

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

(Y Cofnod)

The National Assembly for Wales

(The Record)

Dydd Mercher 10 Mai 2000

Wednesday 10 May 2000

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y Siambr. Yn ogystal, cynhwyswyd cyfieithiad Saesneg o eiriau a lefarwyd yn y Gymraeg. Bydd cofnod dwyieithog cyflawn ar gael bum niwrnod gwaith ar ôl cynnal y sesiwn.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the Chamber. In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches has been included. A fully bilingual record will be available five working days after the session was held.

*Cyfarfu'r Cynulliad am 2 p.m. gyda'r Llywydd yn y Gadair.
The Assembly met at 2 p.m. with the Presiding Officer in the Chair.*

Cynnig Trefniadol
Procedural Motion

Y Llywydd: Yr eitem gyntaf ar yr agenda yw ethol i'r Pwyllgorau Sefydlog. Gan na chafodd yr eitem ei chyflwyno mewn pryd, galwaf y Trefnydd i gynnig cynnig trefniadol o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 6.16 er mwyn caniatáu i ni ethol i'r Pwyllgorau heb y cyfnod cyflwyno gofynnol.

The Presiding Officer: The first item on the agenda is the election to the Standing Committees. As this was not tabled in time, I call on the Business Secretary to propose a procedural motion under Standing Order No. 6.16 to allow us to elect to the Committees without the required tabling period.

The Business Secretary (Andrew Davies): I propose that

the Assembly, under Standing Order No. 6.16, agrees to allow me to move the first no-named day motion set out on the agenda.

Nick Bourne: Could we have an indication of what is being proposed?

Andrew Davies: This motion is to allow us to vote on the election of Delyth Evans to the appropriate Committees. The procedural motion that follows is to allow us to vote on the election of the new members of the Partnership Council.

The Presiding Officer: To clarify, both these items are on the agenda, but they are unscheduled business.

*Cynnig: O blaid 36, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.
Motion: For 36, Abstain 0, Against 0.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Bourne, Nick
Butler, Rosemary
Cairns, Alun
Chapman, Christine
Davies, Andrew
Davies, David
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
Graham, William
Griffiths, John
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Lloyd, David
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Morgan, Rhodri
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Richards, Rod
Rogers, Peter
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion adopted.*

Ethol i Bwyllgorau Election to Committees

The Business Secretary (Andrew Davies): I propose that

the Assembly

- 1. In accordance with section 57(8) of the Government of Wales Act 1998 and Standing Order No. 8.3, elects Delyth Evans to its Agriculture and Rural Development Committee in place of Alun Michael;*
- 2. In accordance with Standing Orders Nos. 8.3 and 15.4 elects Delyth Evans to its Committee on European Affairs in place of Alun Michael.*

*Cynnig: O blaid 40, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.
Motion: For 40, Abstain 0, Against 0.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Bourne, Nick
Butler, Rosemary
Cairns, Alun
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, David
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Graham, William
Griffiths, John
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Lloyd, David
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Morgan, Rhodri
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Richards, Rod
Rogers, Peter
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion adopted.*

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

The Business Secretary (Andrew Davies): I propose that

the Assembly, under Standing Order No. 6.16, allows me to propose the second no-named-day motion set out on the agenda.

Cynnig: O blaid 40, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.

Motion: For 40, Abstain 0, Against 0.

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Bourne, Nick
Butler, Rosemary
Cairns, Alun
Chapman, Christine
Davies, Andrew
Davies, David
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Graham, William
Griffiths, John
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jarman, Pauline
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Lloyd, David
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Morgan, Rhodri
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Richards, Rod
Rogers, Peter
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion adopted.*

Ethol i'r Cyngor Partneriaeth Election to the Partnership Council

The Business Secretary (Andrew Davies): I propose that

the Assembly, in accordance with paragraphs 1(1) and 4 of Schedule 11 to the Government of Wales Act 1998, appoints the following persons to be members of the Partnership Council: Rhodri Morgan in place of Alun Michael; Peter Black in place of Michael German; Glyn Davies in place of Nick Bourne.

*Cynnig: O blaid 44, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.
Motion: For 44, Abstain 0, Against 0.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Black, Peter
Bourne, Nick
Butler, Rosemary
Cairns, Alun
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, David
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Graham, William
Griffiths, John
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jarman, Pauline
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Lloyd, David
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Morgan, Rhodri
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Richards, Rod
Rogers, Peter
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion adopted.*

Cwestiynau i'r Prif Ysgrifennydd ar Ddatblygu Economaidd Questions to the First Secretary on Economic Development

Map Cymorth Rhanbarth Dewisol Revised Regional Selective Assistance Map

Q1 Jonathan Morgan: What role did the National Assembly for Wales play in drawing up the revised assisted areas map for Wales? (OAQ5050)

The First Secretary (Rhodri Morgan): The Assembly has the responsibility for co-ordinating and submitting all the Wales proposals to the UK Government for inclusion in the British proposals for the assisted areas map, which are sent to Brussels.

Jonathan Morgan: My understanding is that Assembly officials were responsible for replying to your colleagues in London. Is it right that Assembly officials should be engaged in this consultation, without reference to the National Assembly for Wales? Or is the First Secretary distancing himself from unpopular decisions such as those made for Barry and Rhose?

The First Secretary: Not at all. I have no intention of distancing myself from proposals that, I believe, attempt to bring together the best interests of the whole of Wales. I do not doubt that all Assembly Members want to push for the inclusion of their areas. However, we have to take a share of the 338,000 overall population cut for the United Kingdom that is required by the European Commission. Assembly Members speaking on behalf of either their list areas or constituencies can propose an addition to what has been proposed, with a population of, say, 10,000. However, they are not usually keen to come forward with the equivalent cut in 10,000 in somebody else's constituency. That would still enable Wales to carry the share of the overall UK cut of 338,000 that we must achieve to satisfy the Commission's demands for reduced coverage.

2:10 p.m.

Phil Williams: I notice that the other large members of the EU, France, Germany and Italy, have received approval for their designated areas, along with many of the smaller countries. However, we still await approval. This is similar to the situation with the Objective 1 single programming document, which is now in operation in several countries or on the point of approval in many others. These delays are inexcusable. How do you share the blame for these inexcusable delays between the Government in London and Cardiff?

The First Secretary: That is a difficult question, on which I would be *parti pris* myself. It would be a matter on which historians and other commentators or academics comment. I could not be wholly objective about it. As regards approving the assisted areas map, approval should have been given ready for the new map on 1 January. The delay seems to have been caused by the different view taken by the previous European Commissioner, Commissioner Van Miert, about an understanding that was reached, but never put on paper, with the British Government. The new commissioner, Commissioner Monti, took a completely different view and did not want to continue with the informal understanding that had been reached with Commissioner Van Miert. That is an issue that Phil has excluded, because he only wants to blame me or Stephen Byers and does not want to consider that others might be responsible. I will always take my full share of the blame. We can discuss this in more detail if he has any particular points for which he thinks I am responsible. As he did not make any, I assume that he has no evidence.

Christine Humphreys: I take your point, Rhodri, that you would not want all Members to be making arguments on behalf of their regions or constituencies. However, I raise the question of Wrexham, which is now the hole in the middle between Objective 1 in Denbighshire and Objective 1 in Merseyside, and the consequent effect that that will have on businesses settling or not settling in Wrexham. Do you foresee that the majority of this Assembly will have an input into future consultations? I appreciate that the decision was made by officials, but surely, in the future, there should be some input from the majority of Assembly Members?

The First Secretary: If the majority of Assembly Members could come to an agreement on how to reach the Welsh share of the 338,000 cut, and if they could do it better than officials then I am sure that we would all welcome their efforts. What happened was perfectly proper and in order, there is no mystery or conspiracy about it. The officials consult with the WLGA and other responsible bodies. They take note of the views of the WDA about industrial prospects in certain areas and they then publish a draft map, which fulfils the complicated new criteria set out by the European Commission. There are five criteria of contiguity; for example that they must be areas with a population of 100,000 and self-contained. The Commission sets out those difficult criteria then officials carry out the consultation and produce a draft map. It is then up to individual areas, during the three-week consultation, which expired on 2 May, to put forward alternative views. Wrexham County Borough Council did indeed put forward alternative views. Officials are still working with it and the DTI--under my overall supervision--to see if there is a solution that meets the perhaps unique problems of Wrexham in being squashed in between an Objective 1 area with full development area status to the north-east of it in Merseyside and another such area to the west of it in the rest of Denbighshire.

Karen Sinclair: Returning to the same subject, all of us in north Wales share the disappointment of Wrexham's omission, and the implications for Wrexham are serious. Can you assure me, given that you are actively working on Wrexham's appeal, that you will put all your energies and weight into reinstating these areas for Wrexham?

The First Secretary: Yes. Although Wrexham might not get everything for which it has asked, I hope that it gets some of what it has asked for because that salient of non-assisted area status squashed between two full development area status may well be a unique position. However, I cannot guarantee, simply because there is little flexibility built into the system, that you can aid Wrexham without severely discomforting another part of Wales, but we are working hard to try to prevent Wrexham from being left stranded between two full development areas.

Strategaeth Datblygu Economaidd Genedlaethol (Trafodaethau ar Flaenoriaethau Strategol) National Economic Development Strategy (Discussion on Strategic Priorities)

C2 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Pa drafodaethau y mae'r Prif Ysgrifennydd wedi eu cael â'r sectorau perthnasol o fewn economi Cymru ar y blaenoriaethau strategol a fydd yn graidd i'r strategaeth datblygu economaidd genedlaethol? (OAQ5027)

Y Prif Ysgrifennydd: Fersiwn drafft oedd y strategaeth datblygu economaidd genedlaethol a gyhoeddwyd ym mis Hydref 1999. Bu'n gefndir defnyddiol i'r holl raglenni a dogfennau yr ydym wedi eu cyflwyno i'r Comisiwn Ewropeaidd ynghylch Amcan 1, 2 a 3. Yr ydym hefyd wedi cyflawni'r cynllun datblygu Cymru wledig. Mae'r ddogfen mewn fersiwn drafft ac yr ydym yn ymgynghori arni ac yn gwrandao ar syniadau o bob cyfeiriad. Erbyn inni ddechrau ar y ddogfen derfynol byddwn yn ymgynghori ar hyd a lled Cymru gyda phob un o'r sectorau perthnasol yn economi Cymru cyn cyhoeddi fersiwn derfynol y ddogfen.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Er mai dogfen ddrafft yw hon ar hyn o bryd, yr wyf yn siwr y byddai Rhodri yn cytuno bod targedau economaidd go benodol ynddi ar gyfer gwella perfformiad yr economi yng ngorllewin Cymru. Credaf y byddai hefyd yn cytuno bod angen buddsoddiad ariannol er mwyn gwneud hynny. Pam felly nad yw'r ddogfen rhaglennu sengl wedi cyrraedd Brwsel eto? Os na chytunir â honno gan Frwsel ni cheir buddsoddiad economaidd. Ai'r unig strategaeth sydd gennym yw oedi cyn belled â phosibl er mwyn osgoi gwariant yn y flwyddyn gyntaf oherwydd bod Rhodri yn gwybod nad oes arian yno ar gyfer y flwyddyn gyntaf?

Q2 Rhodri Glyn Thomas: What discussions has the First Secretary had with relevant sectors within the Welsh economy on the strategic priorities that will be the central focus of the draft national economic development strategy? (OAQ5027)

The First Secretary: The national economic development strategy published in October 1999 was a draft version. It was a useful background for all the programmes and documents that we have presented to the European Commission regarding Objectives 1, 2 and 3. We have also achieved the Welsh rural development strategy. The document is in draft form and we are consulting on it and listening to ideas from all directions. By the time that we begin the final document we will be consulting across Wales with all the relevant sectors in the Welsh economy before publishing the final version of the document.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Although this is a draft document at present, I am sure that Rhodri would agree that there are quite specific economic targets within it for improving the economy's performance in west Wales. I believe that he would also agree that financial investment is needed in order to do this. Why then has the single programming document not yet reached Brussels? If Brussels does not agree with it there will be no economic investment. Is our only strategy to delay as long as possible in order to avoid spending during the first year because Rhodri knows that there is no money there for the first year?

Y Prif Ysgrifennydd: Nage, yn sicr. Yr ydym yn prysuro, nid yn oedi. Nid oedd Rhodri Glyn yn bresennol yr wythnos diwethaf yng Nghwm Cynon yn ail gyfarfod pwyllgor monitro cysgodol Amcan 1 yng Nghymru. Ailbenderfynwyd gwneud penderfyniadau ariannol ym mis Gorffennaf oherwydd ein bod am roi rhai elfennau o wariant cyhoeddus a all fod yn fodel i'r sectorau perthnasol yn yr economi o ba fath o brosiectau a gaiff flaenoriaeth yn rhaglen Amcan 1 ar y trac cyflym. Penderfynwyd gwneud hynny ym mis Gorffennaf cyn toriad yr haf.

The First Secretary: Certainly not. We are hastening, not delaying. Rhodri Glyn was not present last week in the Cynon Valley in the second meeting of the shadow monitoring committee for Objective 1 in Wales. A decision was re-taken to make financial decisions in July because we wanted to put some elements of public expenditure that could be a model for the relevant sectors within the economy of the kind of projects that will be given priority in the Objective 1 programme on the fast track. It was decided to do this in July before the summer recess.

Glyn Davies: A central theme, Rhodri, of the national economic development plan will be job creation. Your main job creating body--the Welsh Development Agency--is looking at a target of about 17,000 jobs next year, the national economic development plan mentions 40,000 jobs. We know that land-based businesses are likely to lose some jobs and that the tourism industry is suffering because of the exchange rate. Where are all these extra jobs coming from?

The First Secretary: By avoiding the deflationary boom and bust policy that was around when the Government that he supports was in power. He must concede that in spite of the problems of the high pound, the macroeconomic situation is far from unhealthy at present. Growth is continuing and we have avoided the twin perils of inflation and rapid interest rates, and the sudden shocks to the economy as a result of adjustment by slamming the foot on the brakes. We do not have to slam the foot on the brakes, but we are not free of the problems to which he referred in the tourist industry, agriculture and elsewhere that are occasioned by the high pound. He, in turn, would have to concede that the macroeconomic situation over the past three years has been pretty good.

Cau Rover (Effaith ar Swyddi yng Nghymru) Rover Closure (Effect on Jobs in Wales)

2:20 p.m.

Q3 Alun Cairns: What assessment has the First Secretary made of the effect on jobs in Wales of the possible closure of Rover? Can he extend his answer to Dagenham, as a result of recent announcements? (OAQ5161)

The First Secretary: I have referred to Alun before as the Victorian undertaker praying for a hard winter. He has lost his hard winter as regards the Rover-Longbridge closure. He now refers to press reports, which may well be accurate. I do not know. I have read the same press reports as him about Dagenham. If he cannot ask a gloomy question on one subject he switches to another. We will have to see this weekend whether he is right about Dagenham. I am obviously not privy to what Ford will do. The Welsh Automotive Forum taskforce, which includes representatives from the Assembly and the Welsh Development Agency, is urgently considering the implications of the Rover situation for the Welsh automotive sector. They will have another meeting on 23 May and I will meet the taskforce and representatives of others with a special interest in the future of the automotive industry in Wales later on the same date. Perhaps I can report back to the Economic Development Committee or Plenary on the outcome of that meeting. By that time, we will have considered the impact of the success of the Phoenix bid for Longbridge and the good news about Vauxhall. If the press reports are correct, there may not be very good news emerging this weekend about Dagenham as a car assembly plant.

Alun Cairns: We all enjoy the one-line comments that you use sometimes to get you out of some political difficulty. However, I am sure that you will agree that this is a serious situation with potentially thousands of jobs at risk. The last thing that people need is a one-line quip to take away the political tension. Additional costs are imposed on businesses, and on manufacturing businesses in particular. Wales has a disproportionate dependence on these kinds of businesses. Costs such as changes in business rates, the imminent energy tax which will be debated later today and the problems facing British exporters as a result of the failing euro all contribute to these additional costs. What action do you plan to take with the Treasury to save the manufacturing base in this country?

The First Secretary: I apologise if I caught you on the quick with my reference to you changing your question. I accept that we face a moving target. One day, there might be good news about Rover. The following day or week, there may be bad news, equivalent to what had been half feared about Rover, about another part of the car Assembly industry in this country. I have noticed that you do not want to refer to the good news about the £500 million investment by Vauxhall, led ably by its chairman Nick Reilly who is a famous Welsh industrialist. Anybody who says--as I believe Alun is saying-- that the manufacturing industry of this country will become extinct over the next few years is talking through the top of his hat.

Certain industries are coming under severe pressure. I have said before that the kinds of industry that are under severe pressure are those which are heavily dependent on exporting high volume, low margin goods such as steel, electronic components, car components, standard television sets and other consumer electronics. Those goods can be produced in many countries and they do not necessarily need to be made in the UK with the special skills that we have here. I have never denied-- in fact, I have broadcast it heavily--that Wales and the west Midlands are in the most difficult position in the UK with regard to over-reliance on that kind of high volume, low margin, high export dependent industry. Rover was a classic example of that. The steel industry, certain car component firms that are dependent on Rover, Vauxhall, Ford and the three Japanese transplants are all in difficulty for the reason to which Alun referred. I do not deny that. That is the reason that I am meeting the main movers and shakers in the Welsh Automotive Forum taskforce on 23 May. If there is anything significant to report from that meeting, I shall report to the Economic Development Committee or to the Assembly.

Helen Mary Jones: Diolch am eich atebion i gwestiwn Alun Cairns. A ydych yn cytuno mai un o broblemau rhai o'r cyflenwyr yng Nghymru yw eu bod yn gor-ddibynnu ar un neu ddau o brynwyr mawr? Pa gamau y byddwch yn eu trafod drwy Fforwm Moduron Cymru a beth all y Cynulliad ei wneud i gynorthwyo'r ffatrioedd i arallgyfeirio fel nad ydynt yn gor-ddibynnu ar un prynwr yn y dyfodol?

Y Prif Ysgrifennydd: Hyd y deallaf--ac fe fyddwn yn parhau i weithio gyda Fforwm Moduron Cymru er mwyn mapio'r diwydiant ceir, o'r cyflenwyr i'r cynhyrchwyr--nid oes un cwmni yng Nghymru yn dibynnu mwy na 50 y cant ar gyflenwi Rover. Efallai bod y ffigur yn 40 y cant, ond nid yw'n fwy na 50 y cant. Mae hyn y wir am hyd yn oed y ddwy ffatri enfawr yn etholaeth Helen Mary Jones yn Llanelli, a oedd yn eiddo i Rover, neu British Leyland fel yr oedd ar y pryd. Yr ydym eisiau mapio faint o ddibyniaeth sydd ar Rover, Ford, Vauxhall neu ar gwmnïau o Japan, megis Honda, Nissan a Toyota. Hoffwn pe na byddai'r diwydiannau mawr fel Camford Pressings a Calsonic International Ltd yn Llanelli, neu TRW yng Nghwm Nedd yn dibynnu'n ormodol ar yr archebion a ddaw oddi wrth un cynhyrchwr ceir fel Ford. Felly, pe bai un ohonynt yn cael cnoc oddi wrth gynhyrchwr ceir, ni fyddai'n ergyd derfynol i'w allu i barhau mewn busnes.

John Griffiths: I return to the euro and the problems in Wales, particularly in the steel industry. We know that the pound is high, or perhaps the euro is very low, and we know that there are particular problems in Wales. It seemed to me yesterday that there were simplistic comments from the Conservative AMs about early entry into the euro. No doubt that they are split on this as they are split on all matters European. How strongly could the Assembly bring pressure on the UK Government to lay out a clear strategy for early entry? We know that the pound is too high at the moment, but how could we encourage a clear strategy, a series of steps to be laid down and a campaign to be set out so that we would have early entry when conditions allowed?

Helen Mary Jones: Thank you for your answers to Alun Cairns's question. Do you agree that one of the problems facing suppliers in Wales is over-dependency on one or two main buyers? What steps will you discuss through the Welsh Automotive Forum and what can the Assembly do to help the factories to diversify so that they are not over-dependent on one buyer in the future?

The First Secretary: As I understand--and we will continue to work with the Welsh Automotive Forum to map the car industry, from suppliers to manufacturers--no company in Wales depends more than 50 per cent on supplying Rover. Perhaps the figure is 40 per cent, but it is not more than 50 per cent. This is true of even the two big factories in Helen Mary Jones's Llanelli constituency, which used to belong to Rover, or British Leyland as it was at the time. We want to map how much dependency there is on Rover, Ford, Vauxhall or on Japanese companies such as Honda, Nissan and Toyota. I would like to see the large industries, such as Camford Pressings and Calsonic International Ltd in Llanelli, or TRW in the Vale of Neath, not overly depending on orders from one car producer such as Ford. Therefore, if one were to receive a knock from a car producer, it would not be a fatal blow to its ability to continue in business.

The First Secretary: This is moving a long way from the possible closure of Rover, which was the point of Alun Cairns's original question. An overvalued pound and undervalued euro is a threat to manufacturing industries, whether it be Rover, the end of the food chain or the tier one suppliers to Rover, of which we have about six big factories in Wales, with another six that are major suppliers to Land Rover. They may come out of this quite well because if they are sold to Ford they may end up with an increase rather than a decrease in production. However, we are talking about a smaller number of units than Rover at Longbridge.

The problem is that we are a moving target. Every week, if not every day, brings a different projection of what the level of car production will be. It is like the currency markets, where exporters have just got used to what they thought was a high rate at Christmas, but where there has been a further 15 per cent rise to which it has been difficult to adjust. Some companies have done better than others. Vauxhall has done remarkably well despite the rise because it buys a high proportion of its components from mainland Europe. Other companies such as Rover are suffering. This is also true of the Japanese companies because they buy a high proportion of their components, including steel, from the UK. Therefore, they pay the overvalued pound rate, rather than the undervalued euro rate that is paid by some of the companies that carry out more offshore assembly in the UK rather than the whole built-up job using UK steel and components.

I do not know how you achieve early entry into the euro from the standing start of 3.46 deutschmarks to the pound. It is difficult because the pound must decrease to a reasonable level relative to the euro before the big decision about locking it in is made, subject to a referendum. It is a big decision for the UK Parliament--which would have to start the decision-making process--for the Assembly and for the population of this country, and would be made by way of the referendum mechanism, with which we in the Assembly are all familiar.

Cwestiynau i'r Ysgrifennydd Cyllid Questions to the Finance Secretary

Trwyddedau Ffonau Symudol Mobile Phone Licences

2:30 p.m.

Q1 Alun Cairns: How does the Finance Secretary propose to ensure that Wales receives a share of the £22 billion windfall the UK Government has received by selling the mobile phone licences? (OAQ5152)

The Finance Secretary (Edwina Hart): I understand that the UK Government intends to use the proceeds of the mobile phone auction to reduce public sector debt. If that is the case, there are no immediate financial implications for the Assembly. I refer Members to the comments made in Plenary yesterday by the First Secretary.

Alun Cairns: The Prime Minister has stated that the tax burden on the Welsh taxpayer has risen from 35 per cent of gross domestic product to approaching 38 per cent since the last general election. Does the Finance Secretary agree that it would be useful to use part of the £22 billion for the match funding that we desperately need in Wales and also to help Welsh taxpayers by reducing the tax burden that has been imposed on them since the last general election?

Edwina Hart: I do not agree with how you outlined your question. The money that will be raised from the windfall to the UK Government is a matter of national fiscal policy under the control of the Westminster administration.

Dafydd Wigley: I disassociate myself from the Conservative spokesperson's comment on wanting to use the £22 billion to reduce taxation. Clearly, it would be wrong to use one-off money for revenue purposes of that sort. I press the Finance Secretary as to whether she had any consultation with the Treasury before the Chancellor made this announcement. Clearly, if money of this order were available for spending on capital projects on a one-off basis, a share of 5 per cent of this--£1.1 billion--could be of tremendous benefit for Wales. Given that *The Economist* disagreed with the use of this money for reducing the national debt and said that the decision,

'risks making it look as if the Chancellor is taking his famed prudence to the point of perversity',

is it not in order for us to make representations to have some of that money for capital purposes in Wales?

Edwina Hart: I already have a meeting scheduled in the normal course of events with the Secretary of State for Wales and I will raise the issue of the windfall with the UK Government in that context.

Michael German: Do you think that Wales would be better served by having a portion of the £22 billion? If so, do you think that you should take action to ensure that the Assembly's views are well heard by the Chancellor and represented to him, rather than simply accepting what he says? If you had your share of the £22 billion--the proper share for Wales--on what would you spend it?

Edwina Hart: I am never one to make decisions on spending until I have the money in the bank, to be honest. I do not like to dream about what I would do tomorrow if I have not got the money to spend. On the other matter, as I indicated to Dafydd Wigley, I have a normal meeting in the course of events where I will raise several issues with the Secretary of State for Wales. This will be one of the issues on my agenda, to ensure that the Assembly's views are fully taken into account. I assure you that I will fully illustrate the concerns that have been expressed in the Assembly chamber yesterday and today on this issue.

Alun Pugh: What is the best deal for the taxpayer? Is it getting £22.5 billion for leasing part of the radio spectrum for mobile phones or selling off the whole of British Telecom forever for £4 billion?

Edwina Hart: The answer to that question is self-evident.

Gwahaniaethu Hiliol yng Nghymru Racial Discrimination in Wales

Q2 Geraint Davies: What measures will the Finance Secretary be taking to prevent any increase in racial discrimination in Wales? (OAQ5148)

Edwina Hart: It is important that racial discrimination is fully discussed in this Chamber. The Assembly provides leadership, guidance and advice and is developing partnerships with equality organisations in the fight against discrimination. It has demonstrated leadership by signing up to the Commission for Racial Equality's Leadership Challenge. We will ensure that the bodies for which the Assembly is responsible audit their personnel and other policies and programmes to eliminate discrimination. We have already begun that process in the Assembly. It is important for the Assembly to set high standards and lessons that will reflect well across Wales, as we all hear or read about so many incidents of racial attacks and so on.

Geraint Davies: I am sure that you are aware that there has been a tremendous increase in the number of racial crimes in south Wales. The South Wales Police Authority recorded a 150 per cent increase last year. I condemn the activities of people such as the British National Party and other organisations whose sole prerogative is to create disharmony in our communities.

In view of these statistics and facts, I was disappointed to hear that the recent South Wales Police initiative to tackle racial crime through teacher training and education--a vital weapon in fighting this unacceptable activity--has been refused by the Home Office. This was despite the support of seven local authorities and organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality, Race Equality First, VALREC--the Valleys Race Equality Council--and Swansea Bay REC--Swansea Bay Race Equality Council. I realise that this is not a devolved matter, but it is such an important issue for our communities, will you pursue it with the Home Office, so that we can change this decision?

Edwina Hart: I join you in our condemnation of the BNP's actions across Wales and all those that stir racial hatred across society. We must be aware that sometimes comments that are made slur out extreme racial hatred and could lead to attacks. Many of us share the disappointment about the initiative that you mentioned. I guarantee that I will do my best and speak to the First Secretary about writing the matters of concern that have been raised today.

David Davies: On behalf of the Conservative group, I also want to disassociate ourselves from the BNP and extreme right wing groups which promote hatred. Does Edwina agree with the words of Haile Selassie, which later turned into a song by Bob Marley, about building a society where the colour of a man's skin is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes? No doubt, if Val Feld had been there, he would have included women in that. Why is it that Edwina's Cabinet colleagues are supporting policies, such as free eye tests for certain ethnic minorities, which will create more division? Many ethnic minorities would find the suggestion that they cannot afford eye tests patronising. Does Edwina agree that we should be colour blind in this country and all ethnic groups should be treated in the same fair way?

Edwina Hart: We must identify the issues concerning the special health needs of ethnic minorities in the same way as those concerning women's health. That has been discussed in the Health and Social Services Committee. The Committee has had its deliberations and I am pleased with its choice of issues to pursue in this area. I was delighted to hear about your group's condemnation of the BNP. It is important that the Assembly takes a strong lead in condemning racial discrimination wherever it is.

Christine Chapman: In welcoming the initiatives that are in place and in paying tribute to the Committee on Equality of Opportunity's work, which you have mentioned, and in ensuring that the fight against racial discrimination is at the heart of everything that we do, have you considered how much it would cost to extend the route to Torfaen scheme, which addresses racism in communities through their schools and was the only project in Wales to be financed by a grant from the European Year Against Racism, across the rest of Wales?

Edwina Hart: I have not made any detailed considerations of the cost of introducing this scheme into other local authority areas. However, in the light of your question, I will make the necessary enquiries and discuss this matter with my colleagues on the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, as it will fit nicely into our programme of work in tackling race discrimination in Wales.

Adroddiad Lawrence Lawrence Report

Q3 David Melding: Will the Finance Secretary make a statement on progress towards implementing the Lawrence report? (OAQ5153)

Edwina Hart: The Lawrence report is at the heart of all discussions in the Committee on Equality of Opportunity. We have an all-party sub-group in the Committee, which is discussing implementation of the report with the education sector. We have also brought in South Wales Police, Estyn, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Commission for Racial Equality to examine how the Assembly can address the findings of Sir William Macpherson's report on the Lawrence inquiry. I have some good news. I am awaiting the confirmation of the appointment of a secondee to help the Committee and the Assembly to take this forward.

As Chair of the Committee, I pay tribute to the work that it has initiated in this area with the implementation of the Macpherson report and the additional work that members of the sub-group have undertaken to ensure that the Assembly leads the way in implementing the Macpherson report on the tragic death of Stephen Lawrence.

David Melding: Does Edwina agree that casual assurances from ACCAC--the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority--that racial awareness issues are mainstreamed in the curriculum are not helpful when that organisation cannot give a single instance of a topic studied to raise racial awareness?

2:40 p.m.

Edwina Hart: I was also concerned with ACCAC's contribution in the Committee on that area. The pertinent way in which the Committee dealt with it by looking at key areas in the curriculum of how geography and history are taught has been useful. ACCAC has now joined our sub-group to discuss the issues, which will allow us to take the issues forward. Rosemary Butler is eager to ensure that the issues are addressed within the education system so that we can ensure that the Macpherson report is implemented properly in Wales and that people know that we are not just paying lip service to it. Sometimes Commission reports come and go and only lip service is paid to their outcome.

Owen John Thomas: Education is a shared experience that provides an excellent opportunity for nurturing racial harmony. Cardiff has had a cosmopolitan community for almost 150 years and since the 1960s Welsh towns have had substantial ethnic populations. When Betty Campbell retired from Mount Stuart Primary School in Cardiff Bay last year Wales, lost its only head teacher from an ethnic background. As Chair of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, are you satisfied with the efforts that are made to attract entrants from ethnic minorities to the teaching profession and what steps are you taking to encourage this move and to monitor its progress?

Edwina Hart: I cannot give you an adequate answer today on whether sufficient work has been undertaken to attract people from ethnic minorities to the teaching profession. From looking at other career paths in Wales and from the concerns expressed by teaching unions I am aware that more people from ethnic minorities are needed in that field so that we have positive black, Asian and ethnic minority role models with which school children can identify. That is important. In light of your question, I will raise the matter with Rosemary Butler so that we can improve the situation. It is an issue that we would like to examine in general discussions on areas such as education in the Committee on Equality of Opportunity.

Jenny Randerson: I was pleased to hear David's point earlier. Do you join me in condemning William Hague who, in the course of his anti-refugee broadcast prior to the elections last week --

Nick Bourne: That is not a question, it is a speech.

The Presiding Officer: Order. I, not the Conservative Group, am in charge of ensuring that questions are questions.

Jenny Randerson: William Hague condemned time wasted on so-called politically correct policing, which one has to assume must have meant equality and race issues. Do you agree?

Edwina Hart: I share many of your concerns regarding the whipping up of issues against asylum seekers in this country. It is not helpful for leading politicians to use that to play politics with people's lives. There is no place in modern politics to stir up that type of racial hatred, particularly in Wales.

Richard Edwards: Will you take this opportunity to re-emphasise how vitally important schooling from the earliest possible age is to ending discrimination and promoting integration and harmony in this country?

Edwina Hart: To answer that question we need only look at the Stephen Lawrence inquiry findings and its 70 recommendations, and how many of those are linked to racism and the role of education in dealing with racism within society. It is a matter of agenda for us in Wales to tackle racism through the education system and to examine the wider issues of equality of opportunity. This does not just refer to racist attacks but also such matters as providing for people with disability. It is the Assembly's duty, with its proud record in equality of opportunity and legislation to take these issues seriously.

Datganiad ar Werthusiadau Graddfa Fferm yng Nghymru Statement on Farm-scale Evaluations in Wales

The Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development (Christine Gwyther): In March, the Minister for the Environment, Michael Meacher announced details of a scientific programme of farm-scale evaluations of the potential effect on the natural environment of growing genetically modified crops. Before this announcement, his Department informed us that none of the farm-scale evaluations would take place in Wales. We have now learned that Aventis, one of the companies involved in the evaluations, has decided to locate one of its sites in north-east Wales.

The crop to be trialled is Chardon LL, a hybrid line of forage maize containing the transformation event T25, which has been genetically modified to be tolerant to the herbicide glufosinate ammonium. You will be aware that we considered the national listing of this variety in Committee in March, and I emphasise that this is unrelated to the location of the farm-scale trials. As you may recall, national listing is a statutory procedure that establishes whether a variety of seed meets specific criteria that allow it to be marketed commercially for use by growers. Farm-scale evaluations are a scientific assessment which are not governed by statute to assess the bio-diversity effects of growing the genetically modified variety. To be included in a farm-scale evaluation, the seed does not need national seed listing and this seed does not yet have national seed listing.

The crop can legally be grown in a farm-scale evaluation if it has consent under Part C of the European Union Directive 90/220. Part C consent allows a genetically modified organism to be released into the environment throughout the European Union. The particular variety of maize that Aventis proposes to use in the trial in north Wales received Part C consent in August 1998. The reference number is C/F/95/12/7, issued by the French authorities following agreement by member states. This consent is valid throughout the European Union and the company can therefore conduct these trials anywhere in the United Kingdom with no further approvals required. The Assembly does not have legal grounds to prevent this happening. I emphasise that neither does the UK Government.

As this crop has Part C consent under the European Union Directive 90/220, Aventis is not required to notify either us or the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions of the location of the field sites. We only know where they are because of SCIMAC, the Supply Chain Initiative on Modified Agricultural Crops, which is the group of industry organisations that agreed to provide a six-figure grid reference of each field. This has been placed on the DETR'S website. I am not satisfied that this information is sufficiently widely known and I well understand concerns locally. I am informed that the DETR has plans to hold a meeting in the Cheshire area at which a panel of experts will explain the reasons behind the farm-scale evaluations. I do not regard these arrangements as adequate. I spoke to Michael Meacher earlier today and I expressed my deep unhappiness about this. He was sympathetic and recognised the difficulties that we face in Wales and in the Assembly in particular. He agreed that his officials should hold further discussions with Aventis in an effort to get them to use an alternative site in England. Should this not meet with success, I will call on Aventis to delay planting until there has been adequate consultation with local people in the Sealand area. They have a right to know what is going on, and they should have been given adequate notice so that they could, if they wished, make their views known to the farmer who has agreed to the trial, to Aventis the company who will be carrying it out and to us in the Assembly.

We have been promoting and putting public money into organic farming in Wales. I am well aware that organic farmers do not want to have genetically modified crops grown close to their farms. In the Assembly we care about the wishes of organic farmers, so I will be writing formally to Michael Meacher inviting him to consider how the two systems can live together. My officials will also be raising these concerns with the senior management of Aventis. We are promoting and encouraging organic farming in Wales and I do not want to see the integrity of that project damaged. SCIMAC guidelines are specific about cultivation and planting distances in relation to genetically modified crops and I would like to see that strengthened. I will also be pursuing that point with Michael Meacher.

2:50 p.m.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Diolch am y datganiad. Mae'r digwyddiad wedi creu tipyn o newyddion. Bu llawer o adroddiadau camarweiniol a chryn dipyn o gamddealltwriaeth ynglyn â'r sefyllfa.

Yr wyf yn gwisgo dwy het. Gallwn, fel llefarydd Plaid Cymru ar amaethyddiaeth a datblygu gwledig, fanteisio ar y cyfle hwn i sgorio pwyntiau gwleidyddol. Ni wnaaf hynny. Gallwn, fel Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Amaethyddiaeth a Datblygu Gwledig, fanteisio ar y cyfle hwn i ddweud mai ni oedd yn iawn, a phe bai'r Ysgrifenydd wedi gwrandao ar y Pwyllgor, ni fyddai'r amwysedd yn bodoli. Ni wnaaf hynny ychwaith oherwydd y mae dau bwynt o bwys mawr yn codi o hyn.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you for that statement. This incident has created quite a bit of news. There have been many misleading reports and much misunderstanding of the situation.

I wear two hats. I could, as the Plaid Cymru spokesman on agriculture and rural development, take advantage of this opportunity to score political points. I will not do so. I could, as Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee, take advantage of this opportunity to say that we were right, and that if the Secretary had listened to the Committee, this ambiguity would not exist. I will not do that either, because two points of great importance arise from this.

Yn gyntaf, cyfrifoldeb y weinyddiaeth Lafur yn y Cynulliad yw mynegi'n glir yr hyn y mae'r Cynulliad wedi'i ddweud ym mis Gorffennaf y llynedd, sef ein bod am weld Cymru yn glir o gynnyrch a addaswyd yn enetig. Mae'n bwysig bod y datganiad hwnnw yn cael ei wneud yn eglur. Mae Christine yn iawn ynghylch y sefyllfa ddeddfwriaethol. Sylweddolwn hynny. Fodd bynnag, mae teimlad bod y Llywodraeth Lafur yn y Cynulliad yn methu â sicrhau bod dymuniadau mwyafrif Aelodau'r Cynulliad yn cael eu mynegi'n glir.

Yn ail, fel y mae Christine wedi nodi, mae ein strategaeth ar gyfer amaethyddiaeth a datblgu'r economi wledig yn ddibynnol ar greu delwedd o Gymru sydd yn glir o unrhyw ychwanegiadau artiffisial, sydd yn naturiol, yn organig, yn gyfeillgar i'r amgylchedd ac yn gynaliadwy. Mae'r digwyddiad hwn yn tanseilio hynny. Fel llefarydd y prif wrthblaid ar y mater hwn, rhybuddiaf y Llywodraeth y bydd yn anodd i ni gefnogi'r strategaeth hon ymhellach os na wneir y datganiad clir diamwys hwnnw ac os nad yw'r weinyddiaeth Lafur yn y Cynulliad yn barod i ddweud yn bendant y bydd yn pwyso ar y cwmni, a'r ffermwr yn yr achos hwn, i beidio â chael y treialon hyn ar dir Cymru.

We need a clear commitment from the administration that it will ensure that the company and the farmer clearly understand that we do not want these trials on Welsh land.

A wnaiff Christine roi'r ymrwymiad hwnnw i ni y prynhawn yma?

First, it is the Labour administration's responsibility to express clearly what the Assembly said in July of last year, namely, that we want to see Wales free from genetically-modified produce. It is important that that statement is made clear. Christine is right about the legislative situation. We realise that. However, there is a feeling that the Labour Government in the Assembly is failing to ensure that the wishes of the majority of Assembly Members are expressed clearly.

Secondly, as Christine has noted, our strategy for agriculture and the development of the rural economy depends on creating an image of Wales that is free from any artificial additives, is natural, organic, eco-friendly and sustainable. This incident undermines that. As the spokesperson of the main opposition party, I warn the Government that it will be difficult for us to support this strategy further if that clear, unambiguous statement is not made, and if the Labour administration is not willing to say categorically that it will urge the company, and the farmer in this case, not to have these trials on Welsh land.

Will Christine give us that commitment this afternoon?

Christine Gwyther: Would you like me to respond to each individual, Llywydd?

The Presiding Officer: You may do whatever is easiest for you. I have received indications from Nick Bourne and Mike German that they wish to speak. You may respond to all speakers at once, if you prefer.

Christine Gwyther: I will respond briefly. I make it clear that the Assembly administration will not persecute farmers in Wales or companies, whether their headquarters are in England or Wales. It is not my intention to put pressure on the farmer. If DETR is not successful in getting Aventis to withdraw from proceeding with the trial in Wales and to move it to England, I will call on the company to take part in full, public discussions. Before it plants one seed, there will be a full public consultation. It is not for this Assembly to persecute farmers, as you said, Rhodri.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Ni allaf ganiatáu hyn. Nid wyf wedi--

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I cannot permit this. I have not--

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I have not mentioned persecuting farmers in any way. It is a gross--

The Presiding Officer: Order. If you wish to raise a point of order, you may do so at the end of the statement.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Iawn. Diolch yn fawr.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Fine. Thank you.

Nick Bourne: First, I make it clear that we do not want farmers persecuted. However, what concerns me about your statement today Secretary, is that you did not know about these GM trials until today, when you contacted Michael Meacher. I can understand that you feel that this deserves a wider audience, because you yourself did not know about this until today. That is clear and it causes us great concern.

To accepting the legal position for the moment--although I am not sure that it is as Christine stated it--there is a clear mandate for a GM-free Wales from the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and the Assembly. That goes back to a motion for a GM-free Wales adopted nearly a year ago and which I proposed. You are on record as wanting a GM-free Wales. On the one hand, you are GM-free Chris. On the other, when something goes wrong, you say 'it is not me, gov'.

Where is the political will? What are you doing in Europe to ensure a GM-free Wales? Have you been to Europe to present our case? What are you doing in Westminster? Other than your telephone conversation with Michael Meacher this morning, which is a classic case of stable door syndrome, what have you done in Westminster to ensure a GM-free Wales? That is what is causing concern, not so much the legal position as what you are seeking to do to present the Welsh view and show that we want changes, if that is the legal position. There is a clear mandate from the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and from the Assembly. It seems like the administration wants to cherry pick again. It wants to ignore this issue and blame the Labour Government in Westminster. That will not do. You must show political will. Where is the evidence that you will change things to reflect this body's will?

Christine Gwyther: I want to be clear about this site's history. About a fortnight ago, the grid reference of the field under discussion first appeared on the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions website. The farm's address is in England. My officials contacted the DETR immediately. It said that it would contact Aventis to try to persuade them to remove their indication of preference for the field in Wales for one in England. That work continued throughout the last fortnight. The position was the same yesterday afternoon. Yesterday evening, the DETR's press office was contacted in the normal course of events and it changed the position. It said that it was a done and dusted deal and that Aventis would plant in Wales. That happened at 10 p.m. last night.

Nick Bourne: I only heard early this morning myself.

Christine Gwyther: That is when you heard it.

Nick Bourne: Slightly afterwards.

Christine Gwyther: There we are then.

The Presiding Officer: Order. This is not a conversation or a debate; this is a statement.

Michael German: That frightens me considerably because, on 11 April, I tabled a no-named-day motion, which reflected the fact that Aventis would plant in Wales. That matter has been on the table in the Assembly for that period. It is unhelpful when the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development does not know what is happening. The relevant European Union Directive--and you cannot hide behind the European Union on this--has two elements. You are correct that part C consent is commercial consent and that part B consent is experimental consent. The DETR and the Assembly must be notified on the part B level. However, we cannot hide behind Europe because Austria has already banned T25. When there is a will in Wales not to have a GM environment, why must we follow the lead set by other countries in the European Union that find it acceptable, possible and legal? I understand that other countries will follow this route. The Government in Wales, as in London, has lost control of this situation. It has been led by the nose by the company on this matter.

I have two questions. First, will you investigate, as a matter of priority, whether the seeds are being marketed to the farmer by Aventis in breach of EC Directive 70/457, which prohibits marketing these seeds unless they are on the UK National List? Will you also insist on receiving copies of all relevant agreements between Aventis, the farmer and all intermediaries? Secondly, will you support the Assembly in making representations to the UK Government, under Section 33 of the Government of Wales Act 1998, to impose a ban in Wales on the release of T25 maize under Article 16 of EC Directive 90/220?

Christine Gwyther: I am sure that Mike will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that part C allows release into the whole of the European Union. It does not matter whether or not the seed is listed. Part B is another matter. Maybe we need to discuss this in the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. If your party and the Government of Wales have different legal perspectives, we should explore them proactively.

I have been aware of this site for a couple of weeks. Web watchers will have noticed that its details were removed from the DETR website because it was negotiating with the company. To be fair to the DETR, it probably did as much as it could. The original error, which was that we were not told of the likelihood of a site in Wales, rests with the DETR. I am not simply blaming the UK Government or Europe or anybody else. That is where the original error occurred.

3:00 p.m.

Jocelyn Davies: Can you not see the hypocrisy in agreeing to licence this field and then hoping that only English farmers would have to tolerate it? You decided to licence this particular seed. Now you are telling us that you are trying to persuade the company to grow that seed in England alone. It is not fair on our neighbours. Did you not realise that some farmer in the UK would have to live with your decision?

Christine Gwyther: As you know, the listing of the seed has no bearing on the farm-scale evaluations. I need to reiterate that. It is a proposed listing, which is what I agreed to. We will receive the results of the consultation on T25. As far as that is concerned, the issue is not dead. However, as far as the national seed lifting and the farm-scale evaluations are concerned, there is no correlation whatsoever. The media and general public might have got that idea. We need to disabuse people of that.

Peter Rogers: We have dealt with this in detail. Quite rightly, Christine, you said that this matter surfaced about two or three weeks ago. I thought that it had been sorted out at that stage and that the site would be changed. I thought that it would be kept in England, where they had gone through the consultation paper and had accepted that they were going to carry on with these trials. We have reached the point where the soil is right and the drills are ready to drill the crop. It is too late to start negotiating now. We as an Assembly must hold up our hands and stand against this. They must move it back into England because there is no time to consult the people of Sealand. It is time for Westminster to understand that we have teeth in the Assembly and that we are going to look after Wales.

Christine Gwyther: The consultation has been arranged for the English trial sites. It has not actually happened yet. However, you are right to point out that this is the ideal time for growing. Had the intention of a site in Wales become apparent and had there been meaningful consultation, we should have known a long time ago. I can only regret that that is the case. I am being honest when I tell you that, from a political perspective, I have been pressing Michael Meacher to get his officials back on the case and back on to Aventis.

Mick Bates: I raise two issues. First, the *Daily Post* on 29 April had information about this site and the surrounding confusion, so the information was readily available to you and all of us. I want you to answer this question. We hear all about the concordats and the flow of information between the ministries in Westminster and the departments here. I believe that there is a concordat between us and the DETR. Does this not constitute a breach of the protocol within that concordat?

Christine Gwyther: The concordat between the various ministries and the Assembly includes, and I paraphrase, the intention that there should be no surprises. That is a fair summary of it. There should be no surprises either way. That helps departments to operate more efficiently and effectively.

The media had picked this up but, as far as we in the Assembly are concerned, until 10 p.m. last night, the DETR was pulling out all the stops to ensure that this field site was moved into England. Although the DETR had in a way let us down by not informing us of the potential of a site in Wales, I think that they are trying to retrieve the situation. It has been my job today to put political pressure on Michael Meacher to do that. I suggest that, when we know the outcome of these further discussions with Aventis, I bring it back either by the will of the Assembly to Plenary or to the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee.

**Datganiad ar Adolygu Cyrff Gweithredol Cyhoeddus a Noddir gan y Cynulliad
Statement on the Review of Executive Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies**

The Finance Secretary (Edwina Hart): This is a statement on the Assembly's review of our executive sponsored public bodies, or quangos as I call them. This morning, it gave me great pleasure to formally launch 'Betterwales.com' as the Assembly's three-year strategic plan. In it, we have made a commitment to a significant acceleration of the programme for reviewing the executive Assembly sponsored public bodies, or the quangos. The original timetable would have meant not completing the review cycle until 2005. We believe that this would have been too slow, given the importance rightly attached by the Assembly to the work of these bodies. Under the programme that I am announcing today, a full review will be completed by 2003. It will form a critical element in our drive for better, simpler government. Before giving the details, I will set out the background to our thinking.

Since 1997, there has been a more radical redrawing of the map of public bodies in Wales than is commonly recognised. The merger of the Land Authority for Wales and the Development Board for Rural Wales with the Welsh Development Agency in 1998 has produced a new, streamlined approach to economic development in Wales. Tai Cymru has been wound up and its functions brought into the Assembly. The Welsh Health Common Services Authority and the Health Promotion Authority for Wales have similarly been wound up. The number of NHS trusts in Wales has been reduced from 26 in 1997 to 15 in the current year. The arrangements for post-16 education and training are undergoing a complete overhaul by the Assembly under the education and training action plan. This includes the wind-up of the four training and enterprise councils in Wales and the Further Education Funding Council for Wales and the establishment of the new National Council for Education and Training for Wales. Bodies such as Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and the Residuary Body for Wales have come to the end of their natural lives.

All in all, more than 20 major bodies will have been wound up by the end of next year and their functions ended or reallocated. Our policy is that, subject to the legal frameworks concerned, quangos should only be retained where they are the most appropriate and cost-effective means of carrying out the functions concerned. We have an open mind as to what the right arrangements should be in each case. Organisational options should be assessed on their merits, not according to dogma. Where these point to a sponsored body or an agency as the right solution, the requirement must be to ensure that these bodies are properly accountable to the Assembly and the public. Public accountability is the key area. We must also ensure that the bodies make good use of the funds that they receive, are conducting their business in line with the Assembly's values and principles as set out in 'Betterwales.com' and are contributing, as appropriate, to the Assembly's vision of Wales. The Assembly must feel confident that it has effective relationships in place which recognise the particular circumstances of each body and which strengthen the team Wales approach, underpinning the Assembly's strategy.

My concern today is with the cohort of 14 executive Assembly sponsored public bodies. Jane Hutt has introduced separate new performance management monitoring arrangements for NHS bodies, in close consultation with the Health and Social Services Committee. Executive agencies such as Cadw are also subject to a review process. There was a well-established process under the Welsh Office for reviewing individual sponsored bodies. This was known as the financial management performance review. Under guidelines for future quinquennial reviews, which I am issuing later today, we are taking the best elements of that process and updating it to reflect the establishment of the Assembly, the interests of Assembly Secretaries and Committees and the need for a more strategic approach.

In addition to whether there is still a need for the functions of the body, the emphasis in quinquennial reviews will be on accountability, strategic effectiveness and securing continuous improvement. They will look at the performance and the quality of the body's work as well as its management of resources and its success in improving efficiency. The relevant Assembly Subject Committee will be consulted on the terms of reference for each review before the review is commissioned by Assembly Secretaries and will be invited to comment on the reviewer's draft report before the final version is submitted to the Cabinet. It will be up to the Committee to decide whether to call for further evidence at that point before coming to a view. It is essential that Committees are able to engage fully in the process. A successful review requires a partnership approach.

3:10 p.m.

The Cabinet's conclusions and the resulting action plan will be reported to the Assembly. The review and its report will be in the public domain. A feature of quinquennial reviews will be the opportunity for the body's partners, customers, staff and other stakeholders to have input as well as senior managers and board members. We want a rigorous process, but we also want the bodies to have ownership of the review and to be involved at each step. Reviews will be conducted independently. This will either mean appointing an external reviewer or commissioning an Assembly official from outside the sponsoring Assembly division. Our expectation is that external reviewers will carry out most reviews in the forthcoming programme.

The programme for the next three years is as follows. In 2000-2001 there will be reviews of the Welsh Development Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Welsh Language Board and the Arts Council for Wales. The review of the Arts Council for Wales will take place after the special management study currently being undertaken and also in light of the Post-16 Education and Training Committee's arts and cultural review. Also in 2000-01 there will be a review of the Environment Agency Wales, commissioned jointly by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Assembly. In 2001-02 there will be reviews of the Wales Tourist Board, the National Library of Wales, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales. Reviews of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, the Sports Council for Wales, the Qualification, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales will follow by the end of 2003.

Recent financial management and performance review reports on the last two bodies, commissioned pre-Assembly, are to be published shortly. The next review of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, last reviewed in 1999, will be carried out jointly with the first review of the shortly to be established National Council for Education and Training for Wales. This reflects their proposed joint management arrangements. Because the Council will be a new body, it would not be appropriate to undertake a review within the 2003 timescale and the provisional timing is for 2004-05. The Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting is also not included in the review programme because of imminent plans for a new body.

I hope that Members will agree that the intensive review programme will help the Assembly place its relationships with its sponsored bodies on a new and firm footing. They will ensure that we have in place arrangements to make a stronger contribution to our drive for a better, simpler government in Wales.

Janet Davies: I welcome this timely statement brought before the Assembly. We should not have a reflex action to get rid of all Assembly sponsored public bodies for the sake of doing it, although there was a political party that did have it in their programme before the 1997 election, but wiser thoughts sometimes prevail. There are two issues regarding these ASPBs. First, is the question of the best way of administering the executive functions and responsibilities effectively, accountably and efficiently. Second, there is the issue of democracy and how democracy is exercised over them. They both go together to an extent, because without democracy you will not in the long run get the effectiveness either. It is high time for a debate on this. I am pleased to secure your comment that you will not be doing this according to dogma but you will be looking for the right solution. That is the best way to go about it.

I remain concerned about the timetable of 2003. I hope it will be a shorter timetable if possible. It is important that it is done by external reviewers rather than from within the Assembly. You said that 20 would be wound up by the end of 2001. In some cases they have gone to an elected body. For example, Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and Tai Cymru coming within the Assembly remit. However, I have been concerned for some time that although the number of ASPBs is reduced, their functions and areas of responsibility stay exactly the same. They are simply merged into one larger body.

In this case, if an NHS trust is reduced from 26 to 15, local democracy is somewhat reduced because they are further from the people. There is certainly no increase in democracy. I note also that there will be a new Assembly sponsored public body, the National Council for Education and Training. On the issue of keeping the functions while reducing the number of bodies, I would like you to give an undertaking that in debates and reviews there will not be any fudging such as claiming a reduction in the number of ASPBs when in fact the functions and the areas of responsibility remain exactly the same. The change in staff is good as there is a reduction in the number of chiefs. However, it is not a fundamental reduction in administration.

Edwina Hart: The sound of ASPBs suggests that snakes and quangos go nicely together. At the end of the day, some of Janet's points are spot on. One point was about the way that we look at their executive functions and democracy. It is all about how we get democratic control within these organisations. The Assembly is a new body that needs to stamp its authority on these bodies because we are the elected representatives. At the same time, we should consider Janet's point about how to deal with democratic deficits on a local level when some organisations disappear but become larger bodies. Those issues will come to the fore when we undertake the review and hold discussions within Committees. I will look into the issue of functions as we go through the review process. The timetable for 2003 is ideal as it is achievable. I will bear in mind the comments regarding speeding up these processes to get the reviews done earlier. I thank Janet for her comments. I hope Assembly Members feel that they have a contributing role in this through the Committee. This is our review and process. This is the real democratisation of Wales. We were elected to the Assembly to deal with the democratic deficit.

Glyn Davies: We welcome the review. As you know, we were not in favour of 'A Better Wales'. [*Laughter.*] That was an inadvertent joke.

We were not in favour of the strategic plan document but we are in favour of the programme that you are adopting in dealing with ASPBs. I welcome the adult relationship that the Labour administration now seems to have with public bodies. The First Secretary referred to my previous experience in the quango movement. I have greater experience in local government. I spent some 10 years in the quango movement. By now I have experience in the Assembly therefore I know all the ways in which we govern Wales reasonably well. I have always thought that there was a real place for ASPBs. The Labour Government recognises this.

We saw the most appalling rhetoric for a number of years, which damaged the credibility of the role of ASPBs. The Government in the Assembly has made some decisions of which I do not think even Government members approve. An example is the way health trusts have been organised. Some of those mergers may well turn out to have been wrong. I deplore the abolition of the Development Board for Rural Wales and the abolition of TECs. Much of this is driven by the misplaced rhetoric that we saw during the period before the last general election. We need to identify the role that public bodies can play. We need to harness expertise from outside this Chamber to help us. No quango has a God-given right to continue. Let us be clear and not call them taskforces. Let us call them ASPBs, which is what they are. Let us identify when we want a public body to do a job for us. Let us do this within the democratic process because quangos have always been within the democratic process. They have always been appointed by the democratic process to do a specific job, harnessing the expertise that does not exist within Government. Once that is in place, the quango or whatever it is called should be abolished. They have a purpose to serve for us within the democratic movement. In those terms, I welcome the course that you are taking as the proper way forward. It is a pity that it has not always been like that.

3:20 p.m.

Edwina Hart: I only take responsibility for Assembly sponsored public bodies since last May. It is a bit rich for Glyn to talk about rhetoric when we have seen the rhetoric that his party indulged in during the last few weeks with the local government elections in England. You referred to the comments that were made on the bonfire of the quangos. I have never favoured bonfires. I take a different view on Guy Fawkes to many in this Chamber.

I welcome the general slant of your comments for a constructor review. There is a role for ASPBs. The key is the democratic accountability of these bodies. We need to know what they are doing, what their outputs are--we will decide what those outputs are. The purpose of this review is to get things in order, to see what the way forward is and to know what bodies require and need. As the Assembly grows it might look at other bodies when it comes to another review. By 2006-7, issues concerning ASPBs will have changed. We might require a different response.

Peter Black: I also welcome this review. It is important that we finally tackle the remaining quangos. This process was ongoing in a less robust form before the Assembly came to being. We need to ensure--as was clear in the Finance Secretary's statement--that the review is root and branch. It must ask fundamental questions about whether the quangos need to exist. Questions such as: if they need to exist, do they need to exist in their present form and how can they be reformed to meet the Assembly's agenda. I follow Janet Davies's point about local accountability. I regret that we are not including the health trusts and authorities in this review. I noticed that there was a reference to the better management of those bodies but there is also a local democratic deficit. We should look at how we can improve that democratic deficit in relation to those bodies. We need to ensure that where the quangos remain as a result of this review there is improved accountability to the Assembly in particular, and we need to ensure that they are following our agenda. It is important that we do not have a similar situation to the Arts Council of Wales. The council was significantly out of step with political opinion in Wales in the way that they proceeded. The Assembly secretary responsible told us at the time that he was helpless to do anything about it.

I agree that we need to speed up this review. 2003 is a welcome cut off point. We will have finished this review by then which is, conveniently, just in time for the Assembly elections. If we can finish it earlier, we should. It is an urgent matter that we need to tackle.

Edwina Hart: In view of the concerns raised about the timetabling, Plaid Cymru and the Liberal Democrats believe that 2003 is adequate. I will give further consideration to the date if independent reviewers are available. It will be a workload for all of us. The key point of Peter's contribution was for ASPBs to follow our agenda. That is why a significant link was made between ourselves and ASPBs to look at their work, their strategic plans and action plans. They must follow to deliver our agenda. That is a key area. I hope as we go through the reviews that we can get a clear insight into what ASPBs are doing, where they are going and what we require from them. It is an agenda for Wales and it is about local accountability. I note Peter's comments about the health service and I will discuss that further with Jane Hutt. If possible, I will report back to the Assembly.

Cynog Dafis: Croesawaf y ffaith fod Edwina Hart yn cynnal yr arolwg hwn. Mae'r arolwg yn gwireddu un o ymrwymadau'r ddogfen, 'Gwellcymru.com'. Os cofiaf yn iawn, ceir cymal yn y ddogfen sydd yn sôn am y cyrff cyhoeddus a noddir gan y Cynulliad sydd hefyd yn cyfeirio at fecanweithiau cyflenwi mewn ystyr ychydig ehangach. Gobeithio bod hynny yn cynnwys y gallu i ystyried cyrff cenedlaethol eraill yn ogystal â rhai sydd yn dechnegol yn gwangos.

Gan fod gennym gyfrifoldebau a phwerau pwysig ym myd addysg, mae'n bwysig ein bod yn edrych ar sefydliadau cenedlaethol sydd yn delio ag addysg cyn bo hir. Mewn perthynas â hynny, dylid ystyried dau gorff. Un, sydd yn gysylltiedig ag Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru, yw Cyd-bwyllgor Addysg Cymru. Mae'r cyd-bwyllgor yn eiddo i lywodraeth leol, nid y Cynulliad. Serch hynny, mae'n gorff sydd yn darparu gwasanaeth addysg o bwysigrwydd cenedlaethol. Gobeithio y bydd modd inni edrych ar y berthynas rhwng ACCAC â CBAC ac ystyried i ba raddau y byddai'n synhwyrol cyfuno eu swyddogaethau i gael system gost-ffeithiol a democrataidd atebol yng Nghymru.

Cynog Dafis: I welcome the fact that Edwina Hart is undertaking this review. The review realises one of the commitments contained in the 'Betterwales.com' document. If I remember rightly, there is a clause in that document which mentions the ASPBs that also refers to delivering mechanisms in a broader sense. I hope that that includes the ability to consider other national bodies in addition to those that are technically quangos.

As we have important responsibilities and powers in the field of education, it is important that we look at national organisations that deal with education soon. In relation to that, there are two bodies that should be considered. One, which is related to ACCAC, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, is the Welsh Joint Education Committee. The committee belongs to local government, not the Assembly. Even so, it is a body that provides an education service of national importance. I hope that we will be able to look at the relationship between ACCAC and the WJEC and consider to what extent it would be sensible to combine their functions in order to have a cost-effective and democratically accountable system in Wales.

Y corff arall sydd yn cwmpo y tu allan i'r categori arferol yw'r arolygiaeth ysgolion, Estyn. Cyhyd ag y gallwn weld, nid yw'r corff hwnnw yn atebol i'r Cynulliad mewn ffordd ddigonol. Mynegwyd pryderon ynglyn ag Estyn ac mae'n bwysig ein bod yn edrych yn drylwyr ar y modd y mae'r corff hwnnw yn gweithredu. Dylid hefyd ystyried i ba raddau y mae'n ymateb i flaenoriaethau Cymru mewn perthynas ag arolygu ysgolion ac i ba raddau y mae'n dilyn agenda Mr Woodhead yn Llundain.

The other body that falls outwith the usual category is the schools inspectorate, Estyn. As far as we can see, that body is not adequately accountable to the Assembly. Concerns have been expressed about Estyn and it is important that we look thoroughly at how that body operates. We should also consider to what extent it responds to Welsh priorities in relation to the inspection of schools and to what extent it follows Mr Woodhead's agenda in London.

Edwina Hart: Yes, Cynog is quite right. I have concentrated solely today on the quangos that I have outlined. There are areas for discussion about the wider role of organisations in Wales. As the Assembly develops, what type of organisations will we require to deliver our policies? As regards the organisations to which you refer, I will hold discussions with Rosemary Butler about the future development of any work within those areas. Even though I see my primary responsibility as the review of executive Assembly sponsored public bodies, I acknowledge Cynog's comments about the development of all bodies in Wales and that their role will develop to ensure that they deliver Welsh policies made in Wales for Wales.

Pwyntiau o Drefn Points of Order

Lorraine Barrett: My point of order comes under Standing Order No. 7.8. It also comes under point 17 (iv) of the Protocol on Conduct in the Chamber, which relates to discourteous behaviour. It is a small point, but yesterday Rod Richards did it and today we saw Nick Bourne do the same. Where Rod goes, will Nick follow, I wonder? They walked to the front of the Chamber to discuss something with your Private Secretary, Mr Maguire, and handed him some papers. Nick Bourne is shaking his head. I am sorry if it was not you. Rod Richards definitely did it and someone else did it today. It looked bad to walk behind the First Secretary yesterday and the Finance Secretary today. Were we all to start to do this it would look like the stock market. We have e-mail facilities here to contact each other. Will you, therefore, give your consideration to this behaviour?

The Presiding Officer: I am grateful to you for trying to improve our staging of performance in the Chamber. You are right to say that we have the e-mail system and many Members make use of it. Another practice that I find difficult is that of Members who crowd around me at 2.00 p.m. when I am trying to start the proceedings. Occasionally, therefore, we have a little slippage on the opening of proceedings. I ask you therefore to use the e-mail facility to give Mark Maguire, my Private Secretary, and myself advance warning in sufficient time of an interest to speak in a debate. I also try to accept speakers as the mood takes the Assembly, as and when Members indicate that they wish to intervene to speak on a particular subject. However, it is always helpful if we have information about the conduct of debates in advance.

Carwyn Jones: My point of order comes under Standing Order No. 6.32, which relates to the answering of oral questions by Assembly Secretaries. It has been the practice since the Assembly was established that a question to be tabled is put in writing and sent to the Table Office. That question then appears on the agenda and read out to the appropriate Assembly Secretary. Today, Alun Cairns asked question 3 about Rover to the First Secretary. Due to the fact that circumstances had overtaken the question, the proper course of action would have been to withdraw that question. However, another question was piggy-backed on top, which meant that an extra supplementary question was asked when the Member was only allowed one supplementary question. The ruling I seek from you is this: is it correct that a Member should be allowed to ask what is, in effect, another supplementary question when an oral question is being asked? If that is to be condoned, does not that open the floodgates for people to ask questions that are supplementary questions on top of the oral questions, thereby allowing them to ask more questions than they are entitled to ask? There are many questions in my point of order but I think it is important.

3:30 p.m.

The Presiding Officer: I am grateful for all the questions and I agree with them because it is inappropriate for Members to try to use the facility for reading the oral question as it is on the agenda and then add to it or put a gloss on it. That is out of order. Only the question on the agenda should be read so that Members understand what they are asking but, mainly, so that the public understand. I do not approve of the Westminster tradition of reading out numbers, because that is meaningless. We have agreed to read out questions and only questions. If Members persist in trying to put a gloss on their questions as they ask them, namely anticipating their supplementary question, we will have to review the procedure. I am grateful to you for drawing my attention to that.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Point of order. I clarify a situation that arose during Christine Gwyther's response to the point that I made about her statement. I assure you that neither my response nor the translation of my response referred to persecuting anybody and certainly not the farmer. I asked for the farmer to be informed of the Assembly's view. It seems to me that the Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development intentionally and grossly misrepresented what I said to avoid my challenge to the administration. My point of order refers to whether the administration should be allowed to avoid these challenges by diverting attention and by intentionally referring to something that was not said. The administration wants to tell us continuously what it cannot do rather than concentrate on what it can do and--if it dares--on trying to tell us what it will do.

The Presiding Officer: This is not a matter for me. Today we saw an example of what is sometimes described as robust political debate and I do not believe that there was an attempt on behalf of the Secretary to misrepresent what any other Member said. I will check the Record. It is important that, in response to questions and statements, we have clear and succinct answers as well as clear and direct questions. We have only been back for two days and we are reviving all the bad habits that we had before Easter in terms of the length of questions and answers. I hope that we can bring some self-discipline to bear on our proceedings.

Datganiad Busnes Business Statement

The Business Secretary (Andrew Davies): I inform Members that following the special meeting of the Business Committee this morning, the Deputy Presiding Officer, on the recommendation of the four party Business Managers, has determined that the following Assembly Orders need not be referred to a Subject Committee for consideration: the Housing Renewal Grants (Prescribed Forms and Particulars) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2000; the Relocation Grants (Forms of Application) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2000; the Education (Outturns Statements) (Wales) Regulations 2000; the National Health Service (General Medical Services) Amendment (Wales) Regulations 2000 and the National Health Service (Choice of Medical Practitioner) Amendment (Wales) Regulations 2000.

Acting on the advice of the Secretary for Health and Social Services, Jane Hutt, the Business Committee also recommended to the Deputy Presiding Officer that the Children (Protection from Offenders) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2000 should be referred to the Health and Social Services Committee for consideration. The Deputy Presiding Officer has directed the Committee to report back to the Assembly in five weeks.

Pwyllgor Penderfyniadau Cynllunio 2000-01 Planning Decision Committee 2000-01

The Business Secretary (Andrew Davies): I propose that

the Assembly resolves

1. That a committee, to be known as Planning Decision Committee 2000-01 be established, in accordance with Standing Order No. 27, to discharge the functions of the Assembly under Section 77(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in respect of the matter identified in the Schedule to this motion and that the Assembly's functions in that respect be delegated to that Committee;

2. That the members of that Committee be: Sue Essex (Chair), John Griffiths, Geraint Davies, David Davies;

3. That the Committee shall cease to exist when the Chair of the Committee signs the decision letter in accordance with Standing Order No. 27.16 or on 9 August 2000 whichever is the earlier;

4. That if the Committee shall cease to exist without the Chair having signed a decision letter in respect of the matter identified in the Schedule to this motion, then in that event the functions identified in paragraph 1 above are, in relation to such matter, delegated to the First Secretary.

Schedule

An application by Mr and Mrs S. George for permission to carry out certain development at Portfield Gate, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, namely rehabilitation of the Enfield Homestead, including conversion of redundant corn barn for use as a single detached dwelling.

Cynnig: O blaid 41, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.

Motion: For 41, Abstain 0, Against 0.

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Bourne, Nick
Butler, Rosemary
Cairns, Alun
Chapman, Christine
Davies, Andrew
Davies, David
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Ron
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jarman, Pauline
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Lloyd, David
Melding, David
Neagle, Lynne
Randerson, Jenny
Rogers, Peter
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Phil

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion adopted.

Newid yn yr Hinsawdd Climate Change

The Presiding Officer: I have selected amendments 1, 2 and 4 in the name of Jocelyn Davies, amendment 3 in the name of David Davies, amendments 5, 6 and 7 in the name of Christine Humphreys and amendment 8 in the name of Alun Cairns.

The Secretary for the Environment, Planning and Transport (Sue Essex): I propose that

the Assembly agrees to work in partnership with the UK Government, the Scottish Executive and the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) to deliver the Kyoto target of a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 12.5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-2012 and a domestic UK goal of a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions below 1990 levels by 2010 and that it notes the draft climate change programme as described in 'Climate Change Wales' issued to Members on 4 April 2000.

On the Assembly's anniversary, it is appropriate that we discuss a subject that is not only important to us but that puts Wales in its international setting because we are dealing with international and global issues in which we must play a significant part. I am reminded of a quote from John Donne's poem, because it is particularly relevant to the environment, 'no man is an island'. Rhodri Morgan said that in Welsh it was, '*nid ynys yw unrhyw ddyn*'. We can forgive John Donne, who was around hundreds of years ago, for using the gender-specific language that we try to avoid in the Assembly. That poem's principle is so important in getting the message of today's debate across, namely, the global impact of human actions.

We have always experienced climate change but, in the past, that was in terms of epochs. Anyone who studied Geography GCSE or A Level could recount what happened during the Ice Age and the scale on which that affected Wales and elsewhere. However, today we are debating something that is significantly different--climate change in a way that we have never seen before. It is already having a traceable and definable impact on our land and on the physical nature of that land. In historical terms, these significant changes are occurring in a short glimpse of time. We are all aware of the nature of those changes in terms of the weather. They have increased temperatures, resulting in changes in climate with dramatic extremes. We have reached the stage when we have to anticipate increased risks of floods, changes in winter and so on. All these things contribute to a type of instability that previous generations did not face. After many years of debate, scientists have finally linked these changes to increased greenhouse gas emissions.

If we consider this coming century, over a period of time we can begin to predict how those changes and the volume of emissions of greenhouse gases will impact on the landscape. I am not a scientist and there are Members here who are much more able than I to discuss the scientific facts and impact of these changes. However, in simple terms, greenhouse gases that, in the past, would have gone up beyond the atmosphere are collecting and staying within the environment of the atmosphere. The lives of these gases, such as carbon dioxide, nitric oxide and methane, are lengthy. Therefore, we are inheriting the result of past greenhouse gas emissions. The important factor is that what we decide today will live for future generations. It is a significant debate.

3:40 p.m.

Advances in scientific knowledge over recent years enable us to have this debate with a degree of certainty of what we can predict. Although we have debates about living standards, compared to the rest of the world, countries like ours have high living standards overall. We are mostly to blame, even if unwittingly, for the rise in greenhouse gases. Countries industrialised early such as the UK, Europe, north America and Japan, through their wealth, have created the unfortunate effects of pumping vast amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. At the time, the impact of that was not understood, but it is now.

The global dimension is important not only in terms of meteorological changes but also to understand the global wealth inequalities. We in western Europe have a relatively high standard of living while elsewhere there are countries that are still developing. The message is that we have little safety margin to lose. We bear the economic responsibilities of Wales and that is why this is a complicated situation. The disturbing factor that everyone must grasp is that whatever we decide to do today we are not in a position to reverse this trend. The trend is there. Our actions can modify and ameliorate the rate of change and try to minimise the worst aspects of that change. Reversing that trend is unlikely within our lifetime. Past actions make this trend irreversible in the foreseeable future. However, before we get too pessimistic, we can take actions that will minimise the effects.

We are not alone in this. It is a global issue. The impact of climate change is a worldwide concern and the international community has already reacted to this. Looking at the Kyoto Protocol, the formal agreement that was reached in Japan in 1997, developing countries agreed to reduce emissions of a basket of the six greenhouse gases by 5.2 per cent in total. In the EU, that figure goes up to 8 per cent. It was agreed subsequently in the UK that our share should be 12.5 per cent. It is a credit to our Government that it has taken a strong position on this and is trying to take a lead. The percentage of the reduction in emissions to which we have signed up is perhaps necessary. We must take that into account.

We have talked about international commitments, but what does that mean for Wales and how have we approached the issue of examining what policies we need to introduce. Many important debates have been conducted over the last year. In January 1999, the Welsh Office organised a workshop that examined climate change scenarios and their possible impact. Following this workshop the National Assembly for Wales commissioned a study which examined the impact of climate change in Wales in 2080. The study was launched by Peter Law, my predecessor in this post, at a conference in February at which I and some of you were present. The study identifies important themes for climate impacts on the natural and built environment, on agriculture, water management and effects on the people of Wales. The Welsh climate is varied and we must learn more about how people and the environment adapt to these changes.

There may be positive effects from climate change. In the past we have joked about palm trees in Porthcawl and Costa del Cardiff. There may be positive effects such as the extension of the growing season. However, we are also aware, despite the early jokes, that there are more serious impacts. There are more serious changes that we must consider and try to get to grips with. These are real problems in Wales, such as coastal erosion, flooding, storm damage, increased prevalence of pests and diseases. A country like Wales must also consider water resources.

The context for our policy development comes from this document. At least one of you has read it because he mentioned binding problems. If you have read it, well done. It is a comprehensive and scientific document but, if you can persevere, it makes interesting reading. It sets out the draft UK programme for climate change. There is a section in the back for the devolved administrations. There is a section for Wales. The document sets a new strategic focus for action against climate change in the UK. It builds on positive action by business, local government and others. Wales must play a part in reducing emissions. Some of Wales's core industries are significant emitters of greenhouse gas. Wales is thought to be responsible for around 6 per cent of UK greenhouse gas emissions, according to the 1995 figure. I am keen, as I am sure we all are, to reduce these emissions in Wales so that we can play our part in the UK's Kyoto protocol target.

Shortly after the publication of the UK document to which I referred, we produced another document, which focuses on Wales and what we can do. It notes steps and suggests how we should plan centrally to ensure a reduction in emissions. In addition to the greenhouse gases noted in the Kyoto Protocol, the UK has set itself a separate goal. That is, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to 20 per cent below the 1990 levels by 2010. That goal is significantly beyond that agreed in Kyoto. We must all work together to achieve it.

We must encourage environmentally friendly generation of energy. That is dear to the hearts of people in this Chamber. We must be aware that our everyday choices about travelling, using electrical appliances, heating our homes and waste disposal have an effect on climate. We can make a difference. We are not alone in working on this. Other European countries are signing up to these agreements. However, as Rhodri said yesterday, Wales is special because we are alone among European governments in terms of our sustainable development requirement and duty. Although this presents a challenge for core industries, many people will focus on what we can do and how we can meet our sustainable development responsibilities.

The Government of Wales Act 1998 provides a reserve power to ensure that the Assembly delivers a share of climate change commitments. However, I am pleased that neither we nor the UK Government envisage this power having to be used. Wales wants to make an equitable contribution to the Kyoto target, as well as playing a full part in delivering the domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions. However, we realise Wales's difficulties in terms of our historic development and dependence on heavy industries. Those industries have been large energy consumers. As a result of the devolution settlement, responsibility for much of the environmental policy rests with the Assembly. The UK draft climate change programme spans reserved and devolved policy areas. There is also action at the EU level that will deliver carbon dioxide savings.

On the basis of information available, it is not possible to draw a line at the border and attempt to define precisely how successful UK policies have been in delivering emission savings in Wales, nor the precise contribution of policies in the devolved field in the future. There is a need for partnership between us and the UK Government so that it can understand our historical and economic background and tell us how to make the changes, which are difficult for some.

3:50 p.m.

We have a raft of policies to try to help deliver those targets. There are strong incentives in terms of working with business. There is a range of measures, but I will mention specifically the Assembly's business and environmental campaign; the WDA's energy safe programme which gives finance to businesses for energy saving schemes; our development of renewable sources and pursuing the draft energy strategy, which will be important for Wales because it is an area in which we have huge scope to make a difference; the home energy efficiency programme for domestic users, and something that is dear to my heart, measures relating to integrated transport and how we can target road pollution through better development of public and integrated transport.

I want to comment on the climate change levy because I am sure it will be mentioned in discussions today. It is one of the key planks of Government policy which will be introduced for non-domestic energy use in April 2001. The levy is about dealing with increased costs for certain types of electricity, and in return the levy is expected to reduce carbon emissions by around five million tonnes by 2010. We must ensure that policies used to reduce emissions do not have an excessive cost to the economy and industry. I am pleased that all the revenue raised by the levy will be recycled to business via reductions in employers' national insurance contributions and in providing capital sums to assist with energy efficiency.

There has been widespread concern in Welsh industry about the potential impact of the levy, particularly on heavy energy users on which we in Wales are dependent. After vigorous lobbying from the Assembly and other quarters, the Chancellor has responded and introduced several amendments to the design of the levy. These include exempting from the levy electricity generated from new forms of renewable energy, such as solar and wind power and good quality combined heat and power plants; trebling the support for energy efficiency measures arising from the levy packages; safeguarding competitiveness by lowering the overall size of the levy and agreeing an 80 per cent discount for energy intensive sectors that enter into agreements to reduce carbon emissions.

Therefore, there has been some recognition of the difficulties we face in terms of historical dependence on heavy energy users and recognition that there are new forms of energy sources that need to be free from that levy. We are in a good position to be able to develop and pursue that.

I turn to the amendments. I hope the fact that we have eight amendments is a sign of people's interest in this issue. I thank Jocelyn Davies for her amendments 1, 2 and 5, which tidy up the wording, although 'Countryside Council' in amendment 5 should be 'Countryside Council for Wales'. We are happy to accept Christine Humphreys's amendments 5, 6 and 7. However, I want to comment on amendment 6 which mentions the waste strategy and the term 'presumption against' certain elements. In planning guidance, we try to change that term to 'presumption for', but that is just wording. We will not support David Davies's amendment 3 or Alun Cairns's amendment 8. I understand the philosophy behind them in terms of helping and supporting industry, but to vote for them would negate such amendments as those in Christine's name. I am looking forward to an interesting and informative debate and I hope that many will participate.

Jocelyn Davies: I propose amendment 1. In line 1 delete 'Assembly' and insert 'National Assembly for Wales'.

I propose amendment 2. In line 1 before 'agrees' add ' *recalling its statutory responsibility to promote sustainable development*'.

I propose amendment 4. In line 5 delete 'that it' and add

'recognises the major opportunities in Wales for a dynamic renewable energy industry, calls upon statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and the Countryside Council, and local authorities to co-operate positively in the advancement of this industry while also recognising the responsibility of all sectors to significantly improve energy efficiency and'.

Climate change is with us as a result of our unsustainable use of energy, whether it is from electricity generation in the home, office, industry or transport. It is made worse by the fact that unsustainable practices in waste disposal result in large amounts of waste being buried in landfill sites which decompose and produce methane--a powerful greenhouse gas.

We cannot avoid some climate change, as Sue has said, so to a greater or lesser extent we are just facing damage limitation. We must move towards a more sustainable economy, and judging from the greenhouse gas emissions, we in Wales have further to go than some other areas in the UK. This in itself justifies powers of control over energy matters in Wales in the form of an energy strategy. We also, therefore, have a greater need to subscribe to a sustainable way of life. The effect of pollution on our nation's health and the potential improvements to both health and job creation is something that the Assembly should grasp.

I have a few facts to summarise the challenges that face Wales in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions here, across all sectors, increased by 5 per cent between 1990 and 1995, while UK emissions as a whole declined by 10 per cent in the same period. Wales therefore has to deliver greater savings overall. Wales's power generation mix differs from that of the rest of the UK. Our iron and steel industries rely on coal for electricity generation. England relies on gas turbines and nuclear power for electricity, using cleaner technologies for power generation. Wales's obligation to promote sustainable development places it in a position to lead on sustainable practices to achieve reduced emissions. Wales's legacy of pollution also makes it a particularly difficult challenge to reverse the trends of unsustainable practice. However, neither the 'Betterwales.com' document nor the sustainable development scheme has addressed the issue of climate change with enough gusto. Our amendments to the motion call for serious consideration to be given by the Assembly to setting up procedures to enable a dynamic, renewable energy industry to succeed in Wales. This would replace our unsustainable dependence on finite fossil fuels and the contentious nuclear industry.

There are numerous obstacles and objections to even clean technology, but we have a duty to the future citizens of Wales to promote a more sustainable way of life and Wales is well placed to harness its natural, renewable resources for producing clean energy. This places a duty on those concerned with the environment in Wales, in particular the Environment Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales to work together with local authority planning departments to actively promote the future energy supply using clean technologies.

Cynog Dafis: Yr wyf yn falch bod Jocelyn wedi cyfeirio at sefydliadau cenedlaethol, megis Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru ac Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd, yng ngwelliant 4. A yw hi'n cytuno ei bod yn eithriadol bwysig fod cyrff felly yn sylweddoli bod adeiladu diwydiant ynni adnewyddadwy yng Nghymru yn flaenoriaeth strategol, bod yn rhaid i hyn ddigwydd, bod angen inni roi cyfarwyddyd i gyrff fel Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru a bod yn rhaid iddynt hwyluso datblygiad ynni adnewyddadwy yn hytrach na bod yn dramgwydd i ddatblygiadau ynni adnewyddadwy fel y maent yn aml ar hyn o bryd? Clywaf lawer gormod o negeseuon negyddol o gyfeiriad Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru, yn arbennig, ac ambell waith hyd yn oed o du Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd. Mae'n eithriadol bwysig eu bod yn cael y neges ynglyn â'r mater holl bwysig hwn.

Cynog Dafis: I am pleased that Jocelyn has referred to national institutions, such as the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency, in amendment 4. Does she agree that it is exceptionally important that such bodies realise that building a renewable energy industry in Wales is a strategic priority, that this must happen, that we must give bodies such as the Countryside Council for Wales direction and that they must facilitate the development of renewable energy rather than prevent the development of renewable energy as they often do at present? I hear far too many negative messages coming from the direction of the Countryside Council for Wales, in particular, and even sometimes from the Environment Agency. It is exceptionally important that they get the message about this extremely important matter.

Jocelyn Davies: It will come as no surprise that I agree with you. All our partners need to actively promote the idea rather than frustrate our efforts.

The responsibility does not all lie with power generation. All sectors should be involved in promoting energy efficiency. The energy saving trust has a number of projects in Wales that show the way forward, but these need to be extended and become the norm. The promotion of energy conservation and efficiency is a key element in encouraging businesses and public and domestic sectors to reduce energy use and save costs. Traditionally, energy has been cheap, and efforts to reduce use have not been a financial incentive. Now the effects of climate change and the need to conserve finite fossil fuels are pushing the need for more efficiency.

The scope for energy savings are high, but the subject does not generally incite much enthusiasm. What should interest us all is the opportunity for Wales to become the exemplar in the application of energy-efficient technology, and to lead the way towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially in view of our obligation towards sustainable development. We could create jobs and improve health and, if business and industries in Wales act now, become pioneers in clean and efficient technology. That would reap rewards in the market place. If we do not do that, we risk being left behind and losing out to others in job and wealth creation.

4:00 p.m.

What can the Assembly do to uncouple economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions? We can target transport, we can have industrial efficiency and look at fuel poverty. We can opt for clean technology, renewable energy, traffic reduction and reduce landfill waste. That means taking practical action. We can support the Warm Homes Bill, waste can be reduced at source, we can reuse and recycle and we can use wind, solar, tidal and hydro energy. In domestic and commercial buildings, environmental design can make the difference between an unsustainable and a sustainable building. That does not mean simply increasing the insulation. Building management systems, low energy movement-sensitive lighting systems and energy saving devices can make a difference, particularly in offices because they are highly energy-intensive operations. Efficient use of fuel with improvements in combustion, efficiency and boilers can ensure that heating systems do not waste. Combined heat and power installations offer the benefits of electricity generations with district heating for homes. The role of innovative design can play an enormous part and should not be overlooked. Green designs offer exciting ways of addressing the problems that we face. I am sorry that the First Secretary is not here to hear that.

The global implications of climate change means that we cannot afford to be inward looking. We support Christine Humphreys' amendments 6 and 7 but cannot support her amendment 5 because it seems to argue for a reduction in income tax. If the amendment referred to employment rather than earnings of the individual, we would support it. We will abstain on it. We oppose the Conservative amendments 3 and 8. Although we have grave concerns about the levy's impact on the Welsh economy, we cannot oppose a levy in principle.

I remind you that the National Assembly's sustainable energy group will be launched tonight at 6 p.m. I hope that Members and interested parties will attend and show their support.

David Davies: I propose amendment 3. After '2010' delete the words '*and that it*' and insert

'yet recognises that punitive taxation is not the best way of achieving these targets and calls on the UK Government to look again at the alternatives to an energy tax. The Assembly'.

I also propose amendment 8 in the name of Alun Cairns. Add at the end of the motion:

Regrets the additional taxation that will be imposed, which will hit the Welsh economy harder than any other part of the UK due to a disproportionate dependence on the manufacturing and agricultural sectors.

I congratulate the Secretary on producing a worthy enough document which bursts with good intentions on every page. I read of calls for action to reduce carbon emissions, to promote energy efficiency, encourage recycling, improve air quality and encourage sensible land use. These are some of the many worthy sentiments expressed but not properly and fully addressed by the document. There is a huge divergence between the sentiments expressed and the solutions proposed to tackle the problem of a worsening climate. The solutions such as they are fail to address the problem. They are based on that well-known Labour answer to all problems--to raise taxes. There is a belief that raising taxes alone will be enough to stem the decline in the quality of the climate. That is not the case. One example--*[Interruption.]*

Is this going to be a narrow political point?

Brian Gibbons: No. The climate levy implementation will deal with around 20 to 30 per cent of the particular excess targets that we are trying to achieve. It is not a main instrument as you said. It is a minor instrument.

David Davies: One of the biggest pollutants is carbon. The energy tax will be put on producers of all kinds of energy. Whatever they produce, it will hit producers of clean energy such as gas as much as the more heavily polluting coal. That tax is applied as such across the board and will therefore fail to influence businesses in the types of energy that they use. I suspect that it will also fail to reduce the amount of energy being used. It is being applied across the board. Businesses will increase their prices and possibly continue with previous practices. The only person who will benefit is Gordon Brown, who will no doubt increase the size of his war chest. We have seen the same thing happen with landfill.

Brian Gibbons: It is--

David Davies: Hang on, I have not yet said whether or not I will give way to you.

The Presiding Officer: Order. Are you giving way?

David Davies: Yes.

Brian Gibbons: It is extraordinary that I have had to intervene less than two minutes into David Davies's speech. If he reads the documents, he will see that the climate levy proposals are neutral in terms of the Exchequer.

David Davies: I have read that a portion of the money taken through that tax will go into schemes to encourage energy efficiency. I am concerned at the use of the terms. I do not believe that every penny will go back. If you consider the landfill tax, the story was very different to that. The tax was introduced to discourage people from using landfill sites. However, if you talk to the experts in local authorities in charge of recycling programmes, you will find that what happens is that every time the cost of disposal in landfill sites rises, the cost to them of recycling waste also increases, because few companies are involved in recycling waste. Levying higher taxes across the board, without putting the money back into schemes to achieve what you are aiming to achieve, is not the answer.

Peter Black: The landfill tax was introduced by the last Conservative Government. I accept David's point because the tax is clearly not achieving what it should. The problem is that it was not designed to encourage recycling. Local authorities are not allowed to use the credit directly for recycling. That reform is needed.

David Davies: I agree with you. I am not here to defend the record of the last Conservative Government, but I will say that it did an excellent job. Let us not go into that.

You are right that my point is that the money is not hypothecated. It does not return as credit and therefore is not achieving what it is intended to achieve. It increases the coffers of the Treasury without encouraging better recycling policies. If that is your point, then I agree with you. Punitive taxation is not the answer.

It would have been beneficial had we considered what is happening in other countries. In Costa Rica, for example, farmers are paid to plant trees on their land. They allow the trees to grow and are given about \$10 for every tonne of carbon that those trees would have hypothetically used. That payment is expected to increase. I do not suggest that that is necessarily the answer for Wales, but it is an imaginative approach to the problem. Similar schemes are being established in the United States of America, New Zealand and Australia. It would have been beneficial had we examined such imaginative possible solutions rather than simply levying higher taxes. It would, of course, have meant more hard work from and commitment by various Government departments, as well as less money for the Chancellor's war chest.

Mick Bates: For your information, David, there are projects in Britain along the lines of those that you described in Costa Rica. I am not familiar with the Costa Rican projects, but you will be pleased to learn that farmers in Yorkshire are already benefiting from taking wood into their local plant. I hope that you will give your support to a similar project that we hope is about to begin in Newbridge-on-Wye.

David Davies: I do not know the details of that scheme. No doubt I will find out about it tonight if attend the sustainable energy meeting that you have helped to organise.

I suggest a combined approach. The Labour Party is fond of soundbites and would no doubt call it joined-up government. I prefer to call it common sense. I will briefly contrast the divergence between principles and commitment in two other matters mentioned in the report. First, on the use of land for housing, there must be a recognition--and I believe that there is one--that building on greenfield sites, apart from being unpleasant for the environment, can affect water tables. I have seen that happen in my constituency. We must discourage building on greenfield sites and encourage development on brownfield sites. The Government has set a target for 60 per cent of new development to be on brownfield sites. It is disappointing that we are not doing the same in Wales. We are not taking this opportunity to show a commitment to the development of brownfield sites.

It is pointless to produce wordy documents that call for sensible land use to be included in planning guidance, if other Assembly departments will force local authorities to build on greenfield sites regardless.

4:10 p.m.

Earlier, Sue Essex quoted from a poem by John Donne. I recall three lines from a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

'O if we but knew what we do
When we delve or hew--
Hack and rack the growing green!'

Although it was written over 100 years ago, it is relevant to us all today. I thought that you would appreciate that.

Alison Halford: Will you read it again, please?

David Davies: I would be happy to give you the whole poem after I have finished my speech.

Worthy sentiments are expressed on reducing car use. This is not the place to become parochial, Llywydd. However, as a general example, a village in Monmouthshire has for years been trying to get a speed reduction on the A4042 in Llanover. I am not trying to raise that issue. I will say nothing further about it except that despite the fact that everyone seems to agree that a reduction in the speed limit from 60 to 40 miles per hour would be reasonable, and despite the fact that we are only asking for two signs to be erected, nothing has been done. I have received promises and I know that this is in the pipeline, but we have had one excuse after another. The signs have not been erected. If the Assembly cannot even arrange a few speed limit signs on a trunk road-- [*Interruption.*] If the Assembly Secretary would like to intervene, I would be happy to give way.

If the Assembly cannot even arrange that, I am not confident that we can change the planet. We want proper solutions which will make a real difference: carbon credit controls, hypothecation of landfill taxes, a greener housing policy and even a speed limit through Llanover. Most importantly, we need the commitment, energy and imagination to carry out these solutions.

Peter Law: Will you acknowledge that you have publicly acknowledged that when I was Assembly Secretary with responsibility for transport, I made a decision to bring in proposals for safety measures and speed limits, not only in Llanover but also in Llanellen and Goetre. My colleague Sue Essex carries on that work, which is subject to Gwent Consultancy and has been agreed at £100,000.

David Davies: I acknowledge that you were open in speaking to me about this and were supportive. I have always publicly acknowledged your help on this. However, although I have your letter, it has not happened yet. There seems to be a delay. I do not blame you for that; it is possibly officials' fault. However, if it takes so long to introduce a speed limit, how can we be confident that we will be able to change the world overnight? I ask for firmer solutions than those found in this document.

Christine Humphreys: I propose amendment 5. Add at the end of the motion:

To assist Wales and the other UK regions in meeting the targets set out in the Kyoto agreement, this Assembly calls upon the UK Government to introduce a phased carbon tax applied to fossil fuel generated energy sources with the undertaking that:

a portion of the generated revenue be used to provide energy intensive businesses financial assistance towards the cost of energy efficiency investment;

a portion of the generated revenue is used for investment in energy efficient public transport; and

a portion is used to reduce the tax burden upon the earnings of the individual, shifting the tax burden towards energy consumption and away from the individual.

I propose amendment 6. Add at the end of the motion:

This Assembly also resolves to implement an all-Wales waste strategy with the following characteristics:

that there is a clear movement away from unsustainable landfill and incineration towards recycling and sustainability;

That a planning presumption be introduced against further incineration and landfill developments in Wales in the interests of sustainability;

where incineration is the only viable option, the Assembly should encourage the harnessing of the energy that is generated so that it can be put to both domestic and industrial use.

I propose amendment 7. At the end of the motion insert:

In addition, this Assembly resolves to:

set, monitor and evaluate targets for environmental performance improvements;

set clear guidelines for local authorities to assist them in reducing road traffic volumes; and

seek European Union co-operation to assist in the development of international environmental initiatives.

I welcome this opportunity to discuss a pivotal part of Liberal Democrat philosophy. As the Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy said recently, and as others have said, you do not inherit the environment from your parents, you preserve it for your children. The ostrich approach is no longer an option. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and hope that environmental questions will disappear. They will not.

The environment has been sadly neglected by politicians in recent years. On too many occasions, environmental concerns have been seen as constraints on economic growth and development. In reality, the reverse applies. Environmental protection is one of the most liberating forces in politics. It broadens choice at all levels. It creates jobs and helps to build a more sustainable and cohesive society. Environmental protection should be at the centre of any liberal democracy.

Climate change is an international problem, as Sue said. Multinational co-operation is vital if we are to meet, and perhaps even exceed, the targets set by the Kyoto agreement. Although I welcome the motion's commitment to working with other UK regions, it fails to recognise the international dimension that environmental action will require if it is to succeed. Also, the motion does not do justice to the role that the Assembly could potentially play in developing domestic and international environmental protection initiatives.

Under the Government of Wales Act 1998, the Assembly is legally bound to promote sustainable development. Today's debate is a chance to demonstrate that we are serious about fulfilling that obligation. My criticism of the motion lies principally with the fact that it does not indicate how the Assembly proposes to carry out its obligation. We need flesh on the bones and my amendments seek to provide some of that flesh.

I have sought to rectify the lack of international perspective by calling for the Assembly to co-operate with the European Union in developing environmental policy initiatives. As a National Assembly, we should look to make an input into the international decision-making process, separate from that of the UK, in recognition of the fact that our environmental concerns may differ from those of other UK regions. Those concerns must be expressed clearly and distinctly in the European forum.

Wales's environmental concerns are different. In comparison to other UK regions, Wales has a greater concentration of energy intensive industries. That fact is recognised in the document 'Climate Change Wales: Learning to Live Differently', which was issued to Members earlier this year. Therefore, it would be unfair to suggest that Wales should be required to reduce its greenhouse emissions at a rate equal to that of the rest of the United Kingdom. That would impact upon Welsh industry and jobs. I have called for the Assembly to set, monitor and evaluate targets for environmental performance improvements so that they can be placed in the Welsh context in a way that will not pose a threat to Welsh industry or jobs.

The contribution made by road traffic towards the total greenhouse gas emission is huge. Reducing the volume of traffic on our roads is not easy. The Assembly's powers are limited with regard to acting in this area. However, we can act in an advisory role by setting clear guidelines with local authorities and assisting them to reduce traffic volumes. The differing circumstances that prevail throughout Wales with regard to road traffic volumes make it appropriate for the local authorities to implement their own strategies to suit local needs. However, guidance is needed from this Assembly to assist them in this task.

On waste management, the current level of landfill in Wales, as a major waste disposal option, is undesirable and unsustainable. Wales is the most wasteful country in Europe. We are beginning to richly deserve that title. We only recycle 5 per cent of our waste; 95 per cent of our municipal waste finds its way into landfill sites across Wales. The resulting methane emissions from decomposing waste contribute significantly towards greenhouse emissions. The releases of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and other noxious gases from waste incineration are equally problematic. Both are unsustainable and highly damaging to our environment.

4:20 p.m.

The Assembly's commitment to producing a waste strategy for Wales that improves the sustainability of waste management is welcomed by the Liberal Democrats. We look forward to the findings of the current research into waste management being presented to the Assembly later this year. However, we believe that to have a truly sustainable waste strategy, recycling must be at its core. Landfill and incineration must be actively discouraged by the Assembly to ensure that sustainability is at the forefront of our approach. Where incineration is the only viable option, mechanisms should be in place to ensure that the energy generated from that incineration is not wasted, but used to generate both domestic and industrial energy. My amendment 6 reflects this approach to waste management and I hope that it is something that strikes a chord with other Members in this Chamber.

The Liberal Democrats welcomed the Chancellor's modification to the climate change levy last November as it sent clear signals to the industrial and commercial sectors that carbon emissions must be cut, energy consumption regulated and the environment safeguarded. However, it needs to be based upon the carbon content of the energy consumed and the revenue it raises should be used more effectively in promoting sustainability.

My amendment 5, asking this Assembly to call upon the UK Government to implement a phased carbon tax to assist in meeting the Kyoto targets, is unashamedly radical. A phased carbon tax would certainly assist Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom in meeting the Kyoto targets. It would seek to shift the burden of taxation away from the individual's earnings and onto energy consumption. I stress that I do not envisage this applying to petrol, which already bears the brunt of heavy taxation. It is directed specifically towards industry and the consumption of domestic energy. 'Phased' is probably a key word as far as carbon tax is concerned. I do not suggest for one moment that this tax would be introduced without warning. This would prove fatal to energy intensive businesses and would increase the problem of fuel poverty among the most vulnerable in our society.

By gradually increasing the rate at which the carbon tax would be payable over a period of time, the Government could implement energy saving initiatives, using revenue generated by the carbon tax and provide financial assistance to those industries that will find reducing energy consumption a costly exercise.

Pollution has a detrimental effect on all of us, but it affects the poor the most. Politicians have ducked the tough questions that need to be answered. They fear that radical environmental policies will impact upon their fortunes at the ballot box. Environmental protection is overwhelmingly more important than short-term electoral gain, and today's debate is the chance for this Assembly to take the lead and live up to its legal obligations to our environment in Wales. I ask you to show both courage and conviction and vote in favour of my amendments.

Phil Williams: In my opinion, this is the most important topic that the National Assembly for Wales or any other parliamentary body could discuss. I welcome this debate and the contributions that have been made. It is the overriding imperative of global politics and, for me, it has been the most important single issue since the 1980s, and the issue that brought me back into active politics. It is also the issue that drives my continuing research and I have had the privilege of knowing and working with several of the key scientists in the field. I therefore have an obligation to convey to you today their sense of reasoned, responsible panic.

Since 1958, the exact concentration of carbon dioxide has been measured from Hawaii. It is rising and, despite the warnings, the rate of increase is rising. The average temperature of the earth is rising. For example, 1998 was the hottest year ever recorded, by a considerable margin. The consequences of rising temperature are already apparent.

Average sea level and sea temperatures are rising steadily. When sea temperature reaches a trigger point, the flow of energy into the atmosphere increases dramatically, leading to hurricanes. In recent years, Central America has suffered hurricanes of unprecedented ferocity, France has suffered the worst storms in its recorded history, Mozambique has suffered disastrous flooding and, elsewhere, the deserts are spreading. These are not random accidents.

Over the past 25 years, huge efforts have been made to build scientific models of the global climate to predict the effect of increased carbon dioxide with confidence. I want to pay tribute to a Welshman, John Houghton, who has led this work worldwide, as chairman of the scientific committee of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the man primarily responsible for the Rio and Kyoto conferences.

In the past, the scientific models had to face two puzzling aspects. There were large, unexplained fluctuations in temperature, and also the average temperature increased substantially between 1900 and 1925 when carbon dioxide levels were not rising quickly.

Scientific uncertainty--honest uncertainty--allowed unscrupulous industrialists in the fossil fuel and automobile sectors, especially, to claim that man-made global warming was a myth. Their client journalists and politicians echoed the claim and, alas, this is still the case to some extent in the USA. It was suggested, for instance, that high levels of solar activity were entirely responsible for the high temperatures of the 1980s and 1990s.

Today, if I may wear my other hat as a solar terrestrial physicist, it is fair to state with some confidence that the uncertainties are largely resolved. The large fluctuations are now understood. We now know that the sharp drops in temperature over the past century were all the result of major volcanoes putting dust and aerosols into the atmosphere, which reduced the sunlight for a couple of years.

The second uncertainty--the increase in the early years of the last century--has also been explained, although there is still an element of controversy. This has answered the crucial question of how much global warming is a result of human activity and how much is the result of changes in the sun. Although it is controversial, this is the area of my research, therefore it is fair to say that changes in the solar and interplanetary magnetic field accounted for much of the increase at the beginning of the century, but that recent increases are almost entirely due to man-made activity.

The effect of this is to remove some of the crucial uncertainties, so that we have increasing confidence in the scientific models. The jigsaw is becoming complete. The predictions are more certain and they tend towards the less threatening end of the old, uncertain predictions. However, this can bring us little comfort. One result of the increasing unanimity among scientists has been the Kyoto agreement to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 5 per cent. This is bad news and good news.

First, the bad news. According to the scientific models a cut of 5 per cent is inadequate and will make little difference. The good news is that the Kyoto agreement has established an international framework for tackling the problem, and the optimists--and we must all be optimists--believe that when even the most reactionary governments accept the overwhelming evidence, 5 per cent will become 50 per cent, and a 50 per cent cut will make a difference.

However, will the change in world opinion occur in time? Once there is universal acceptance that anthropogenic global warming is occurring, the main debate--and partly our debate in Wales--will be between mitigation and adaptation. It will be between those who advocate that our absolute priority is to halt global warming as soon as possible, and those who are unwilling to make drastic cuts in carbon dioxide and argue instead that we should counter the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, increased ferocity of storms, more rain in some areas and droughts in others, and the migration of plant and animal species.

4:30 p.m.

However, those who stress adaptation to climate change at the expense of mitigation are making a fatal mistake by ignoring the likelihood of positive feedback leading to runaway increases. Several feedback mechanisms are already identified. The Arctic icecap is melting and is now only half the thickness that it was 40 years ago. With the Arctic covered by ice, most sunlight near the north pole is reflected back into space but once the icecap disappears that sunlight will be absorbed into an ocean that will heat up further. If the temperature of high latitudes rises beyond a certain level, methane trapped in the tundra will escape. As a greenhouse gas, methane is more powerful than carbon dioxide, which is why landfill disposal of organic waste must become unacceptable.

The next stage, reported by the Natural Environment Research Council, will occur when temperature rises and changes in rainfall cause natural deforestation. That is why over-emphasis on adaptation at the expense of mitigation is so dangerous. We must take steps to anticipate the increased flooding and storm damage that will inevitably occur but our priority must be to achieve climate stability as soon as possible, which implies large cuts in our carbon dioxide emissions. That is why energy conservation and renewable energy are so important and why reduction in car and lorry traffic is so urgent.

Having been somewhat apocalyptic, I will end on a positive note. Governments are starting to recognise the urgency of the situation. Soon, the targets of 10 or even 20 per cent cuts in carbon dioxide--which are commendable in that they lead the world--will be forgotten and we will be achieving cuts of 50 per cent. With proper planning, it is technically possible--without discomfort or inconvenience and without any serious dislocation of our overall standard of living--to make such cuts. We must remember that for every crisis, there is an opportunity and the replacement of the spectrum of fossil fuel industries throughout the world by renewable, non-polluting energy industries creates enormous economic opportunities. Wales is ideally placed to pioneer these new industries and to win a significant share of the new global market.

We already have a mature industrial sector for wind energy, hydroelectricity and solar power. We have ideal conditions for wave and tidal power and for biomass generation. Therefore, the Assembly has responsibilities and opportunities. It has a responsibility to draw up a detailed strategic plan for energy conservation and renewable energy and an opportunity to give planning guidelines and rating discrimination to enable those plans to proceed. I give credit to Peter Law for designing the business rating to take this into account.

We have the responsibility to encourage a partnership between Government agencies, research laboratories, industry and community enterprise to develop renewable energy and an opportunity to use Objective 1 to support such a partnership. We have the responsibility and opportunity to direct our agencies, such as the Welsh Development Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environment Agency, to give their full commitment to these aims. That has not always been the case in the past but there are signs that they are giving positive support to our sustainable development aims.

The only area where we do not have direct power is in defining the climate change levy. We welcome the principle but regret the crude way in which it has been levied and the rebate distributed. I hope that our evidence and advice on that--in our own interest in Wales--will modify the way that it is implemented and make it more selective. Therefore, I welcome this debate, the contributions and the fact that, although no single parliament has the power to solve the problem globally, this Assembly, with the exception of the climate change levy, has all the necessary powers to ensure that Wales plays not only its full role but perhaps a leading role. That is my dream.

Richard Edwards: Thank you, Llywydd, for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate. I welcome the draft climate change programme, 'Climate Change Wales: Learning to Live Differently'. It provides, for the first time, a strategic focus, which in the longer term can only be good, not only for the environment of Wales, but also for the economy and people of Wales. We must all accept the environmental message and we need to respond to the challenge it presents. Without reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases, there will be severe consequences, especially for the poorest countries of the world, where flooding, famine and drought will compound the already desperate circumstances. We must all do our bit, as the Deputy Prime Minister would say.

The practical application of this responsibility means that we must share a strategy in partnership with the UK Government, the Scottish Executive and the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland. There must be an UK wide response. However, Wales must make its contribution to ensure that the UK goes well beyond the 12.5 per cent target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, as well as achieving the more difficult goal of a 20 per cent cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2010.

The 'Climate Change Wales: Learning to Live Differently' document seeks to establish the consensus needed to underpin concerted action on this vital issue. It considers a wide range of policy options for delivering emission reductions and provides a first assessment of the costs, benefits and practicality of target reductions.

For the first time ever we have a blueprint for stakeholders in the economy to work together to actively tackle the challenge of global warming. All sectors of the economy must move forward together to generate energy in new, renewable and sustainable ways. The Assembly has a duty to promote sustainable development. That point has been made several times. It is unique in Europe, which gives us a cutting edge role. We are uniquely placed.

Energy efficiency and conservation are also crucial. In the UK context, I welcome initiatives aimed at improving energy efficiency in the home, with particular help for the elderly and people on low incomes. Similarly, it must be the responsibility of electricity and gas suppliers to encourage and help householders to save energy and cut fuel bills. This clearly must be part of the strategy.

Others have dwelt on the importance of a waste disposal strategy and an integrated transport system, which, I know, is dear to Sue Essex's heart. I will not spend too much time on that, but obviously it must be fundamental to our vision. We must have clarity in our objectives and all stakeholders must be clear that carbon credit trading cannot form part of the longer-term solution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The way ahead must be renewable energy and energy conservation and efficiency.

Not surprisingly, there has been much discussion about the increasing burden of tax, especially on business. I recognise the effect of costs on business. However, this is primarily a question of equity, both in the short and longer term and we must seek equitable long-term solutions.

As Sue has pointed out, the effect of the climate change levy will be offset by cuts in employer National Insurance contributions and by increased support for energy efficiency schemes.

The message must be that improved environmental management can reduce waste. It can also improve competitiveness as well as protecting the environment. The climate change programme and the issue itself deserve the greatest commitment in accord with our singular responsibility to promote sustainable development in Wales.

4:40 p.m.

Alun Cairns: It is fair to say that since our return after the Easter recess, much of the statements, discussions and questions in the Chamber have focused on the problems of manufacturing industries such as the car and steel industries, particularly in Wales, because of our disproportionate dependence on such industries. Some Members sought to curb the debate on such issues earlier in points of order, during my absence from the Chamber.

We have discussed the problems facing exporters in Wales. No one would blame the UK Government completely for the weakness of the euro or the overvalued pound, although it must accept some of the responsibility. I will not repeat the argument on that point or on the additional burdens that have been put on business such as those relating to business rates, extra employment costs and changes in taxation and the additional legislation from Westminster and Brussels. In a presentation last week, Nick Cragg, the managing director of strip products at British Steel, or should I say Corus, said that the cumulative effect of these problems will mean a dire future for our manufacturing industries.

Wales has a disproportionate dependence on these manufacturing industries. Every action that we take in the Assembly that affects such industries should encourage them rather than add to their running costs. Richard Edwards said that he regretted the additional taxation that is imposed on these industries but that we must take the longer-term view. So many of our debates and discussions have focused on that. I regret to say that many of these industries will not have a long-term view if the costs and burdens continue as they have since the last general election.

The energy tax will cost an additional £233 million to the steel industry, £33 million to the water industry and £17 million to the farming industries. These are the burdens with which our industrialists must compete. The Government argues that the energy tax is tax neutral. That is not the case as it discriminates against manufacturers. It moves money from the manufacturing sector into the service sector. It is causing enormous problems and will lead to the export of jobs and the import of pollution.

Brian Gibbons: I was interested in what Phil Williams said about Hawaii because when I was a kid we used to watch a programme called Hawaii Five-O. Phil was talking about Hawaii CO₂. This is an important issue, which demands a global response. People have highlighted the importance of what we can do in Wales but if there is not a concerted international response on this issue we will have endured a lot of pain in Wales for nothing.

Wales contributes 0.1 per cent to greenhouse gases. The United Kingdom contributes 2 to 3 per cent and the United States 25 per cent. As we read in the document on climate change, there is increasing evidence that the United States Congress does not intend to sign up to the Kyoto Protocol. If the United States Government is not prepared to sign up, the radical ideas that Christine Humphreys and others who have proposed amendments today will account for nothing. A major debate continues in the United States about increasing car petrol tax to meet the commitments that were outlined in the Kyoto Protocol. The attitude to this is highlighted in an editorial in *The Washington Times*. It says that the free flow of energy close to the market is critical for a healthy and vibrant economy and that they would not be in the midst of 10 years unprecedented economic growth if it were not for the restraint that they have applied in exercising taxes on fuel.

Brian Hancock: Your argument proposes to do nothing. Would not leading by example be a stronger argument? Taking steps in Wales would show the world that we can act to provide and safeguard a future for our children. Therefore, the bigger nations could readily assume this and take it on board.

Brian Gibbons: I agree. However, the message that I want to convey in my contribution is that the efforts that we are making in Wales and the United Kingdom will count for very little if we do not exercise influence on the United States of America at every opportunity. If that country is not on board, everything else will count for nothing. There is no point for our industries to endure the pain if the United States and other big gas emitting countries are not prepared to sign up to this agreement. That is vital.

I have some other points. First, the carbon tax. The parties that expressed concern yesterday about the steel industry must express concern about the implication of the carbon levy for that industry. We cannot say one thing on one day about the steel industry and another thing the next about the implications of the tax. Secondly, the steel industry and industry in general. It would be preferable for the climate levy tax to be introduced on a company basis, and if not on a company basis, at least on an industry-neutral basis, rather than, as Alun Cairns said, across all of the manufacturing industries. If we had a more restricted, better targeted carbon levy tax we would be more successful in achieving our desired objectives.

I welcome the document's commitment that Wales will not be asked to go it alone on this issue. I was concerned with Janet Davies's contribution about the need for a Wales-only energy strategy. We must hold such a view about Wales, but the best way to solve this problem is on a UK-wide basis.

The Presiding Officer: I think that you mean Jocelyn Davies, Brian.

Janet Davies: I was just about to say that I have not spoken in this debate.

Brian Gibbons: Yes, it was Jocelyn Davies.

This is an issue that is better solved on a UK-wide basis. An equitable response is better than an equal response bearing in mind the sensitivities of the type of industrial configuration that we have in Wales.

Sue Essex: This has been a good discussion with many good points and ideas. I will start with Phil Williams, who was slightly apocalyptic. I would hate to see him when he is hell-bent on being apocalyptic. I am always interested when Phil stands up to speak because he is the world expert on everything. I expect to hear him during a health debate stand up to say, 'As a qualified neuro-surgeon'. I recognise, from your passion, that you are an expert on this issue, to which you have a real commitment. If we ever have time during the Assembly's pressurised schedule, perhaps we could set aside an hour or two to have an academic discussion about this because it is something about which you are extremely knowledgeable.

I would like to start with the point about mitigation and adaptation. We must do both. You are right to say that there is no way to hide in adaptation only. That will not deliver the goods. Our responsibility to the people that we represent means that we must do both. Points have been raised about how difficult it is in the early years to make these adjustments in Wales because we have particular problems, as Brian mentioned. It would be unfair if we did not to recognise those problems, such as our existing dependence on heavy industry.

4:50 p.m.

Cynog Dafis: Derbyniaf eich pwynt ynglyn â diwydiannau sydd yn ddibynnol ar ynni, megis dur. Mae achos dros drosglwyddo cyfran dda o'r derbyniadau lefi newid hinsawdd i ardaloedd sydd yn ddibynnol ar ddiwydiannau felly. Fodd bynnag, mae'r lefi hwnnw hefyd yn agor cyfleoedd. Bydd twf y sector bio-ynni, er enghraifft, sydd yn cynnig cyfleoedd mawr i ardaloedd gwledig ac a all greu nifer o swyddi, yn cael ei gryfhau gan y lefi newid hinsawdd. Bydd cynhyrchu trydan o'r ffynhonnell honno yn gystadleuol yn erbyn cynhyrchu trydan o ffynonellau confensiynol.

Cynog Dafis: I accept your point regarding industries that are dependent on power, such as steel. There is a case for transferring a good proportion of the climatic change levy receipts to areas that are dependent on such industries. However, that levy also opens up opportunities. The growth of the bio-energy sector, for example, which affords great opportunities to rural areas and which may create a number of jobs, will be strengthened by the climatic change levy. Creating electricity from that source will compete with creating energy from conventional sources.

Sue Essex: That is right--it is what I was going to move on to. I was spreading the bad news first, because there have been other emphases on waste problems and we have had a high dependency on landfill resulting in our methane problem. You are right that we can be optimistic. If we use that levy imaginatively and negotiate with companies, as Brian mentioned, there are possibilities of making improvements within some of those heavy plants, and we can turn these problems into real opportunities. Jocelyn and your intervention made one point strongly, namely, the scope and potential that we have here in Wales if we get our act together. One key message--I know that you and others will be saying this at 6 p.m. tonight at the launch of the Assembly sustainable energy group--is that we need to have a strong focus on this. I would not necessarily support all you said on the Countryside Council for Wales. We must realise that there are other issues here in terms of landscape quality and nature conservation quality, but if we have produced the right strategy we can reconcile those issues and get ahead.

One fundamental lesson from this debate is that we need to concentrate on those areas where the Assembly is going forward, to work with our partners and with the UK Government in using that levy to ensure that we take advantage of the available opportunities. On David Davies's amendment, you never know quite where to start with David--he has gone, so he might not want to hear this. He mentions, as usual, that we are a party that introduces taxation. He seems to have amnesia about the past Tory Government. He does not remember them doing anything nasty or awkward or difficult, but he cannot get away from VAT on fuel--he was around when that was introduced and there was no recompense for that. He says that this is just about taxation, when it is not, there is a whole raft of measures that is in the--

Glyn Davies: You say that there was no recompense for that. I specifically remember that when VAT was introduced on fuel there was recompense for all vulnerable people, particularly pensioners. You were not accurate in your statement.

Sue Essex: I take that point. I was trying to say that this particular tax, of which I believe he was accusing us, is hypothecated and is going back to specifically help industry, both in terms of the national contributions and also with lump sums that are allocated to energy efficiency improvement. The whole scope of the programme is to look at climate change and the problems that we have from a whole raft of issues and policies that need to be put in place. That is the issue--using a whole series of measures, because the issue comes not only from energy use and production, but from what we do in transport, from landfill problems, from the series of problems that we have inherited. That is why we have this composite programme of which there are measures that need to be put in place. Our Welsh waste strategy, which was mentioned by a few people, is important in delivering that.

Richard's point--and Jocelyn and Christine may also have mentioned this--on energy efficiency and how that links to our other policies on anti-poverty is extremely important. The money put into home energy efficiency programmes can meet a vast range of our objectives. It is not just about saving energy, it is about helping people make their homes warm and saving them money into the bargain. It is wonderful to have those opportunities to introduce measures that hit a whole series of our objectives. That is important.

Alun Cairns mentioned the manufacturing industries. I apologise for talking about him when he is not here. We are aware of the issue of competitiveness. We are not alone in our taxation and our efforts. Other European countries are natural competitors in these areas. Other countries are also putting this into practice. They also signed the Kyoto Protocol. It is important that we recognise that.

Brian's last point was about the USA. We know that the USA is the big nut to crack on greenhouse gas emissions and so on. Brian Hancock made the vital point that if we do not do it, we cannot turn around and say that others must also do it. That is an important lesson for us all. In meeting our requirements, we can show an example. It might be difficult. In the process--as Phil said--we will learn and achieve positive gains. That is looking to the future. The short term will be difficult. Looking to the medium and long term, there are positive gains in Wales that will make us competitive and place us at the cutting edge of the way in which we produce energy. That will give us an advantage.

I would like to thank everybody who contributed to the debate. As Phil said, it is not a marginal debate--

Gareth Jones: Pa rôl ydych chi'n ei gweld i addysg ac ysgolion yn y rhaglen hon?

Gareth Jones: What role do you envisage for education and schools in this programme?

Sue Essex: It is part and parcel of education on the environment and sustainable development. That is why organisations such as the Environment Education Council for Wales are important in delivering that. You are right to emphasise that it is critical for youngsters to understand how important this is for their future. We have a duty to them and they must understand what their responsibilities will be in future years.

*Gwelliant 1: O blaid 44, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.
Amendment 1: For 44, Abstain 0, Against 0.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

*Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment adopted.*

*Gwelliant 2: O blaid 40, Ymatal 6, Yn erbyn 1.
Amendment 2: For 40, Abstain 6, Against 1.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol yn erbyn:
The following Members voted against:

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Butler, Rosemary
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

Graham, William

Ymataliodd yr Aelodau canlynol:
The following Members abstained:

Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Davies, Glyn
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Rogers, Peter

*Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment adopted.*

*Gwelliant 3: O blaid 9, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 43.
Amendment 3: For 9, Abstain 0, Against 43.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol yn erbyn:
The following Members voted against:

Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Davies, David
Davies, Glyn
Graham, William
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Rogers, Peter
Thomas, Owen John

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Butler, Rosemary
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Ron
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

*Gwrthodwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment rejected.*

*Gwelliant 4: O blaid 51, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 0.
Amendment 4: For 51, Abstain 0, Against 0.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Bourne, Nick
Butler, Rosemary
Cairns, Alun
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, David
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Ron

Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Graham, William
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Rogers, Peter
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

*Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment adopted.*

5:00 p.m.

*Gwelliant 5: O blaid 29, Ymatal 15, Yn erbyn 8.
Amendment 5: For 29, Abstain 15, Against 8.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Butler, Rosemary
Chapman, Christine
Davies, Andrew
Davies, Ron
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol yn erbyn:
The following Members voted against:

Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Davies, David
Davies, Glyn
Graham, William
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Rogers, Peter

Jones, Carwyn
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Marek, John
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Williams, Kirsty

Ymataliodd yr Aelodau canlynol:
The following Members abstained:

Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Hancock, Brian
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Lloyd, David
Ryder, Janet
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Phil

*Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment adopted.*

*Gwelliant 6: O blaid 45, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 8.
Amendment 6: For 45, Abstain 0, Against 8.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Butler, Rosemary
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Ron
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol yn erbyn:
The following Members voted against:

Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Davies, David
Davies, Glyn
Graham, William
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Rogers, Peter

Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.

Motion adopted.

Gwelliant 7: O blaid 45, Ymatal 7, Yn erbyn 1.

Amendment 7: For 45, Abstain 7, Against 1.

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:

The following Members voted for:

Barrett, Lorraine
Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Butler, Rosemary
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Ron
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol yn erbyn:

The following Members voted against:

Davies, Glyn

Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

Ymataliodd yr Aelodau canlynol:
The following Members abstained:

Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Davies, David
Graham, William
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Rogers, Peter

*Derbyniwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment adopted.*

*Gwelliant 8: O blaid 8, Ymatal 6, Yn erbyn 39.
Amendment 8: For 8, Abstain 6, Against 39.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Davies, David
Davies, Glyn
Graham, William
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Rogers, Peter

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol yn erbyn:
The following Members voted against:

Barrett, Lorraine
Butler, Rosemary
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Janet
Davies, Ron
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Gwyther, Christine
Halford, Alison
Hart, Edwina
Hancock, Brian
Hutt, Jane
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Phil

Ymataliodd yr Aelodau canlynol:
The following Members abstained:

Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
German, Michael
Humphreys, Christine
Randerson, Jenny
Williams, Kirsty

*Gwrthodwyd y gwelliant.
Amendment rejected.*

Amended motion:

the National Assembly for Wales, recalling its statutory responsibility to promote sustainable development, agrees to work in partnership with the UK Government, the Scottish Executive and the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) to deliver the Kyoto target of a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 12.5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-2012 and a domestic UK goal of a 20 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions below 1990 levels by 2010 and recognises the major opportunities in Wales for a dynamic renewable energy industry, calls upon statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and the Countryside Council, and local authorities to co-operate positively in the advancement of this industry while also recognising the responsibility of all sectors to significantly improve energy efficiency and notes the draft climate change programme as described in 'Climate Change Wales', issued to Members on 4 April 2000;

to assist Wales and the other UK regions in meeting the targets set out in the Kyoto agreement, this Assembly calls upon the UK Government to introduce a phased carbon tax applied to fossil fuel generated energy sources with the undertaking that:

a portion of the generated revenue be used to provide energy intensive businesses financial assistance towards the cost of energy efficiency investment;

a portion of the generated revenue is used for investment in energy efficient public transport;

a portion is used to reduce the tax burden upon the earnings of the individual, shifting the tax burden towards energy consumption and away from the individual;

this Assembly also resolves to implement an all Wales waste strategy with the following characteristics:

that there is a clear movement away from unsustainable landfill and incineration towards recycling and sustainability;

that a planning presumption be introduced against further incineration and landfill developments in Wales in the interests of sustainability;

where incineration is the only viable option, the Assembly should encourage the harnessing of the energy that is generated so that it can be put to both domestic and industrial use;

in addition, this Assembly resolves to:

set, monitor and evaluate targets for environmental performance improvements;

set clear guidelines for local authorities to assist them in reducing road traffic volumes;

seek European Union co-operation to assist in the development of international environmental initiatives.

*Cynnig wedi'i ddiwygio: O blaid 43, Ymatal 0, Yn erbyn 8.
Amended motion: For 43, Abstain 0, Against 8.*

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol o blaid:
The following Members voted for:

Pleidleisiodd yr Aelodau canlynol yn erbyn:
The following Members voted against:

Bates, Mick
Black, Peter
Butler, Rosemary
Chapman, Christine
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Andrew
Davies, Geraint
Davies, Janet
Davies, Jocelyn
Davies, Ron
Edwards, Richard
Essex, Sue
Evans, Delyth
German, Michael
Gibbons, Brian
Gregory, Janice
Griffiths, John
Halford, Alison
Hancock, Brian
Hart, Edwina
Humphreys, Christine
Hutt, Jane
Jones, Carwyn
Jones, Elin
Jones, Gareth
Jones, Helen Mary
Jones, Ieuan Wyn
Law, Peter
Lewis, Huw
Lloyd, David
Marek, John
Morgan, Rhodri
Neagle, Lynne
Pugh, Alun
Randerson, Jenny
Ryder, Janet
Sinclair, Karen
Thomas, Gwenda
Thomas, Owen John
Thomas, Rhodri Glyn
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Kirsty
Williams, Phil

Bourne, Nick
Cairns, Alun
Davies, David
Davies, Glyn
Graham, William
Melding, David
Morgan, Jonathan
Rogers, Peter

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig wedi'i ddiwygio.
Amended motion adopted.*

Dadl Fer Short Debate

Pobl Ifanc ac ME Young People and ME

Lorraine Barrett: I have been involved with a family in my constituency where the young teenage daughter suffers from ME. That young teenager is Tiffany, and she has taken the brave step of coming here today with her mother to listen to the debate. That has taken a superhuman effort on her part, as she is often unable to leave her bedroom let alone her house. Also here today is Jo, another young ME sufferer. She is here with her family and other families with young ME sufferers who, unfortunately, are not well enough to be with us today. Thank you all for making the effort to come here.

This week is ME awareness week, and I could not believe my luck when my name was drawn in the ballot for the short debate. I knew then that I had to use this opportunity to highlight the misery caused by this often misunderstood illness.

I thank Wendy Holloway and Jill Moss of the Association of Youth with ME, known as AYME. I wanted to pronounce it as 'amy', rather than 'aim', but they said that the boys in the association would not accept that. Esther Rantzen is the president of AYME and I will refer to the association's work later. Several Assembly Members attended a presentation by AYME during the lunch hour, along with parents and young ME sufferers. It was informative and relevant leaflets are available for Assembly Members.

I do not feel that it is appropriate to go into the quite complex medical side of ME today. I will use this debate to highlight the effects of the illness and the difficulties that are faced by young ME sufferers and their families. The proper name for ME--this is where my nurse's training may come in useful--is myalgic encephalomyelitis. It is derived from Greek: myalgic meaning muscle and encephalo meaning brain. It is also described as chronic fatigue syndrome and was originally flippantly and cruelly referred to as yuppie flu.

It is only in recent years that ME has been recognised as a serious illness. Young sufferers receive a double whammy. As teenagers, they have to cope with all the pressures that beset healthy young people, let alone those who are ill. They are going through the normal growing up processes that we all went through, such as hormonal changes, difficulties with relationships, including parents, as well as having to deal with social pressures from school and exams. Then they are hit by this cruel illness, causing symptoms such as fatigue, sore throat, joint pain, concentration loss, lack of sleep and poor memory. Some young people have described their symptoms as 'my legs ache continuously', 'my words come out all wrong and I forget what I am saying in the middle of a sentence'. Some say that they cannot concentrate or watch television for more than ten minutes. Any noise is painful and bright lights hurt their eyes. Headaches can sometimes go on for days. In young people, these symptoms can lead to feelings of social isolation, as they simply cannot join in the things that their friends do. They often become depressed, as I am sure that I would.

At this time of their lives, losing contact with friends and dropping out of their social world can be devastating and can lead to terrible feelings of isolation and insecurity. Therefore, they not only have to cope with feeling ill, they also often lose their friends and suffer educationally because they are not well enough to go to school or college.

In the past, children and young people have always had difficulty in getting people to listen to their problems and concerns. The north Wales child abuse inquiry proved that. I hope that things are turning around now, particularly with the Assembly's commitment to appointing a children's commissioner for Wales. We must develop a different attitude towards young people. We should listen to them when they are well, but we should listen twice as hard when they are ill.

The problem with ME is that the understanding and treatment of the illness appears to be patchy throughout health authorities, not only in Wales but throughout the UK. A recent report called 'Speaking Up', written by Dr Stan Tucker of the Open University and Chris Tatum, a young ME sufferer, is informative. It was funded by the National Lottery Charities Board and compiled by asking young ME sufferers to fill in a questionnaire. Some were also interviewed, including several parents--to gain an insight into how this illness affects the whole family. I hope that Dr Tucker and Chris Tatum do not mind, but I can do no better than use some of the information gathered in their report to highlight the difficulties experienced by young ME sufferers.

According to the report, many youngsters experience negativity when they first see their doctor. I am sure that that is not true of the two doctors that we have in the Assembly. I do not want to criticise the medical profession, but it seems that many youngsters have come up against ignorance of the illness among their doctors and nurses. However, the report also lists positive experiences, with youngsters saying thing like, 'even though my GP did not know anything about ME, she read up on it and listens to me, which helps'. Some youngsters say that they found their child psychologist helpful. However, others report that they had been sent to a psychiatrist and one was even asked whether he heard voices.

5:10 p.m.

There also seems to be a huge variation in the treatment offered to these youngsters. Some ME clinics advocate an aggressive exercise programme which tries to push the youngsters to do more physical activities. It seems to me, from the examples and information I have come across, that young ME sufferers should only do what they feel they can do, because they will become more exhausted if they push themselves too hard and end up feeling worse than when they started.

Young people with ME face two hurdles. One is having to deal with the illness and the other is having to deal with the educational problems that result from their illness. Again, provision is patchy throughout the country. There are examples of some local education authorities not understanding why a pupil cannot attend school, sometimes for a year or even longer. Some parents chose to educate their children at home or are provided with home tutors, some of whom are helpful, but there are some who do not appreciate or cannot cope with the physical and emotional demands of their young pupils. I know of one case where the education authority has virtually forgotten a young ME sufferer, with no contact since the parent decided to teach the child at home herself. I appreciate that there are huge demands on schools, teachers and local education authorities but these young people are at a crucial time in their lives and they could lose out on their education for months and years, some of them never managing to catch up. We must do all we can in the Assembly to ensure that all young ME sufferers in Wales obtain the best education they can, which is suited to their ability, depending on the severity of their illness.

I would like to pay tribute to the work done by AYME, the Association of Youth with ME, which is a lifeline to so many young people. AYME is a UK-wide charity dedicated to supporting young people with ME. It runs entirely on voluntary donations and produces a free newsletter called Cheers, which keeps its young members in touch with each other and also provides medical, psychological and educational advice and information. I am wearing their cheerful badge, which shows what they are about, today. I hope this short debate will be the first step to raising public awareness of this cruel illness and that together, through the Assembly's health and social services and education departments and committees, we can improve the health and well being of so many young people in Wales who suffer from ME. I agreed before the debate to allow Kirsty Williams, David Melding and Dr Dai Lloyd a minute or two each.

Kirsty Williams: Thank you, Lorraine, for bringing this subject before us today and for your conscientious work in organising the presentation this afternoon which my colleague Jenny Randerson attended. It is hard for us to imagine the difficulties faced by any sufferer of ME but the difficulties faced by young sufferers of ME are increased because of the nature of the disease as Lorraine described it, suffering not only problems within the health system but also problems within the education service.

I would like to raise two points that are of particular concern to action for ME. First, patients are often misdiagnosed by medical professionals or have great difficulty in expressing their problems and getting the relevant treatment. There are a range of treatments available for ME sufferers and I have been aware of cases where they have been pushed down a particular route although they would have liked to pursue other options available for them. Second, there is the lack of awareness of ME within minority ethnic communities. I would be interested to hear from Jane what progress is being made following a Liberal-Democrat amendment passed by the Assembly on 25 January that noted the omissions from Assembly health and strategy documents of culturally appropriate health care. What can the Assembly do, not only to raise awareness of ME generally, but in particular to raise awareness within minority ethnic communities? I pay tribute to Lorraine for bringing this important topic to our attention.

David Melding: I am glad that the random ballot could come up with the pleasing result of allowing Lorraine to win during ME week and raise this important subject. I am disappointed that I could not attend the lunchtime function, I had to attend to other duties relating to the Committee that I chair.

Lorraine's exposition was powerful. It is difficult when a diagnosis is complicated, particularly when it relates to a condition that has a range of effects. As medicine advances we become much better at identifying these complicated conditions and that must continue. However, as ever in medicine, the situation with children is particularly demanding. This goes right across the range. It can be the case with drug research and all the treatments and interventions that we offer--they tend to come from the adult end of the market and are then brought in for children as well, without detailed research sometimes. This can be a concern. The other particular matters that aggravate the condition for children are the ones that were described, particularly education and the whole aspect of going through adolescence, which is itself a complicated time, often making the diagnosis more difficult too. The points about education and the way that they link into health and access to health services have to be taken up by the Health and Social Services Committee and the Pre-16 Education Committee.

David Lloyd: Diolchaf innau hefyd i Lorraine Barrett am godi'r pwnc hwn yn ystod wythnos codi ymwybyddiaeth ME. Fel y dywedais yn y cyfarfod amser cinio--nid ailadroddaf y pwyntiau yn ormodol--mae angen codi ymwybyddiaeth o'r clefyd hwn. Mae angen mwy o wybodaeth arnom a llawer mwy o waith ymchwil, oherwydd ar hyn o bryd nid oes gennym, ar yr ochr feddygol, brofion newydd a all brofi a oes ME ar rywun ai peidio. Mae angen triniaethau effeithiol hefyd gan nad oes gennym rai ar hyn o bryd. Mae angen llawer mwy o sylw i'r cyflwr hwn a llawer mwy o waith ymchwil. Dyna bwysigrwydd cael wythnos fel hon i godi ymwybyddiaeth, a phwysigrwydd ymgyrch AYME yw codi ymwybyddiaeth er mwyn hybu ymchwil yn y maes.

David Lloyd: I also thank Lorraine Barrett for raising this subject during ME awareness-raising week. As I said at the lunchtime meeting--I will not elaborate too much on the points--we need to raise awareness of this disease. We need more information and far more research work, because currently, on the medical side, we have no tests that can prove whether or not a person is suffering from ME. We also need effective treatments, as we do not have any at present. A great deal more attention needs to be paid to this complaint and far more research is needed. That is the importance of having such an awareness-raising week, and the importance of AYME's campaign is raising awareness in order to promote research in this area.

The Secretary for Health and Social Services (Jane Hutt): Thank you Lorraine. I recognise that ME is a distressing, debilitating and disabling condition, affecting people of all ages. It poses a great challenge to health and social care, but also to the wider policy areas of education. It, in fact, affects all aspects of people's lives. Today, we are looking in particular at children and young people, at all aspects of their lives and life opportunities and those of their families and carers. Sadly, despite a great deal of commitment from professionals, carers, families and voluntary organisations, there are major gaps in our knowledge and understanding of ME and its impact on people's lives. It is important, therefore, that the Assembly has the opportunity of debating this today. I will take back issues that have come out of the contributions to my Cabinet colleagues, where relevant, and also take note of them in respect of my own responsibilities.

ME affects many people and their families throughout the world, but because of the problems of definition--Dr Dai Lloyd touched on this--it is hard to determine the actual number of sufferers. It is thought that perhaps two people in every 1000 may have the illness, with numbers peaking in the 20 to 40 age group, but there is probably under-reporting of the illness in some social groups. We know that the condition is more prevalent among women and that it can affect children as young as five. More recently, we have become aware that ME is becoming increasingly more common among school-age children, which is of great concern to us. I have also had cases in my constituency where these issues have been brought to my attention.

5:20 p.m.

These issues have also been brought to my attention in my constituency. There is much debate on the causes of ME. I will not go into detail, as that was not the focus of our discussions today. However, it does indicate, as Dai Lloyd said, that we need more research to guide our health practitioners and policies. It is appropriate that Lorraine has raised this in ME awareness week. I thank Tiffany, Jo and all the others who have come here from many different constituencies to listen to this debate. Thank you for coming and sharing your experiences.

Much research is being carried out on ME. However, it is not enough, as has been indicated. The Government has provided considerable funding and has funded several research and development projects to inform its work on the development of health and social care policy. In Wales, the Wales Office for Research and Development has funded a pilot study for a narrative analysis of patient accounts of chronic fatigue syndrome. Like the Open University report that Lorraine described, that is about listening to children and young people's experiences. I will return to that point.

The difficulty in defining the cause of ME means that there is no single diagnostic test for the condition. That returns to Dai Lloyd's point. At present, diagnosis hinges largely on the elimination of other possible conditions through a series of tests. It follows that because the causes of ME are not fully understood yet, there is no agreed treatment. That leads to problems in how people receive care and attention.

What can we, and the NHS in particular, offer ME patients? The symptoms are numerous and vary from one person to another. Sufferers usually have chronic fatigue and pain in common. The NHS provides several services to which sufferers from chronic fatigue syndrome and ME have access. Patients are seen within a wide range of hospital specialities and can discuss the options available with their GPs. However, it is also important that they get support, empathy and understanding from their GPs. That is most important in the care of people with ME. Lorraine helpfully revealed this in her discussion of the Open University study. We should learn from good practice based on such studies and from users, carers, and those who have this complex illness.

Kirsty pointed to the importance of culturally appropriate health care. Minority ethnic groups may feel even more excluded from an understanding of ME. I am glad that the Health and Social Services Committee influenced our guidance on health improvement programmes. We need to ensure that we reach ME in the implementation of those programmes by health authorities. The issue of how people can get the right kind of support from their GPs is critical to what happens next.

A working group was established by the Department of Health in 1998 to consider providing good practice guidance. That is being taken forward by the Chief Medical Officer for England. We need to ensure that we learn from that group in Wales. The working group comprises health service professionals, academics, patients, carers and representatives of voluntary groups. It is reviewing management and practice in the sector with the aim of producing best practice guidance for professionals, patients and carers to improve the quality of care and treatment. I understand that its work should be completed by summer 2001. However, that is too far away for those here today.

A sub-group of that working group is considering issues affecting children and young people. We need to learn from that group also. We are closely in touch with the work being carried out by the Department of Health. The issues we have heard about today occur throughout the United Kingdom and the working group's findings will be a useful resource that we can draw on to improve the quality of our understanding, support and care for people with this distressing and debilitating condition. Our aim must be to provide good and appropriate care for sufferers of ME, which is an often perplexing condition. We must ensure that our knowledge continues to grow and our provision continues to improve.

On the wider issues, it is important that we recognise the blight on young life. Lorraine, you eloquently described what it means. Social exclusion and isolation leads to lack of confidence and esteem. Young people lose out on long-term life opportunities in education and social contact. This goes back to David Melding's point about listening to children and young people about their needs. The Assembly has agreed that listening to children and young people has to be our priority. It is easy to say these things. However, taking on board what children and young people are saying is the test of whether we put it into practice. We must ensure that we in the Assembly know about any local education authorities or schools who are not helpful in terms of education. We must ensure that we note unsatisfactory responses that have been given to children, young people and their parents. Lorraine, you sit on the Pre-16 Education Committee. I am sure that Rosemary Butler would be concerned to hear about this.

In conclusion, I thank Lorraine for drawing attention to the important work of the voluntary sector in this respect, which is leading the way and educating us. In the Assembly, we take that strongly on board. We consult with the voluntary sector and we want to learn from the voluntary sector as well as put money into the research and provision. In this instance we are supporting people with ME, particularly children and young people.

Y Llywydd: Dyna ddiwedd y ddadl ar bwnc pwysig. Diolch i'r Aelodau am eu cyfraniad. Daw hynny â gweithgareddau heddiw i ben. Diolch am eich cydweithrediad.

The Presiding Officer: That is the end of the debate on an important subject. I thank Members for their contribution. That brings today's proceedings to an end. Thank you for your co-operation.

Daeth y sesiwn i ben am 5.26 p.m.

The session ended at 5.26 p.m.