better Homes'.

As capital resources are now largely unhypothecated local authorities have much more flexibility to address local housing priorities and meet both the Assembly's and their own strategic housing objectives—both in terms of their own capital expenditure, and also deciding how the allocation of social housing grant is invested.

Areas where we have made significant steps to secure improvements, and have provided additional funding in this budget include:

- The homelessness and rough sleeping programme is a vital mechanism in the delivery of the objectives of the emerging national homelessness strategy, which takes forward and builds on the work of the Homelessness Commission.

The additional funding for 2004-05 and 2005-06, which provides an annual programme of nearly £5 million, recognises that we will have better information about local needs and priorities when local homeless strategies are in place in September 2003. Compare this with the £650,000 spent in 1998-99.

The programme funds voluntary organisations to provide bond schemes, housing advice, outreach services and other projects to prevent or alleviate homelessness. Funding is also available to local authorities to support their development of local homelessness strategies in line with their new statutory duties under the Homelessness Act 2002.

- Supported housing revenue grants will allow for growth in the provision of supported housing for vulnerable people. The increase in the baseline will allow the Assembly Government to uplift current grant rates as well as provide for a small growth in programme (approximately 100 new bedspaces) in the year leading up to the implementation of the new supporting people programme.

Supported housing is an important contribution to meeting the Assembly Government's objectives to tackle social exclusion. Programme growth will increase the number of vulnerable people who can receive support to prevent them losing their home.

- The rapid response adaptations programme is a new programme which will provide an immediate response to specific needs by providing adaptations such as ramps, stair lifts and handrails, to enable elderly and disabled people to return to their own homes following hospital discharge.
- Care and repair services provide assistance to enable elderly and disabled people to stay in their own homes in comfort and security. The Assembly Government's proposals for the enhanced funding of care and repair services emphasise the importance that is placed on healthier and safer accommodation for older and disabled people.

The programme will facilitate hospital discharge and allow more elderly/disabled people to remain in their own homes in comfort and security; will relieve pressure on hospital and residential care services; and prevent hospital admission by addressing problems of homes that may no longer be safe or appropriate for older and disabled people.

- The social housing management grant programme—which is designed to help social landlords achieve high standards of housing management. The programme provides the opportunity for the Welsh Assembly Government to support and promote innovation and good practice that is capable of being copied across the Welsh social housing sector.
- Black and minority ethnic programme—the recently published black, minority ethnic housing action plan for Wales aims to ensure that clear directives and targets are set for social landlords and other providers of housing, to ensure that discrimination and disadvantage is eliminated across BME communities living in Wales.

The introduction of the Assembly Government's BME housing budget will be used to support social landlords to implement their responsibilities under the action plan. In particular, the budget will be used: to fund innovative BME housing projects that deliver best practice that can be copied across different parts of Wales; to produce a 'social housing and race' training package; and to support a national BME housing conference.

**To Nick Bourne:**

At the end of the debate last Tuesday, I undertook to respond to any specific budgetary points raised by Members that were not covered in my closing speech.

You questioned the thinking behind the reduction in the health promotion budgets. Although the health promotion budget expenditure line has been reduced, this funding has been transferred to the public health (including vaccine) budget expenditure line, where it is more appropriately placed. The health promotion budgets are for the Assembly Government's national programmes, such as tobacco control, the Welsh network of healthy school schemes, the corporate standard for health at work and support for local health alliances. While some elements of these programmes are delivered by the NHS, it is important to recognise that the budgets only include funding for specific activities and not for health promotion services as a whole. Trusts and, from 2003, local health boards also contribute to health promotion and provision for this is made in the local health board and trust current expenditure budget expenditure line.

You also queried the reduction in the budget for agri-environmental schemes. The agri-environmental schemes budget expenditure lines support the environmentally sensitive areas scheme, the habitat scheme and the moorland scheme. A public consultation in 1998 recommended that these schemes should be rolled into one, taking forward the best practices of the schemes and incorporating them into a single whole farm scheme available throughout Wales—Tir Gofal. Tir Gofal replaced these schemes from 1999 and all three have now closed to new applications. The decreasing annual profile reflects the fact that the number of extant agreements will steadily fall over the next four years.

**To William Graham:**

At the end of the debate last Tuesday, I undertook to respond to any specific budgetary points raised by Members that were not covered in my closing speech.

You expressed concern about the way in which the deprivation fund will be distributed and

you will therefore be pleased to know that I fully intend to publish the distribution formula for the deprivation fund as soon as it has been formalised.

I am also able to clarify that the provision I have made for the Safer Communities funds will not replace but supplement Home Office funding in this area. The fund will support a range of activities linked to the safer communities agenda. In particular, it may be used to provide support for a special police task force aimed at tackling the drugs threat to south Wales. It will also provide a source of funding for Communities First and youth partnerships for crime reduction and safer communities initiatives.

**To Alun Cairns:**

At the end of the debate last Tuesday, I undertook to respond to any specific budgetary points raised by Members that were not covered in my closing speech.

My draft budget proposals do not make specific provision for the increase in national insurance contributions from April 2003. Each year, I expect all the public bodies that receive core funding from the Welsh Assembly Government to make efficiency savings. I have made it clear that next year, across the board while the budget allocations do not provide for the NIC increase neither have they been adjusted for an expected efficiency saving.

On structural funds, the figure that you quoted in the debate of £340 million relates to the total public funds, i.e. structural fund grant payments and public sector match funding that should be incurred in financial year 2003-04. The match-funding element is provided not only by the Welsh Assembly Government but also by local authorities and other public sector bodies.

My draft budget proposals, therefore, provide a baseline of £220,000 for the Welsh European Funding Office for 2003-04, which covers only expenditure for European structural funds, the local regeneration fund, voluntary sector, match funding and programme support. The baselines relating specifically to European structural funds total £186 million. Match funding budgets are also held in other main expenditure groups, such as the Pathway to Prosperity fund, match funding in the economic development main expenditure group.

**Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol at OAQ19361 a gyhoeddwyd  
gan y Prif Weinidog, Rhodri Morgan, ar 30 Hydref 2002**

**At David Lloyd:**

Yn y Cyfarfod Llawn ar 15 Hydref, fe ofynnodd a oedd aelodau Cabinet y Cynulliad yn cael gweld drafftiau cynnar o adroddiadau arolygiadau a chyd-adolygiadau cyn eu bod yn cael eu cyhoeddi. Addewais y byddwn yn ysgrifennu atoch.

Nid yw aelodau'r Cabinet yn cael gweld drafftiau cynnar o adroddiadau o'r fath gan y gallai hynny beryglu annibyniaeth yr adolygiad. Mae'r Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithadol yn cael gweld drafft terfynol yr adroddiad ychydig cyn ei gyhoeddi (rhyw wythnos neu bythefnos fel arfer) er mwyn cael amser i baratoi ymateb. Mae llythyr esboniadol yr adroddiad (crynodeb o'r darganfyddiadau) yn cael ei anfon hefyd at y Gweinidog Cyllid ac i'm swyddfa innau. Ambell dro, mae'r Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol yn derbyn papur briffio cynharach ar ddarganfyddiadau amodol a chasgliadau tebygol yr adolygiad neu'r cyd-adolygiad. Mae'r papurau briffio hyn fel arfer yn eithaf cyffredionl eu natur ac nid ydynt yn cyfeirio at fanylion unrhyw ddrafftiau.

**Information further to OAQ19361 issued by the First Minister,  
Rhodri Morgan, on 30 October 2002**

**To David Lloyd:**

In Plenary on 15 October you asked whether members of the Assembly Cabinet see early drafts of inspection and joint review reports before they are published. I undertook to write a reply to you.

Cabinet members do not see early drafts of such reports. To do so might compromise the independence of the inspection function. A copy of the final draft goes to the Minister for Health and Social Services a short while before publication (usually one or two weeks) so she may prepare her response. The covering submission (which summarises the findings) goes also to the Finance Minister and to my office. In some cases, the Minister for Health and Social Services may receive an earlier confidential briefing on the provisional findings and likely conclusions of inspections and joint reviews. Such briefings are general in form and do not refer to detailed contents of any drafts.

**Information further to the statement on the Wales Millennium Centre  
issued by the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language,  
Jenny Randerson, on 5 November 2002**

**To Glyn Davies:**

I promised to write to you in response to your question about the origin of the steelwork at the Wales Millennium Centre after the Plenary statement I made on 15 October.

The Wales Millennium Centre selected the main contractor (Sir Robert McAlpine) through European Union rules, and agreed a fixed-price design and build contract. Under EU rules it is difficult with materials like steel to be prescriptive about their origin. There is also the question of capacity for production and specification of types of steel.

Could I say at the outset that while the majority of the steel for the construction of the WMC comes from Corus, this does not in every case guarantee that it is British, although the WMC Company have been told that it is. I have asked for a more detailed breakdown of origin than I can provide here, and I hope to supply further information when it is available. You should know, however, that this information comes not from the main contractor, but from the principal supplier, and in some cases from other suppliers.

There are two major sources of steel for the WMC—the plate girders that are made in Finland and are a very special build and the rest, which comes from Corus but from a number of sources, all of which are in the UK. I have asked for a more detailed list of these sources. I understand that Sheffield will feature in the list, but not Wales. The question is further complicated because specific sections of steel are pulled from stock yards and I understand that a lot of steel is not marked these days and is not, therefore, easily traced.

Reinforcing steel was sourced until recently from Allied Steel and Wire.

**Information further to the statement on the Wales Millennium Centre  
issued by the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language,  
Jenny Randerson, on 7 November 2002**

**To Glyn Davies:**

Further to the information issued on 5 November I can now provide further detail on the origin of the WMC steelwork. This expands on the information that I have already provided, and identifies some steel sourced from Wales (in addition to the Allied Steel and Wire reinforcing steel that I referred to). Steel from Corus is sourced as follows:

- Scunthorpe/Humberside—small and medium weight sections;
- Lakenby—heavy section for fly tower and auditorium;
- Motherwell—plates for prefabricated beams;
- Corby—small tubular section.

Steel from abroad is as follows:

- Finland—24 cantilever plate girders for auditorium.

I also understand that some of the heavy tubes to support the plate girders are coming from Germany.

Metal decking I now understand is still coming from Newport.

Stainless steel sheet for the roof shell may be supplied from Wales (Cwmbran) as well as Sheffield, but this depends on stocks and who is rolling the relevant specification at the time and what stocks the patinator holds.